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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

### BUDDHIST HOPES & BUDDHIST FEARS

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*In this issue of our journal, we present the proceedings of the conference prepared and organised for the Western Chan Fellowship by the Bristol Chan Group in Bristol on the 31st October and 1st November 2009. It follows from a similar conference on Death and Dying in 2006 and is intended to discuss important themes, psychological, educational and cultural, emerging from the threats from impending Climate and Peak Oil crises now facing the 21st century world society. What beneficial role can Buddhism play in this crisis? The speakers provide important and profound thoughts on several aspects of our time – psychological development in relationship, work, education, and philosophical holism. This is a beginning of thoughtful appraisals that all of us with concerns about the world must now address with increasing attention. We are proud to present these valuable texts to you here.*

## PAPERS FROM “LIVING AND LOVING IN THE 21ST CENTURY: BUDDHIST ENQUIRES” CONFERENCE

*A Conference presented by the Bristol Chan Group for the Western Chan Fellowship  
31st October & 1st November 2009*

### CONTEXT: THE PLAN AND THE INTENTION

*Sarah Bird, Bristol Chan Group committee representative*

When we asked our speakers to address a group of people about Living and Loving in the 21st Century, we set them a tall order. Our questions were rather vast:

- Where have we gone wrong, and how might we go better?
- What has happened to our sense of connection to the world, and to each other?
- How might Buddhist teachings and practice help us today?
- How might we learn to live and work with wisdom and compassion?
- What should we teach our children?

We wanted them to help us all to explore the potential for mindset change, in a variety of contexts, with the help of Buddhist teachings. We wanted them to help us see the potential of these mindset shifts – can we think and act differently and can this really contribute to a resolution of the global challenges that we currently face. We also asked them to facilitate small group discussions, so that each individual attending the conference might have the opportunity to explore what new ways of thinking and acting might mean for them, in their own everyday, inter-related, living and working experiences.

The following papers reflect the diversity and energy of the conference, and contain many practical and helpful insights. They also contain many glimmers of beauty, an appreciation of which seems indispensable as we look forwards. We are profoundly grateful for the wisdom and compassion of all those who contributed to the conference and to this publication.

### INTRODUCTION

*Mike Mashedor*

*Fair daffodils we weep to see  
You haste away so soon;  
As yet the early-rising sun  
Has not attain'd his noon.*

Why do I quote these lines from the well-known poem of Robert Herrick? Mostly, it is because it is what often comes to mind when I think of the rapidly changing world around us. Although certainly not intended by Herrick, I find the daffodils as a metaphor for not only the natural world which seems to be

disappearing at a rate of knots but also for the wonderful edifices, both physical and cultural that have been built up over the centuries by countless generations of inventive humanity.

Is that all about to come to an untimely end, shrivelled to a crisp and drowned in the rising seas whilst survivors fight bloody conflicts over dwindling resources? Does it have to? Probably not, but some radical changes in the mindset are likely to be called for. Can humanity come up with the wisdom to use its extraordinary cleverness in much less stupid and blind ways?

Why should I weep for the passing daffodils, for the things lost or about to be lost? Why should any of us care about the changes that are coming? After all, the world has always changed and humanity has managed to adapt, although the changes now do seem to be bigger and faster than hitherto. I suggest that it is important not to weep out of sentimental attachments to how things were and what may be lost, however beautiful. Our concern should be driven much more by real and genuine compassion for our fellow sentient beings and those that will follow on to inherit whatever we care to leave behind. We are, after all, all part of the same process.

The next stanza of the same poem is a little poignant:

*We have as short time to stay, as you,  
We have as short a spring;  
As quick to a growth to meet decay,  
As you, or anything.  
We die  
As your hours do, and dry  
Away  
Like to the summer's rain;  
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,  
Nèer to be found again.*

— *Be mindful of impermanence; be careful of idleness.*

So here are some questions to be addressed. The weekend is not about details of climate models, economic tactics or social strategy. All these things are likely to become a mere rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic if we don't learn to think differently. Just how adaptable can we be? In his study of behavioural biology and how creatures adapt to changing environments, Niko Tinbergen came to doubt whether mankind could adapt to the ever more rapidly changing circumstances. He called for major changes in attitude and world-view. Although the crisis is rather worse now, we have the possible advantage of some familiarity with different world-views on which to build – those of the East and particularly the Buddhist view.

What we'd like to do today and tomorrow and for evermore is to try to investigate mindsets from Buddhist and other perspectives and see how these ideas might be useful in changing them for the better. In doing this we need to avoid misunderstandings of Buddhism. Perhaps I can quote John (Crook) in his recent book, 'World Crisis and Buddhist Humanism' [New Age Books, Delhi, 2009. Opening of Ch 19]:

In placing Buddhist ideas in the forefront of modern thought we must challenge the manner in which they are most commonly described and by which they may be dismissed or subverted by the prevalence of a materialist world-view. It seems essential to emphasise once again that the root ideas of Buddhism cannot be treated simply as just another religion. Indeed, it would be more correct to argue that Buddhism belongs to Science, just as Science can inform Buddhism.

Buddhist ideas comprise a system of enquiry that has no end because it is bold enough to press beyond the confines of narrative into that mysterious silence that lies beyond thought...

One of the key ideas of Buddhism is the 'Law of Co-dependent Arising', often called by a variety of other names. As you know, it emphasises the mutuality and interconnectedness of all entities and phenomena. Let me quote John once more [End of Ch 14, p 184]:

And yet, merely knowing this [Law] will not make much difference to the world. The existential use of the Law depends on directly experiencing the mutuality of all things and this is unlikely without a deep practice of spirituality. The implication of the interconnectedness of all phenomena is that any apparent one of them is empty of any specific thing-ness; it has no existence inherent in its own isolated being. Insight is needed to perceive that this means that emotional attachments to things, ideas, prejudices, beliefs resting in mere assertion, as objects to rely on as sources of safety within impermanence is mistaken for not one of them possesses constancy, and that to defend such attachments through vicious argument, resentment, strife and terror is to base a life on total illusion. The only course must be through sharing and mutual understanding and that means the cultivation of love. There's the problem".

What this is saying is that we must find solutions to our problems using not only our clever intellect, but also with a sea-change of heart. Finding solutions is essentially a spiritual enterprise. Can we truly realise the empty nature of the self? Can we learn to see that so much of what we do is an escape from the fear of 'ungroundedness' (as David Loy would put it)? These are the questions for the next day or two.

What's in a name? Living and Loving? Well, actually, the name came about from a bit of a whimsy after our successful Death and Dying conference three and a half years ago. It was much appreciated by many, I believe, but nevertheless I did feel and death and dying was going to happen to me anyway and that in the meantime, what I was rather more interested in was life and living, and somehow "Life and Living" got changed to the even more catchy title "Living and Loving". You could have a conference about all kinds of things with such a catchy title of course, but I felt we should be looking at the all-embracing global crisis as that seemed to be what was pressing on us now.

## DEVELOPING AND RELATING: PERSPECTIVES OF A BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGIST

*Eddy Street*

It is important at the beginning of a discussion of this topic to be clear about some of the ways that Buddhism and Western Psychology are linked. My experience is that when people talk about the history of Buddhism they tend to refer to the way Buddhism enters a society and takes on a cultural aspect of that society. The example everyone uses is the way that when Buddhism travelled to Tibet how it became connected to the Bon religion. There was a cultural interaction, and it was in that process that Tibetan Buddhism developed. When Buddhism migrated into China it came into contact with the ideas and practices of Taoism and there was an interaction that led to a particular development of Buddhism. In each of these processes, what also happened is that at some point within Buddhism there was a critical review of how that process of cultural interaction had gone on and what its outcomes were.

Given this general understanding, when people talk about this history of our spiritual practice I always wait to see what they are going to talk about in terms of Western culture. What is the bit of Western culture that Buddhism has connected to? What is the cultural interaction between Buddhism and western society? Few seem to mention this directly. Yet, if we consider this question fully we can see that the connection is to psychology. What Buddhism has connected to in Western culture has not been a spiritual tradition neither has it been a connection to a philosophy. It has connected to our understanding of the psychological and, in historical terms, we have not yet had a comprehensive, retrospective and critical review of the outcome of that linkage.

This makes some of the things that I am going to talk about difficult, as it would be too easy to present a dharma talk about the nature of the Western psyche but that would miss the point. What I think we need to understand is the 'psychology' that Buddhism has become related to. We need to be clear about the positive and negative aspects of that psychology as it links with Buddhism.

When I was younger and got chatting informally to people, I learnt very quickly not to say that I was psychologist. I did this to avoid the consequences of our 'lay' conceptions of psychology that would be revealed if I let people know what I did. What would happen is that firstly people would say "I'd better not talk too much because you'll be reading my mind." Then after about 5 minutes we would move onto "It must be wonderful sitting down talking to people all the time, listening. But don't you get tired of other people's problems?" After a while we may get "Oh, don't try your psychology on me." Then after a while they'd say, "Do you know, um, I have this difficulty with my mother and I wondered what I should do.....?" So here we have the lay conception of our western psychology – it is hidden inside the individual and it can be 'got out' by talking to somebody who may have some special insight into things. So these are some of the assumptions that are present when we are talking about the psychological in our culture.

What I have described here is of course different from academic psychology, the scientific study of psychology which also has a professional base for its practical application. But these things are different from the kind of 'psychology' that everybody thinks about and it is this psychology that Buddhism is in danger of becoming too attached to culturally. For example we have 'women's interests' magazines devoted to the 'lay' psychology and in these they have articles on 'This is your personality test'; 'Ten ways to chill out.'; 'How to introduce meditation into your life.' Clearly people are thinking and assuming that Buddhism is linked to this kind of psychology. It is presented as a 'lifestyle' and a way to be calm and all within the commercially created needs of our society. So I am saying that the understanding of psychology - the lay popular conception of psychology - is that it is unconscious, that it is deep, that it is hidden, that it can be revealed. It is something that is manipulative - you can do something here and something else will happen over there. It is something that will make you happy. If you have had a difficult life this is what you need to make you happy. It is also logical as psychology is a problem solving process. It is a commodity that you can pick up and buy.

These are things I do not recognise in Buddhism, particularly the logical bit.

The link with the formal study of psychology is also growing as there now appears a strong interest in the practice of mindfulness in academic psychology, and certainly in applied psychology a fashion has developed based on mindfulness. In fact you can't move for Mindfulness. But some people who teach mindfulness almost think of it as managing your stream of consciousness; just managing your thoughts and cognitions. Then when I, as a Buddhist, talk to the mindfulness people about mindfulness practice and the necessary confrontation of the Self that it involves I can see that they do not appreciate the difference; they do not appreciate the depth of the practice. So please do not be misled by people within the field of psychology who are talking about mindfulness as if they understand it. The question I always ask of psychotherapists who say they are doing mindfulness is "What is your tradition?" And if they can't tell me then I know they are doing it just as a technique rather than as a practice of living and this is a very important difference.

However the difference between psychology and Buddhism is sometimes difficult to tease out for if you read some of the talks by Western masters (for example Looi, Beck, Magid etc.) they talk about the way we are conditioned; the way we need to be aware of our emotional response to things; the way we need to overcome our habits; the way in which we need to be aware of how we are thinking and feeling about ourselves and our self esteem at any moment. These are exactly the same kind of ideas and notions that you come across if you read an introduction to psychology. What we have to look at is our conditioning, what we have to look at is our emotions, what we have to look at is our self conceptions. They sound as if they are the same thing. But all our teachers are obviously talking about something different and it is important in our contact with this cultural phenomenon of the linkage of Buddhism to psychology, to recognise that Buddhism is different, it is not the same. What psychology does is look at the content of the ego and what Buddhism is interested in is the way we are attached to the idea of

ego. These are two entirely different things, two entirely different processes. It is important to realise from the outset that psychology as we know it, Western psychology, will ultimately disappoint. The Buddha dharma will not. But it is important to understand that in any discussion about Buddhism and psychology we unfortunately have to use some language that has a different meaning in the two contexts and because a 'psychologist' uses some of the words we Buddhists are familiar with it does not mean that the psychologist has an appreciation of the message of the Buddha. This makes it difficult but it is a part of the koan of working out how as Buddhists we respond to our life in our western society.

There are some words which are particularly problematic for understanding the process of development. One of these words is "attachment". Attachment is a part of the current psychology climate and it is a word that everybody uses. It is important for us to understand what the process of attachment is in the psychological sense. As soon as an infant is born she experiences some distress. She is hungry; she is uncomfortable; she needs her nappy changing. She experiences distress. What happens is that the parent picks up the infant, holds her and this calms the infant. This is the whole process of development. Winnicott the psychologist said that there is no such thing as an infant; only a nursing couple. There is no such thing as a person entity, there is only reciprocation in a social context. Development therefore occurs by a reciprocal process. Development occurs because in dealing with the infant there and then the parent has to put her 'self' down in order to focus on the child. So at the core of our experience, at the start of our becoming a person and of being a parent, the self has to be put down. So putting down the self and attending to what needs to be attended to at that very moment is not something that only develops on a cushion in a zendo, it is something that is there naturally in the process of caring for a child. So the process of putting down the self, the process of mindfully attending to what is actually happening here and now is a part of everyday ordinary life. In order to develop as a person it is necessary for each and every one of us to have experienced this process of being calmed in a social context where a self has been dropped. This is the way in which personhood develops. What happens next is that, after a while, bits of the carer, bits of her self do arise and get in the way because they are not necessarily straight forward. Now the child has to relate to these bits of the carer in ways that fit the situation; the child has to adapt to the care that is given. In this way what then develops for the child psychologically is what is known as the 'internal template' for how relationship works. Certain emotions are allowed, certain emotions are not; there are avoidance patterns and seeking patterns. Certain people are there at some times and not there at other times so the child develops ambivalent patterns – expecting and then not expecting with this becoming related to anger. The child then begins to walk and at a certain distance feels uneasy at being so far away from her parent so she returns. All this describes what we know as the developmental process of attachment – a process in which the child recognises what makes her feel safe and not distressed and whether it be distance or emotions they are demonstrated by a particular person who becomes the 'secure base'.



Now again here it is worthwhile emphasising a point of difference between Western psychotherapy and Buddhism. Psychotherapy is interested in the process of – ‘this is the infant’, ‘this is the mother’ and ‘this is the kind of person I have become because ‘this is my mother’’. So a person may say “I’m pretty good with being angry because sometimes she wasn’t there. I’m not very good with being sad because I had to suppress sadness. My mother made me feel small.” These are the kinds of thoughts and feelings which are in us all and which arise out of our attachment relationships, those reciprocal relationships that give rise to our internal template which is our map for how the world of relating works. So what Western psychology and its practice as psychotherapy is all about is working out such questions as “why is it that I don’t allow myself to be angry or sad or happy? Why is it that it is difficult for me to deal with some kinds of emotions? Why is it that I want to get closer and then I want to move away?” These things are important but if we look again at the actual process of attachment what we see happen is that the infant feels anxiety and needs to hold onto something else to find calmness. It is this initial feeling of anxiety that the Buddha called ‘dukkha’, it is the anxiety at the core of our existence. It is not the anxieties that arise later – “what kind of person am I?”; “What do I have to do to be loved?” It is the anxiety about being a person; it is the root nature of human anxiety and it is this that the Buddha was essentially talking about in his reference to suffering. Neo-natal psychologists, particularly those who have a background in psychoanalysis, understand this process and are now starting to appreciate that in meditation you can touch and sit with this core experience. So the processes of the development and attachment and hence the foundation blocks on which we form relationships we have to see as a way of managing anxiety, a way of managing our essential distress. It needs to be recognised that our attachment in relationships starts out not as a way of attempting to get love but as a way of relieving suffering. It is this that is the beginning of our development.

As a Buddhist it always interests me that although we talk about impermanence, about the ever changing nature of phenomenon we do not talk about human development very much. We do not talk about the fact that a 2 week old is different from a 2 year old, is different from a 22 yr old, is different from a 42 yr old. In fact the nature of human development is a wonderful example of the process of impermanence. In the early processes of the development, what is very important for the child is learning about intimacy and also learning about solitude. In helping our children’s development what we have to help them learn is how to be intimate with somebody and how to be on their own. We have to help deal with that koan of human life about balancing solitude with intimacy and intimacy with solitude. But as a Buddhist, I scratch my head about this because one of the things about Buddhism is that there seems to be so much emphasis on solitude. There is so much emphasis on working on the self. As one of our invocations goes “We go into the snow alone”. But for me I like to hold hands with somebody sometimes and I am sure that we all need to hold hands sometimes. A practice of intimacy could be just as important as a practice of solitude. I’m not sure why there is the emphasis on one kind of practice as opposed to another. But then of course beyond solitude and intimacy - where one attains one’s natural self one attains solitude and is intimate with everything. Where we are intimate with everything there is a sense of being with the

universe in a unifying way. So the question is how do we develop this idea of intimacy? And we have already arrived at some form of answer - to be truly intimate a 'self' has to be put down. It is the same as being the parent caring for - 'being intimate with' - the child. To be truly intimate with somebody means there is no 'I', there is only 'we' and perhaps there is no 'we'. How do we do this? How do we practice intimacy in our relationships? This is what I want to turn to next.

In terms of forming relationships it was not until about the 12th century that the idea of romantic love came into being. So historically in our society the process of being in relationship has changed. Before 1200, intimate relationships were about function. You had a husband who brought home food so you could eat. You had a wife who looked after the children so you could go out to work. You had children so they could look after you when you got old. That was the function - and you latched onto anyone who was available. In those days you did not find a partner by logging onto findyourmatch.com. Long term relationships, marriages if you like, were based on function and they were held together externally, by the processes of society keeping people together. Now what has happened is that there is very little functional imperative in relationships. Relationships have become issues of choice. Relationships have become defined by feeling rather than by function. So relationships are determined by emotional rather than by practical and structural needs. Today this means that to embark on a long term relationship is a high risk venture simply because it is so involved with our internal being. It is high risk because it is so involved with the process of who you think you are.

Here we might quickly look at the issue of sexuality in relationships. Obviously sex is a physical need but it is unlike other human physical needs, such as the need for oxygen or food or water for if you don't have sex you don't die. But we know if you don't have oxygen you do die. Because sex is a biological need, and because you don't die from a lack of it, it is rotten ripe to attract all the neurotic feelings and ideas we have about ourselves. This is why sex and sexuality in relationships has become so important as it has become a part of the process of being connected to emotion and ideas of the self.

What this process of changing from function to feeling means is that relationships now involve a much greater pressure towards intimacy - an exploration of who I am in relation to who somebody else is. It is this that makes it so risky particularly if you are concerned about a quick fix for your self and is the reason why so many people have problems with their intimate relationships. But the converse is also true in that it means that a long term relationship has the potentiality of being personally transformative. Long term relationships have the power of you attending to who you are personally in this relationship now. So a relationship, this high risk venture, is just like going on your first retreat. It is going to be bloody hard, it is going to hurt, you are going to have uncomfortable feelings, you are going to wonder what it is all about. These are things that are part and parcel of entering into a relationship, a long term relationship. But just like going on retreat the outcome might mean that you emerge truer to yourself than when you went in. This is the beginning of a different way of conceiving of a relationship. Rather than looking for something that provides me with a personal remedy. Rather than asking the question 'Can this person

meet all my needs?’ The question is the same you ask of a teacher; ‘Can I work with this person?’ This is the key question that we must ask in our personal relationships.

At this juncture it is worth while considering some aspects of the psychological study of relationships and the only psychologist I’ll mention is John Gottman. In his studies what he did was to look at a lot of couples as they spent time in a Big Brother type flat and whilst they were there he gave them a lot of tasks. What he found was that, with about 91% accuracy, he could predict which couples would divorce after 2 years. The way he did that was by looking at their interactions, by looking at the way they related to each other. On the negative side he found that there was criticism which was attacking the other person rather than talking from where you came from. He found that there was defensiveness which was not listening to the other person and just holding your own position. He found there was contempt and he also found a very interesting pattern which he called ‘stone walling’ which happens when somebody tries to make an effort to have contact with you and you just blank them. We will all be familiar with these things both as givers and as receivers. He also identified positive emotional expressions including respectfulness and compassion. Gottman’s major discovery was that that in terms of the relationships that were long lasting there were two basic characteristics. Firstly at any time there was always in interaction 5 positives to a negative and if ever a negative arose in one of these relationships then 5 positives arose after. The second characteristic was that if there was conflict it was always resolved. Just as in child development, in order to develop in a positive way a child needs to experience some difficulty- a difficulty that they are helped to overcome. There can not be positiveness all the time as children need to develop resilience by managing conflict and difficulties. In relationships that work there needs to be conflict - but it needs to be resolved and this leads to resilience in the relationship. So in any relationship there is nothing wrong with being in conflict as long as the resolution is worked through together. The question we must pose for ourselves therefore is “Can we accept that conflict will arise and it can be successfully dealt with?” So what relationships do is to throw us onto ourselves in new and different ways and it is this that can lead to personal transformation.

From this perspective it becomes possible to identify the tasks we have to undertake in order to create a transformative relationship and the list I have put together is not in any kind of order. The first task is to be able to detach from the family of childhood; you have to be able to detach from the family that you have come from. This doesn't mean living a long way away from them; it means you have to be able to put down your mum and dad as parents and see them purely as important adults with whom you relate and care for. This will involve seeing yourself as being capable of creating a new relationship separate from old patterns. This might mean being honest with yourself about the nature of the relationship that you thought your mum and dad had together; not idealizing it, not seeing in a very negative way but seeing it in a very realistic way. Another relationship task is to be able to introduce new people into the relationship and that means children as well as friends. There has to be a way in which the boundary between the couple and the outside world is very loose and very rigid at the same time - a couple’s



boundary really is a koan. It is a paradox but a potential conflict area that needs to be discussed and worked at all the time. Thirdly with regards to children, illness, the difficulties of life, there needs to be a way in which at different times the needs of one of the partner's life can dominate over the other's but in the sure knowledge that things can reverse. This is the way in which there is a balance between "this is what I have given" and "this is what I have received". The way this balance is worked out temporarily is therefore different to how it is worked out over a longer period of time. It involves a couple having an ability of dealing with time together in a different way. Dealing with time in this way involves the acknowledgement that you will be together when your children leave home, when your parents die, when one of you passes away. What is important in dealing with this future time is that it also holds the joy that there was beginning time - a period that holds the idea of 'do you remember when we were young and we did this, and it was wonderful'. In this way the past then is also the joy of now, so as Dogen says time becomes 'being time'. Hence the notion of time and the notion of development in a couple need to be permanently on the agenda. Other tasks involve couples needing to be able to laugh together, not take each other seriously, being friends. Couples need to be able to have a playful and imaginative sex life. They need to be able to allow each other to have different needs at different times. The importance of transformation in a couple is being able to recognise difference and live with it and enjoy its development. And, in particular, a long term relationship task is to offer encouragement and nurturance continually which involves listening, respect and compassion.

In finishing, what we can see is that the way in which human society has evolved has led to the nature of the relationships changing so that now a long term relationship is a challenge and hard work. But due to its potentially transformative nature if you can truly enter into a relationship, truly find yourself, you will truly find the other person. And when you do that you will discover the origin of love. Thank you.

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## WHAT IS MY WORK IN THE WORLD?

*A paper based on a talk by Tim Malnick*

*Edited by Sarah Bird*

I want to talk about work in the context of Living and Loving in the 21st Century. How does our work help us live and love in the 21st century, and more specifically, what is the role of our work in helping us address and respond to some of the pressing social and environmental challenges of our time? And what does Buddhist thinking and practice have to say to these tricky questions? How might Buddhists engage with their work, and how might Buddhist ideas and practices be helpful to the many people who are struggling to find a way for their work to be more satisfying and a more positive contribution to society.

I would like to do four things. First I want to say a little about the nature of work and point to the ways in which so much of our identity can be wrapped up in our work in the world. Then, based on my experience working with people across a wide range of sectors, who are trying to respond through their work to the question of how to make the world a better place, I want to suggest two main ways that we can get stuck when we try to engage with the huge challenges out there in modern industrial society. Having identified these two main traps, I want to then suggest a middle way between these two extremes that might be the place from which a Buddhist inspired response to the challenges of work will come. And finally, I want to flesh that middle way idea out a bit, and give a few principles and practical examples, based on my experience working with people who are consciously changing the way they work.

### WORK

So first work. Work is a big deal. Although there were promises a generation or two ago, when the modernist industrial myth was at its strongest, that we would by now be living in an era of leisure, with machines doing all the work, it hasn't turned out like that. Economists David Boyle and Andrew Simms suggest that in actual fact modern Britons work harder than medieval peasants, with more working hours and less time off, citing this as one of "the many paradoxes of 20th century progress".

A lot of our sense of self is bound up with the notion of the work we do. It seems to me that many people have their life energy residing in and around their work. I think the sickness, both physical and mental related to both working and not having work is a sign of this.

And whilst so much of our sense of self can be wrapped up in work (why is the first question we ask new acquaintances not 'are you happy?', or 'what do you find beautiful in the world?', but 'what do you do?'), work as currently conceived also makes many people tremendously unhappy. Work is a necessity in our modern culture, and yet the experience of work for many is still quite unfulfilling. E.F Schumacher in his famous study of Good Work suggests that, "No management is unaware of its duty to avoid accidents or physical conditions which impair workers' health. But workers' brains, minds and souls are a different matter".

So, much of our time, our life energy and our sense of self is bound up with work, and yet work in modern life is often unfulfilling and soul destroying. And work that destroys the soul links very strongly to organisations that then damage and disrespect the wider world.

Work is important. In Buddhist terms work is a limb of the noble eightfold path – Right livelihood – something to be perfected on our journey of awakening. The question of right livelihood is much more complicated now than it would have been in the time of the Buddha. Originally, conceived relatively simply as avoiding certain professions that cause harm, today we need to explore a more Mahayanist conception. By this I mean that many people not only wish to avoid harm through their work, but are asking themselves, ‘how can my work in the world be a source of good, of benefit to others?’

Faced with alarming evidence about the growing challenges in 21st century society, and considering the role of the work we do, I find that people, broadly speaking, can form two main types of response both of which, from the Buddhist point of view, are based on confusion, and are ultimately unhelpful, or at least limited in scope.

#### EVERYTHING’S OK!

The first one is what I call the ‘Everything’s OK’ response. Here we hold on for dear life to the modernist, industrial myth that progress is delivering and gradually moving towards the perfect world. In our current version of this myth, growth through industrial activity will solve all our problems; technology, science and knowledge will conquer all obstructions, and there are no issues outside of our ability to solve them rationally. Work harder, increase growth, trust the power and range of technology, and everything will be fine. We get on with the rat race, climb the ladder, meet our targets, go shopping at weekends, and trust, or try to, in the grand narrative of modernist society that by so doing all will be well.

The other, slightly more complicated version of ‘everything’s OK’ is the pseudo Buddhist response, that conceptually understands that ultimately everything is self-existently pure and perfect (as they would say in the Dzogchen tradition) or illusory and empty as they might say more generally in Mahayana. Here we are mistaking a conceptual view of the world, albeit a profound and inspiring one, for a genuine experience of what the view is pointing towards. I’m not honest about my actual experience of the world if I claim to see it as perfect, without problems. I can aspire to that view, I can be and indeed am deeply inspired by it, and occasionally I may have genuine experiential glimpses. But if I use this as a reason not to respond to the problems we face, when my experience suggests that there are problems, then this is Buddhist bullshit really. Of course the view of primordial purity and emptiness is precious and important, and as practitioners we are often working with inspiration and glimpses. This Buddhist view has much to offer a world full of apparently solid, material problems. We can link the physical problems out there to confused states of mind, seeing how we create and recreate Samsara through fixed habits of thought. But this conceptual view could lead us to cut off from suffering and world problems.

I suspect that we all link into both of these responses at times. Perhaps because of the sheer scale and alarming nature of the challenges we face. It is nice to be able to opt out with the view, that everything's OK. I summarise this approach as 'denying the truth (albeit still a relative truth according to some views) of Samsara' - denying that there is suffering and that suffering is manifesting in particular ways.

### I CAN FIX IT!

What is the other side of 'Everything's OK'? Well, if we do open up to the existence of problems, and perhaps make a commitment to engaging with those challenges through the work that we do, the other main trap we can fall into is thinking that on some level we can fix everything, and make 'saving the world' a personal and material project. We are so uncomfortable with the truth of suffering, that subtly our response and action is linked to some agenda of ambition, personal success, and perhaps the hope that we can through ego-centric effort make these problems disappear.

The great 20th century teacher, and my own teacher's teacher, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche wrote a book called 'Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism'. He suggests that we might think that we have abandoned something unsavoury about modern life, and embarked instead on a spiritual path. Maybe we see the world as overly consumerist or competitive or aggressive so we adopt a spiritual path. But subtly our egos just use this new path to play all the same games as before, so we relate to our spiritual path in consumerist, ambitious or aggressive ways. This often happens when people try to make their work more beneficial – there is something genuine and positive there, but also it can become yet another project, another thing to achieve, deeply bound up with projections into a better future, which of course is only ever arising in the present moment. I suggest that these sorts of projections underlie a lot of the life energy of our industrial growth society – competition, ambition, consumerism, looking to the future for satisfaction and wealth, rather than resting in the present. So to the extent that we allow similar projections to drive our search for meaningful work, and a better future, then perhaps we are actually just perpetuating the confusion that makes the world go round.

If we try to make too solid and personal a project of solving the problems of the world, we can also become materialistic in our approach. Often I find this in people working with environmental issues, and issues of social justice. Although the roots of their work may initially be deep and heartfelt, often the solution of the issues becomes materialistic – the focus becomes on technical solutions, measurable outcomes. This is fine, but from a Buddhist point of view we might say that our view has become narrow, that we have moved from a wish to benefit beings to a fixation on material solutions. Fundamentally from a Buddhist point of view the roots of our problems are our confusion, our greed and our hatred. These manifest in the problems of the material world, indeed in some sense these kleshas create the material world we are in. Of course material solutions to material problems are absolutely vital. Of course we must give and provide material solutions as best we can to help others, but I think Buddhists have a contribution to make in pointing to and working with deep causes, even while we take material steps. These responses I class as 'Shit, there is a problem, it is x and I have to fix it'. We make something overly

and, from the Buddhist point of view unhelpfully solid and personal about the problems, our role in solving them and adopt a fixed response.

#### SO WHAT IS LEFT?

If we are not stuck in denying there are problems, nor in trying to fix them all personally and materially, what is left? What is the middle way between those extremes?

When I pondered what I thought was left, it seemed to me incredibly non heroic. When I considered what I thought remained, as a basis for action or work in the world, I found myself thinking “surely there is something more than that?” But then I got interested, and now I wonder if the fact that it seems so utterly not enough, is indeed a sign that it is truly what we do need to base our work on. Maybe the fact that the middle way I am about to suggest seems so out of sync with our deep assumptions about the world of work, so counter intuitive, is a sign that it is exactly what we need.

#### RESTING BEYOND SPEED AND AGGRESSION

Trungpa Rinpoche suggests that when people start to meditate in this Western culture, the first thing that we notice is how racy, speedy and apparently out of control our minds are. I think that suggests a lot about how many of us experience our day to day working worlds, and our organisations – a basic sense of speedy, relentless activity. If we sit with the speediness for long enough, he suggests, our minds will start to settle down, we will start to see things more clearly. At this point he suggests most people will experience aggression – not necessarily in an obvious angry way, but we will see how compulsively our minds resist or try to manipulate the simple truth of what arises within our experience. We will have any number of games and strategies, often not noticed as such, that are fundamentally aggressive – attempts to manipulate the spontaneous truth of our experience, an unwillingness to simply relate to things as they are, preferring to compulsively fix, change, or avoid them. Again there are links here to our work environments, our global business projects and to our personal attitudes to work for many of us. When we are not just speeding along, caught up in the adrenaline rush of work, many of us are working to strategies, and ambitions, held quite heavily and personally, tools for ego in one way or another to assert its ground. Many of our plans for ‘changing the world’ or ‘saving the planet’ also fall into this category. If we can sit and let both the speed and aggression loosen and dissolve, which they will naturally and gradually do over time, then Trungpa Rinpoche says that we will then experience sadness; a tender hearted, raw, open sadness. I have always found this both true and amazing. The idea that just beyond the speed and manipulation of our minds (and thus we may also say our society and organisations) lies a soft, tender, heartfelt, natural quality. This spot is the birthplace of the warrior, the Bodhisattva, the person who vows to work for the benefit of all beings, according to their particular skills, situation and inspiration, until all beings are awake. Linking to this tender heart is the birthplace of the warrior working for the benefit of all. Speed and aggression won’t do it – no matter how many noble plans for changing the world we have. Sitting with tender open heartedness is the starting point for the one who works tirelessly for the benefit of others.



We can decide for ourselves if this relates to our experience as we meditate, or allow ourselves to settle down and rest in a simple sense of responsiveness to the world, beyond our usual speed.

Of course, in current society, full of offices, bureaucracies, and deep cultural assumptions, often untested and unspoken, about the nature of work and success I find that there is little place for tender hearted sadness. Our modern assumptions of work value exactly the opposite of what Trungpa Rinpoche describes. We may get rewarded for speed, for compulsive activity, for aggression – not overt, but the goal fixated, future oriented, manipulating mindset that never rests with what is. Conversely I cannot remember a time when I saw genuine open tender heartedness manifested by a business leader. Taking this experience as the basis for action is radical, it is political, it is downright embarrassing too, but that is the point. We shouldn't underestimate just how unusual and powerful such a starting place for a response in and to our work might be.

And this tender heartedness is not just a private experience to be wallowed in or fixed. It is the starting place for an active response, for our work – beyond trying to deny or fix Samsara, and beyond habitual speed and aggression. The idea is that to the extent that we can first rest in an open minded and open hearted, non conceptual responsiveness to a situation, the more skilful, compassionate, and wise our subsequent action will be. So the practice is to rest in this place and to gradually gain confidence to use this place of tender heart, rather than our usual hard hearted, ego-centric strategies and projections as the basis for true and skilful action in the world. We may find ourselves saying or doing something surprising or timely. A response may also be a longer term vision, inspiration or intention – that becomes a plan. But a vision or plan that comes from the heart. The warrior, the one who truly works for the benefit of others, has confidence to rest beyond strategy and then respond. This may be radical, but how many more rational goal oriented action plans do we need in the world? Are our 21st century problems because we haven't yet found the right action plan, or don't yet have enough of them, or is there a deeper question of how we conceive of work and action, about where those things come from?

Finally, I think it is really important to acknowledge the sense of shame, awkwardness and embarrassment that we may have, at least at first, when we rest in this place of tender openhearted responsiveness to the world. Many cultural and organisational theorists have written about the way that certain experiences and behaviours are normalised within a culture, rendering other parts of the experience of being human, marginalised, abnormal, and therefore somehow shameful. Consider for example the idea of the 'professional', both a noun and an adjective, a word that I suggest has huge power for the way we think of work, and yet power that is rarely examined. To be 'professional' implies a person who is unmoved, rational, dispassionate, logical, not personally involved. There is little about tender heartedness that we see in contemporary notions of what it is to be professional. Is this a big con trick that we are all playing on ourselves?

Organisations, and the people in them, cry out for innovation, passion, inspiration, and yet in the subtle uses of language, the very thing that gives rise to these juicy energies is simultaneously marginalised. 'Be

innovative, passionate and inspired, but don't you dare bring your raw and tender heart into this boardroom, that simply is not professional'. Part of our work, individually and collectively, is to heal this split, for it is this split that allows so much corporate and professional activity to damage the very world it professes to serve. And healing this split, in each moment, is heroic and courageous and thus part of the work of the warrior of awakening.

So, I suggest that if we are to avoid the twin traps of denying problems or trying to fix them, then the dynamic middle way is to learn to rest as openly as we can with the truth of our experience as it arises, beyond our particular conceptual notions of how it is, or should be, or how we should make it. Somewhere in there is a natural connection to a heart response, the essence of our wise and compassionate minds, from whence all true and noble volitions may come.

### FINDING OUR WORK

The Bodhisattva is one who works in the world according to the inspiration of these deep heart volitions – in each moment, and over countless eons, according to his or her particular connections, skills, and inspirations. There is no limit to the ways in which we may work in the world for the benefit of others. There are no bonus points for being an activist rather than a politician, a doctor rather than a businessman. There are no boundaries to the ways in which we may serve. In my experience of working with people, I think that many people, maybe all people, have some sense of what for them a true volition for working for the benefit of others might be. I have seen small business advisors longing to follow a path making hand sewn silk knickers, sales advisors joyfully retraining as plumbers. I'm not sure how such shifts inform the wider questions of global challenges, but I do recognise heartfelt longing when I see it, and I do see how people change when they allow their work to follow that.

The psychologist James Hillman suggests that all of us have an implicit sense of what the work of our soul is about but may spend years denying, confusing or avoiding it. Of course soul is not an easy word for Buddhists but let's not unpick that here. What I want to suggest is that many of us do in fact experience some connection, maybe a hazy one, to a deeper heart sense of what our work in the world might be. And due to our incredible ability to confuse ourselves and complicate the simplicity of our experience, many of us spend years doing a damn good job of not responding to those deep volitions. Now I would like to consider some practical things that I have learnt working with people trying to find and manifest their work in the world. These are things that I have found helpful for noticing the ways that we do and do not follow the heart.

### MONEY

First, money has nothing to do with any of it! I have observed that for many people, hopes and fears about money, about having enough or not yet enough, constrain them from moving in a direction that feels meaningful. I have done some amazing work with a man called Peter Koenig. He has studied what he calls the phenomenology of money for 25 years. He points out that money is empty, a social

construction, it is nothing much at all, other than what we make it through our projections. But what we make it becomes immensely powerful. If money is to us security, value, whatever, then it can drive us as we search for these things. A Buddhist perspective can be helpful in helping people unpick and examine the ways we project our human hopes and fears onto money. As we liberate ourselves from those, the possibility of action becomes vaster.

## FEAR

This raises the general area of fear. I think fear of not having money limits many of us from choosing to do the work of the heart. The Bodhisattva is committed to overcoming fear, in oneself and in others. Noticing the many fears we have of following our deeper inspirations is powerful and helpful practice. I find in my own work that organisations, particularly large bureaucratic ones, are often fuelled by fear. Grown adults acting like frightened children who simply cannot and will not say what they believe in through fear. This is tragic. Overcoming fear in skilful ways, and helping others to do the same, can be important work for people in any type of organisation. The teaching of the wheel of life, and the idea of the six realms, the six core styles of confusion that beings can have, is illuminating here. I think that many organisations are within the realm of the Asuras, the Jealous Gods. The key style of confusion is a sort of frantic paranoia. The competition, aggressiveness, and paranoia of being attacked, having to hold one's ground, seem a good metaphor for many organisations. Being able to work open heartedly with the fear and paranoia that may arise for self and others when we try to work from the heart is important.

This leads onto one of the core teachings that Buddhists may consider in their work, the 8 worldly dharmas. These list 4 pairs of things that are inevitable to all of us in our lives, and which nevertheless we put huge effort into chasing and avoiding. These worldly concerns fuel our organisational and work related paranoia. The teaching says that we habitually:

*Avoid pain and seek out pleasure*

*Avoid ignominy and seek out fame*

*Avoid defeat and seek out victory*

*Avoid loss and seek out gain*

As a diagnostic tool for what goes on in most organisations, helping us to understand the paranoid games of the jealous gods, this is the best there is! People chasing victory, gain, fame and pleasure and avoiding at all costs the opposite. Once again I suggest there are clear links between our personal practice, the experience of organisational life and the wider societal impacts of work. We will always have victory and defeat; we will all have times of gain and loss. Could we just not get caught up in the game of trying to avoid some and chase others at work and in work? What energy or possibility of action might open up if we were less caught in fear and paranoia?

## COMMUNICATION

Next, I want to say something about speech, about communication in the work context. Many people I work with who hope to create change, begin with a strong distinction between action and communication. Somehow, initially at least, they see their response in terms of action, perhaps a new job, starting a project, doing something. But actually there is a wealth of literature in leadership and management that strongly suggests that speech, the act of communication is absolutely key to creating change in work, organisations and society. Indeed when we analyse modern work activities, we don't actually make things in the UK anymore, we find that actually what we are all doing most of the time is communication – meetings, emails, phone calls etc. So paying attention to how we communicate, and considering that a part of the work we do, is part of the Bodhisattva path. Indeed speech is a key aspect of Buddhist practice – one of the five precepts concerns speech – to speak truth in a way that is skilful and respectful. If we fixate too much on having to be 'a person with a project' we can ignore the reality of what we are actually doing moment by moment, and the natural field of possible action that presents itself to us. But more than this, I suggest that lack of open, honest courageous speech is one of the most powerful things that keeps organisations acting in ways that harm people and planet. Whatever our role, if we can find skilful ways of speaking truth, of naming or questioning what is actually going on in a situation – the damaging impacts of corporate activity on the wider world, the yearning of our collective hearts for something more inspiring, then we are taking powerful action. This doesn't mean just blurting out our own biased projections and causing trouble that way. But developing skilful speech, developing courage to speak truth to power, what the Greeks called *Parrhesia*, can be a major contribution of Buddhist ideas - seeing through the confusion of a situation and naming that with gentleness and compassion.

There are connections here between speech, meditation and the idea I mentioned earlier of responding from the place of open and tender heart as the basis for action. All of these can be considered essentially an act of communication between self and world. As we breathe in and out naturally there is always some communication going on, some exchange between what is deeply inside oneself going out into the world (the outbreath) and then something of the world entering intimately into oneself (the inbreath).

In my tradition, we talk about formless meditation, *shamatha vipassana*. The idea here is that the outbreath dissolves into space carrying our awareness with it, and we are left in a gap, a brief pause or rest in openness if you like, before the inbreath returns, from the world, all of its own accord, into us. So meditation is an act of letting the breath take our awareness into the limitless space of the world, or of experience, having a gap, where we are not clinging to our fixated notions of the world, and from there allowing the world of experience to enter into us. I am suggesting that this simple act of breathing, linked into meditation as we gradually train to open out ever more fully to the world, is in fact the basis for any activity, response or work that we might skilfully do – responding from our heart, opening to the communication coming from the world, beyond our stuck notions, concepts and assumptions. It is significant that when we find our true work in the world we call this a 'calling' or 'vocation', words that suggest an act of communication and responsiveness between self and world.

## DEVOTION

Finally I want to talk about the importance of devotion. This is a risky word in our material modernist era. It is wrapped up in concepts of blind faith, of dogma and religion. But faith and devotion are incredibly important; they are natural human dynamics – we are in fact doing them all the time, just often without noticing what we have faith in and show devotion to. People have great faith in the concept of economic growth for example, even though evidence is all around that it is flawed. People are devoted to the idea of progress, personal or cultural – the idea that we are working for some better future.

If we are to develop courage to act with true responsiveness, the courage to move towards our true work in the world, we absolutely need faith in something beyond our individual selves. This is of course a key idea in Buddhism. Faith, *Sraddha*, sometimes translated as ‘confidence’ or ‘conviction’ is needed to encourage us to go into the unknown. We are back again to the idea of letting go into space. All real discovery, all new action requires this sort of jumping off. We can be clever, we can intellectually understand new possibilities, but a new act, a genuine responsiveness to the world beyond our fixed ideas, requires some faith that entering that space of tender openness is the right thing. We trust the situation, the naturally wise and compassionate nature of the world. It doesn't mean that everything will always go well – in our limited sense of that phrase - but rather that we have a deep faith in some underlying compassionate quality in the universe, and in some innate natural wisdom in ourselves that is way beyond our ego-centric hopes and fears. This is incredibly important for everyone in this troubling day and age. Devotion relates to this idea. If we are to take action in response to the problems of the world, if we are to test out our courage to speak, act, rest with open hearted responsiveness, then we need to feel that it is not an individual act, not personal heroism or personal screw up. That doesn't make any sense at all from a Buddhist point of view. The Mahayana tells us that the universe is pervaded by living qualities of compassion and wisdom, that there are Buddhas in each and every atom in space – we can take this as literally or metaphorically as we like – but the point is that the universe is alive, inter-connected and imbued with living qualities of wisdom and compassion that are beyond our conceptual imagination. And we need to ask ourselves, what is our relation to this view? Really. When we think of the problems of the world, when we question the work we are doing, when we ponder a deeper response, what do we truly feel is supporting such questions, and whatever response we can offer? I would argue, and I think Buddhist teachings would say this, certainly the ones I have received in the Tibetan tradition, that as long as we think we are solitary practitioners, individual Bodhisattvas doing our best, without a lived sense of the vastness of our connectedness to the living wisdom and compassion of the universe, then we are doubly doomed. We are doomed because ego cannot go beyond ego, there is always a need for something to come from beyond ego – so our practice will be dry and stunted. But more than that, we are more likely to be doomed as a society too. The problems of our modern world can be seen as problems of modernist ways of thinking - and these emphasise a separated, individual, goal-oriented, materialistic relationship with a world divided clearly into living beings, and dead things.

Devotion is ultimately about trust in something profound and genuine in the fabric of the universe itself – wisdom, compassion, and teachings are all around us. This view sustains people who are trying to act for the benefit of others, and is in itself the very sort of view we need as a culture to move beyond a dry modernist worldview with its many problems and fixation on technical solutions. When we have this world-view, our work is an outbreath and an offering.

## CONCLUSION

So, to draw to a close. Work is a big deal for most of us – it needs looking at because of the personal and societal questions it raises, particularly in this strange day and age. And that when we try to connect our work with the immense challenges in global society we need to watch out for two traps – we need to stay open to the nature of suffering involved in work, in business and globalisation, not kidding ourselves that all is fine. But we also need to stay open enough to know that we don't know the answers, that we cannot improve things by using our work, even our work to save the world, as yet another ambitious, goal-oriented project that we subtly hope will give us the solid ground, security and personal credentials that we long for. That is just more of the same old stuff, far too seductive.

And where that leaves us is in a raw, tender, heart centred place, a place of great movement and of not knowing. Resting with confidence in that place, and allowing responses and actions to arise naturally is both act and path of the courageous Bodhisattva, the place where we might find our true work in conversation with the world, and also, a radical place when we consider how antithetical such a state is to modern work environments. In so far as we learn to rest in and act from that place, our actions are likely to be wiser, more compassionate and more genuinely responsive to what is needed – in both moment to moment situations, and across years and decades too. And in so far as we make that connection, and respond to some sense of calling – calling from the living world and from all beings perhaps, then we are also required to cut through our fantasies around money, hope and fear, victory and defeat and just act. And finally I suggested that acting may be the same as speaking truth kindly and that we could, indeed must, see all of this as an act of service and offering to the world that sustains our activity.

The tender raw heart, the place of true volition and action is both a place of joy and a place of sorrow, and we need to be able to rest with and respond from both to find and do our work. I'd like to end with two quotes, apparently opposite, that illustrate this point.

David Whyte, borrowing from another poet W H Auden asks us 'what hurts you into your work?' As we open up, maybe something in the world will touch our hearts, will prick us into responding. Our calling may come from that in the world which hurts us.

Another quote says, 'your work is where your joy meets the needs of the world'. I am not sure where this came from, I have seen it attributed to three different people on Google, so I will attribute it to the kind person who told it to me, David Ballard.



Just as the world may touch us, hurt us into our work, so we may also feel a deep sense of joy associated with a particular avenue, possibility or activity in the world. This is to be followed and trusted too. Ultimately the place where our joy and our hurt meet the needs of the world is the same place, the place of our natural awakened heart.

We all have that natural awakened heart fully present. It is there always. Perhaps our work is simply to trust that, gain confidence in that, and knowing that awakened heart will express itself in an endless myriad of forms, simply respond, respond simply, from there.

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## ESSENTIAL EDUCATION

*Alison Murdoch*

### WHAT IS ESSENTIAL EDUCATION?

Essential Education is a new international initiative that will contribute to living and loving through helping children, youth and adults to develop compassion and wisdom, and to live in a way that will bring peace and wellbeing to themselves and the people around them. This will be achieved through providing resources, training and connections that make the universal essence and methods of the Buddhist tradition available to people of all ages, cultures and traditions, in ways that are creative, accessible and contemporary.

The work of Essential Education is based on a three-part proposition:

1. That every human being, without exception, has the capacity for compassion and wisdom.
2. That this capacity can be consciously developed, from birth up until death.
3. That developing this capacity is the most stable and lasting way to create a more peaceful world.

Most Buddhists will be familiar with the concept that the most direct way to bring about positive change in the world is through addressing our own negative emotions and unsubsdued mind, and that this in turn takes place through investigating the nature of reality. In the twenty first century, where we are relentlessly conditioned to solve problems through ‘doing’ rather than ‘being’, this concept can be presented using the image of a mother on an aeroplane who puts on her own oxygen mask before putting an oxygen mask on her child.

It can also be explained through reference to recent catastrophes such as the flooding of New Orleans. While nobody will argue with the importance of relief work and rebuilding, if the local and national government had exercised their powers with greater clarity, efficiency and equanimity, it’s possible that the damage caused to the city would either have been far less severe, or would not have happened at all. In this context, the role of Essential Education is to design and disseminate the resources and training that can help people in power to develop the necessary clarity, efficiency and equanimity to avoid or mitigate such catastrophes in the first place.

### GO BEYOND BUDDHISM

*In Buddhism we have an incredible arrangement, universal education from beginning at birth up until death, as an old man. I feel these things could be put into a universal language. Give up religion, give up Buddhism. Go beyond the Buddhism. Put the essential aspect of the philosophy into scientific language. This is my aim.*  
– Lama Thubten Yeshe, 1983

The original vision for Essential Education (at that time labelled Universal Education) came from a Tibetan Buddhist teacher called Lama Thubten Yeshe. Lama Yeshe was also the founder of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), now a network of over 150 affiliated teaching and retreat centres, publishing houses, hospices and social projects worldwide.



The core of Lama Yeshe's vision poses a central dilemma: how do you go 'beyond Buddhism' without referring back to Buddhism? It's a bit like asking a meditator not to think about chocolate cake: the mind has a tendency to go immediately to the smell, taste, texture and attraction (or otherwise) of the best piece of chocolate cake that it can dream up.

One argument could be "well, what do you actually mean by Buddhism?" The word dharma for example has a much broader and more specific meaning – it's just a shame that it doesn't have a ready place or equivalent (as yet) in the English language. Unfortunately, whether or not we like it, for many people the term Buddhism will conjure up an exotic Eastern religion where monks in orange wander around barefoot and cultivate the other-worldly expression found on the kinds of statues beloved by interior decorators. In the case of Essential Education, this issue is resolved through seeing the organisation and its activities as a bridge between Buddhism and a range of educational resources and programmes that, while being clearly rooted in Buddhist philosophy and psychology, are committed to going completely beyond any specific affiliation or identity with a single tradition. This approach also enables the organisation to be clear about its roots, avoiding the perils of either a new age melting pot on the one hand, or accusations of stealth Buddhism or Buddhist elitism on the other.

The thousands of British people who have now adopted Buddhist principles and methods, often after years of careful examination and testing out, have in the main done so because they find them helpful for leading a happier and more meaningful life. If you're reading this article, you may well be among this group. Learning to sit cross-legged, grappling with the pronunciation of Pali, Sanskrit or Tibetan, and getting used to incense and bells generally comes as part of the territory. At a certain point, is it not time to find ways of offering the pith of these precious teachings to people for whom these customs represent an insurmountable barrier?

## RELATIONSHIP WITH RELIGION

*Figure it out: there are more than five billion of us on the planet. Three billion have no sort of religion. Of the two billion who call themselves religious, I would say that only a billion of the followers of this or that religion are sincere believers. One billion in five, that means a minority. Evidently we have to work today for the other four billion.*

– Taken from an interview with HH The Dalai Lama in Shambhala Sun, November 1995

HH The Dalai Lama, who is the Patron of Essential Education, repeatedly asserts that he does not see it as his priority to promote Buddhism, but to promote secular ethics. He puts a particular stress on doing this with young people, because they hold the future in their hands. He also recognises that in this era of intrinsic rather than extrinsic authority, it is vital that people are encouraged to think through their ethics for themselves.

Rightly or wrongly, the world's religions are often seen as causes of disharmony in the world, as if they were so many competing football teams. They are also associated with blind faith, which is completely at odds with the Essential Education vision. A religious image would make Essential Education unattractive

and inaccessible to many of the people it is most enthusiastic to reach, and will make it partisan and non-universal. This is why it is registered in the UK as an educational charity.

Although inter-faith relationships and developments are of great interest and relevance for the development of Essential Education, especially in identifying common ground and fellow travellers, they can also be a red herring. The subtle but important distinction is that Essential Education seeks to transcend religious boundaries rather than to explore or erode them.

#### RELATIONSHIP WITH SCIENCE

One of Lama Yeshe's aspirations for Universal/Essential Education was that it would help to bridge the gap between spirituality and science, embracing every aspect of what it means to be a human being. The Buddha himself said that his students need to scrutinise and check up on everything they read, hear or encounter, just as a goldsmith polishes gold. In the twenty-first century, the people who make a profession out of scrutiny are generally labelled scientists. As a result the general public is often more accepting of the research findings they encounter on TV and in the newspapers than of any faith-based teachings, even if the latter have credentials that go back over thousands of years.

The challenge for Essential Education will be to generate an equivalent degree of respect, through linking its work to contemporary scientific research and commissioning scientific evaluation of its work. Again, this is an approach that sits naturally with core Buddhist teachings. If they don't work, then don't use them! Both Buddhist philosophy and modern science share the methodologies of empirical observation, rigorous investigation and logical analysis, promoting personal inquiry rather than a dogmatic approach to knowledge.

In terms of content, initiatives such as the Sydney-based Happiness Conferences and the Mind & Life Institute have now been pioneering the common ground between science and spirituality for more than twenty years. Recent studies in neuroplasticity and quantum theory are shedding fresh light on explanations of emptiness developed 2000 years ago in the monasteries of India, and the work of Howard Gardner on multiple intelligences, or Dan Goleman on emotional intelligence – among many others – powerfully makes the case that education doesn't end with IQ.

Martin Seligman and the positive psychology movement share our message that happiness and wellbeing are vital for flourishing, and scientists and psychologists worldwide are energetically researching the quantitative benefits of qualities like kindness, generosity and forgiveness. Projects such as Karen Armstrong's Charter for Compassion focus on what religious traditions have in common, rather than on what divides them, and Interdependence is a rallying cry of the environmental movement.

#### THE ESSENTIAL EDUCATION CORE CURRICULUM

One of the dangers in developing Essential Education is that the rigour and profundity that distinguishes Buddhism philosophy and psychology could get diluted, creating a 'one size fits all' watered-down system of general goodwill.

To avoid this, a framework called the Essential Education Core Curriculum is under development, inspired by Lama Yeshe's instruction to incorporate the whole of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy and psychology into children's – and adult - education. The Core Curriculum comprises two sections, "Exploring Reality" and "Practicing Compassion."

#### Section 1: Exploring Reality

- What is real?
- What is the nature of the universe?
- How are things connected and why do things happen?
- Does everything change?
- What are the things that we know?
- How do we know things?
- What is my potential?
- Who am I?
- What ascertains reality?

#### Section 2: Practicing Compassion

- How can we recognize states of mind?
- How can we behave in an ethical way?
- How can we develop positive relationships?
- How can we create a happy and peaceful society?
- How can we care for the environment?
- How can we develop peace of mind?
- How can we sharpen our intellect?

This list of topics was first generated in 2006, working with three Tibetan Buddhist Geshes - teachers who have each completed a traditional 18-year monastic training in India. Since then, a team of scholars and teachers have been fleshing out each topic in exploratory essays, basing their work on texts and commentaries from Indian authors such as Nagarjuna, Shantideva, Dignaga, Dharmakirti, and the work of HH The Dalai Lama. Essential Education is now seeking funding to edit and publish these essays online and in book form.

An additional essay, to be completed during 2010, will present the objectives, principles and methodologies of Essential Education. Whereas most modern theories of learning focus on reproductive and reflective learning, our goal is to promote a deeper form of transformative learning, which results in choiceless changes in attitude and behaviour. This third level of learning is achieved through the three stages of listening, reflecting and meditating. In the secular language of Essential Education, we present these as a process of encountering, examining and experiencing.

Essential Education trainers and facilitators are now beginning to create pilot workshops based on and around these two sets of topics, supplementing the Buddhist-based content with complementary material from the natural and social sciences, and from other spiritual and wisdom traditions. A pilot course was offered in Bristol in 2009. The potential for developing resources and training based on the Core Curriculum is vast.

### THE ROLE OF MINDFULNESS

For most of us, it's a breakthrough moment when we realise that it's no longer necessary to remain a victim of the unsubdued mind, and that we can actually learn to observe, tame and re-direct our mental consciousness in the manner of our choosing. It seems tragic that so many people are never introduced to this fundamental and life-changing skill.

For this reason, it's vital that all Essential Education programmes introduce and are infused with the practice of mindfulness. Whether this is introduced as a means of slowing down and finding calm, of making space for enquiry, or of developing focusing and attention skills, it can still be done in as pure a way as possible, by facilitators and trainers who continue to develop their own practice of mindfulness based on traditional teachings and techniques.

As mindfulness practice becomes fashionable and well-known, and re-directed into new areas such as healthcare or corporate efficiency, there is a danger that it will get divorced from its ethical and philosophical context. As many Buddhist teachers have pointed out, it's not enough to simply create more mindful burglars. Perhaps Essential Education will be able to play a role in ensuring that mindfulness practice remains connected to its ethical roots.

### ETHICS THROUGH UNDERSTANDING – THE 16 GUIDELINES FOR LIFE

*Inspiring tools and values that can immediately be applied to make a difference in my life.*

– 16 Guidelines workshop participant, Malaysia

The 16 Guidelines for Life are the first initiative of Essential Education. They are a set of practical, straightforward tools for developing happiness and meaning in everyday life, inspired by a 7th-century Tibetan text written by King Songtsen Gampo as a set of principles for creating a peaceful and harmonious society.

The guidelines address the four topics of how we think, how we act, how we relate to others and how we find meaning in life via easy-to-memorize key words, such as “humility,” “generosity,” and “courage.” The approach is one of exploration rather than moral rectitude, encouraging the reader or workshop participant to take a long look at the shadow side of each guideline, and be gently honest with themselves about the painful gap between aspiration and reality.

Each of the four topics is underpinned by a wisdom theme:

- the power and potential of the mind
- the fact that everything we do will have an effect of some kind
- we are all interconnected
- everything is changing

The flip sides of the four wisdom themes are the four myths:

- I can't! It's impossible!
- Nothing I do will make a difference
- Look after No.1
- Nothing ever changes round here.

These are the myths that underpin much of contemporary literature and art, the TV and magazine adverts and billboards that accost us, and that drive many of our daily routines. It's unfortunate that most of us find it easier to relate to the myths than to their wisdom-based alternatives.

A range of resources, including books and playing cards, has been developed to allow people of all ages to explore the Guidelines and use them in their daily lives. The essential "user manual" is 16 Guidelines: The Basics, now published in English and Spanish, with French, German and Italian publications planned by the end of 2010. A resource pack for children, Ready Set Happy, is available online, and a youth magazine and DVD are under development.

*The guidelines stimulated lots of discussion in our family - particularly during the drive home. That time is often quite stressful as we are all hungry and tired, so it was a nice change. The other remarkable thing was that it taught me that my child can process much more complex ideas and language than I give him credit for. This has encouraged me to discuss more complex thoughts and feelings with him.*

– Parent of a 3 year-old who has been introduced to the 16 Guidelines in school, Canada

Since their launch in 2008, more than 400 people have attended 16 Guidelines training courses in 15 different countries, and the guidelines are now being used in homes, schools, hospices, drug rehabilitation centres, prisons and workplaces across five continents.

*I definitely have strategies to apply to some problem students I have, where I'd been just baffled as to how to deal with them before.*

– University staff member, London

In the UK, the two-day 16 Guidelines Introductory Course has been offered in London, Brighton, Leeds and Oxford, with further courses planned for Belfast, Liverpool and Macclesfield during 2010. They offer a concise first encounter with our methods and content, from which people have gone on to become members of the Essential Education faculty or to develop programmes in the community, such as at Ellis Guilford School in Nottingham, and at Oxford and Cherwell Valley College. This summer, a youth-led programme called Music to Live By will tour 10 cities around the UK, taking the hip hop group Foreign Beggars into youth clubs showing young people how to create 'right rap' based on the 16 Guidelines.

## CREATING COMPASSIONATE CULTURES

Creating Compassionate Cultures is an Essential Education associate programme, which shares our Buddhist philosophical and psychological roots, and has been developed over a period of nearly twenty years by Californian educator Pam Cayton. It centres around a methodology called the Seven Steps to Knowledge, Strength and Compassion which leads children from the initial step of asking "what do I

want?" into an exploration of concepts such as interdependence, cause and effect, and the importance of compassion.

A sample curriculum, available from the website [www.compassionatecultures.org](http://www.compassionatecultures.org), demonstrates a step-by-step approach to presenting and integrating these ideas throughout the school year. In 2010 Pam will be conducting her second European training tour, aimed at teachers and parents. Participants who have completed either the two-day training or the four-day Foundation Training will then be eligible to sign up for an online programme scheduled to commence later this year, which will include readings, discussions, exercises, study questions, web links, reflections, video & audio presentations and live chats.

#### TRANSFORMATIVE MINDFULNESS

Transformative Mindfulness is another Essential Education associate programme, consisting of a series of self-help receptive visualizations that are being used in health care, medical services, social services and education. These are techniques that can be used by anyone, without any prior knowledge of meditation, and which access the mind's potential to strengthen well-being and change the underlying causes of stress, pain, anxiety and reactions to uncomfortable situations or illness.

Clinical trials of Transformative Mindfulness by oncologists at the University of Florence in 2009-10 are showing some very positive results. Current applications include a drug rehabilitation retreat centre for youth by youth; online education programmes; and the development of a Masters degree in Mindfulness and Transformative Mindfulness. [www.lamponthepath.org](http://www.lamponthepath.org)

#### LOVING KINDNESS PEACEFUL YOUTH

Loving Kindness Peaceful Youth (LKPY) was set up in response to the Columbine School Massacre in 1999, with the aim of helping young people take a positive approach to life, nurturing peace within themselves and their communities. The philosophical underpinnings are simple but profound: to get peaceful youth, first show and teach them loving kindness.

Five young people in Australia began developing LKPY in 2004, and although it works closely with Essential Education, the organisation continues to be run by youth for youth. The main projects are an international network of meetings in cafes, called Habit, and Be Kind Day on 31 March each year. [www.lkpy.org](http://www.lkpy.org)

#### THE POTENTIAL PROGRAMME

Based in Copenhagen, The Potential Project works with the employees and managers of major corporations. In addition to corporate-based mindfulness training, it has developed a programme called The Three Potentials, which reworks the Tibetan Lam Rim teaching of the Three Principal Aspects of the Path (renunciation, bodhicitta and right view) into a framework for developing a clear and focused mind; the ability to see positive potentials in everything; and kindness and constructive relations with others.

The Potential Project was founded by Rasmus Hougaard. Its work is based on a synthesis of Western scientific research in neurology, positive psychology and organisational studies with Eastern psychology, philosophy and methods. [www.potential-project.com](http://www.potential-project.com)

#### PRACTICAL NEXT STEPS

Based in London, the Essential Education office now has a fulltime staff team of two people, who are working with over 100 volunteers worldwide to develop resources, training and connections for people who want to help take this work forward. From an organisational point of view, our aim is to create a dynamic and sustainable organisation which tackles the root of problems in the world through supporting a diverse global network of educational initiatives and community projects.

*I am convinced that, by attending the sessions, the children were given clear and precise tools for promoting positive changes in their attitudes... All of them were delighted and made requests for more sessions.*

*Their positive energy and optimism was contagious!*

– Silvia Alcantara, Principal of Julia Ambrose School, Cozumel, Mexico, which hosted a 16 Guidelines workshop in December 2008

Since its establishment in 2005, Essential Education has focused mainly on developing the Core Curriculum and the 16 Guidelines for Life. Training courses have been offered in 15 different countries, and an international faculty of trainers is beginning to come together. The connections that it offers include two websites, a wiki, a new intranet site for sharing good practice and work in development, and a range of conferences and gatherings.

Community projects are now underway in five different continents, ranging from work with young people suffering from addiction to children's groups, Montessori programmes, and use by staff and volunteers in hospitals, hospices and prisons. While the projects themselves are completely secular, in many cases they are initiated when someone inside the organisation has a connection with Buddhism, and can see the value of this work.

*I was not sure how the prisoners would react to being involved in discussions on subjects such as kindness, humility etc. I knew for some it would be no problem at all but for others it would be very challenging to 'open up' in front of their peers. The reaction was much better than I expected and the discussions proved to be very helpful and popular.*

– Prison Chaplain, Australia

The next step will be to create some formal programmes. In the UK, we are keen to create curriculum and accompanying resources that can be used within the mainstream educational system, fitting within the National Curriculum, as well as programmes for NEETS (young people not in education, employment or training). We're also seeking funding for a pilot programme in partnership with the South London charity Flipside, which works with disadvantaged young people who have either been caught up in the criminal justice system, or who are in danger of doing so. Flipside Director Jean Carpenter feels that for the young people they work with, the ethical insights and framework offered by the 16 Guidelines could prove more helpful than any other kind of intervention.



The scope and success of Essential Education depends entirely on connecting with the people who will take it forward at the grassroots, combining their understanding of Buddhist philosophy and psychology with their skill and experience as teachers, trainers or facilitators. All too often, students of Buddhism live a compartmentalised existence, developing one set of skills and insights in their private life, and then having to work to completely different principles and targets in their working life. Essential Education offers a rare opportunity to bring these two sets of principles and insights together, at a time when the world urgently needs a more holistic approach.

If our work is of any interest to you, please sign up to our mailing list on [www.essential-education.org](http://www.essential-education.org) for regular updates and information about how to help or get involved. You are also welcome to contact us on [info@essential-education.org](mailto:info@essential-education.org). If you feel you have something to offer, please don't hesitate to get in touch. At the very least, please pray that this work will be successful in contributing to peace in the world. Thank you.

*May Essential Education spread all over the world –  
especially in countries where there is violence.*

*May it open our hearts, so that all beings become  
vessels of universal compassion and wisdom.*

*May we all become living antidotes to war, torture and sickness,  
and to all physical and mental problems.*

*Through the education of the good heart  
may all beings practice kindness, forgiveness, patience, humility and delight.*

– Essential Education Prayer, composed by Lama Zopa, Switzerland, 2005

*Alison Murdoch is the Director of Essential Education*



## LIVING AND LOVING AS PART OF THE WHOLE: AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

*Peter Reason*

### SACRED NAME AND SHOOTING STAR

Some years ago now I was a member of the Dream weavers Lodge, a group of people working with Native American medicine wheel teachings. (To what extent these were genuine teachings, and to what extent a white European can engage is them, is an important question I will sidestep for this talk.) This was a ceremonial path: we engaged in a series of personal ceremonies, starting with the Night on the Mountain, a 24 hour vision quest which I completed memorably on Ramsey Island off the coast of Wales; and proceeding through a variety of challenges to the Sacred Name ceremony which I will talk about in a moment. We also worked ceremonies as a group, including healing circles, sweat lodges and an annual Rainbow Dance. It was an intense and embodied practice. The Sacred Name ceremony came at the end of the first cycle of personal ceremonies. The idea was that by this time one would have discovered one's core gifts and qualities, one's 'sacred essence' maybe, and would be finding a Name to represent it. This name is not to be used in everyday, being between oneself and Great Spirit, but would be used to draw power in ceremony. The purpose of the ceremony was to confirm and bestow this Name.

So, as I was instructed, I collected all the paraphernalia — crystals and icons representing my allies and teachers in the directions of the Medicine Wheel. And I had a good sense of what my sacred name might be, although it had not fully firmed up. I took these, along with my Wolfheart staff, up to the summit of a substantial hill in mid-Wales in the middle of the night, set out them out in a Medicine Wheel and settled down in the middle with my prayers.

The first stage of the ceremony was to go round the circle and call the Name in the different directions of the Wheel and listen for a response. If and when this response was positive—that there was an experience of a reply—the second stage was to conjure a sign from the Universe—in my case I was told to conjure a shooting star. Conjuring involved a formula of words, which I learned by heart, that would build power and call the star, but you may imagine that I was also a bit sceptical. I went into this very full-heartedly, but really quite wonderingly.

My first attempt at going round the circle and calling my Name produced no result of any kind at all. There was a dull silence at all levels. So I returned crestfallen to the centre of my Medicine Wheel, and I think I went to sleep for a bit because I dreamed a new version of the name. And the second time I called my name in the eight directions, it had an altogether different feel, as if something was stirring.

I went back to the centre, took my staff, chanted the conjuring, built a spiral of power, called out my Name and, as I was instructed, pulled my staff across the sky from East to West. And then I lay back to see what happened. Still by no means convinced by all this.

And just as my head touched the ground a bright star streaked across the sky above me from East to West. I was wide awake, fully present. This was a real star that I experience as incontrovertibly responded to my call. I was blown away, to put it mildly and after collecting my allies and teachers went back down to rejoin the Lodge in a most extraordinary state. To this day my hair stands on end when I tell this story.

Now when I first had this experience I thought it was a private story; that it was between me and the cosmos; that I might seem to be boasting about my spiritual or shamanic capacities. But increasingly I have regarded this experience as a teaching that I should share with others.

For this is an extraordinary thing to experience, which cuts through everything we take for granted about the nature of the world. How could this happen? How utterly extraordinary! What does this mean for the nature of this world we inhabit?

And it raises for me all kinds of questions about the nature of our participation in the planet and in the universe that I would like to explore with you.

#### THE QUESTION: LIVING AS PART OF THE WHOLE

It seems to me that we are going to hell in a handcart, so to speak. I am not going to rehearse what is happening to our planet. I confess I fear the worst. And I believe fundamentally, to quote David Orr, that “The disordering of ecological systems and of the great biogeochemical cycles of the earth reflects a prior disorder in the thought, perception, imagination, intellectual priorities, and loyalties inherent in the industrial mind. Ultimately, then, the ecological crisis concerns how we think and the institutions that purport to shape and refine the capacity to think.” (Orr, 1994:2)

My own take on this is that at some very profound level we in the West experience ourselves as outsiders to the planet: apart from, rather than a part of. Bruno Latour writes of “two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of humans on the one hand; that of non-humans on the other” (Latour, 1993:10-11) Even if we no longer consciously believe that we were placed on earth by a creator god in his image (sic), my sense is that underlying our perceptions of and thinking about our place is informed by this sense of separateness which has long been a part of the Western worldview but was intensified by a shift in worldview which started some 300–400 years ago.

Thomas Berry, Christian priest and geologist, one of the great ecological thinkers of our time, traces the rupture back to the period of the Black Death in Europe, a traumatic period in which trust in the natural world was shattered. Wikipedia tells us that it killed 30%-60% of the population, for no reason that was comprehensible at that time. The consequence, Berry argues, was development in two directions. On the one hand, there was an increased religious emphasis on redemption out of this tragic world: we were all born in sin in a fallen world. What was neglected was the other side of the Christian teaching concerning: the “revelatory import” of the natural world as demonstrating and revealing god’s divine presence (Berry, 1988:125-126)-- what Matthew Fox calls Original Blessing (Fox, 1983b). This revelatory perspective can

be found, for example, in Meister Eckhart's statement that "every creature (is) of a word of god and a book about god" (Fox, 1983a). An emphasis on redemptive spirituality, out of this world, so to speak contributes to a view that life on earth is important.

This made possible a second development, which increased emphasis on control and exploitation of the natural world, since this was no longer seen primarily as part of a divine presence. Bacon established the link between knowledge and power, and told us to study nature empirically, that we must put nature on the rack and wrest her secrets from her. Galileo told us that nature was open to our gaze if we understood it, and was written in the language of mathematics. Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* made a radical separation between human and other modes of being; and Newton formulated an extraordinarily powerful view essentially of the universe as a determinate machine obeying causal laws (See Skolimowski, 1994; Toulmin, 1990). And despite quantum mechanics, string theory and complexity theory, this remains the underpinning sense of reality of our Western world. I think this is the underlying sense of reality of nearly all of us, despite our Buddhism, or shamanism. For as our first speaker pointed out, Buddhism in the West has linked into our psychology rather than into our ecology.

Let me tell you another little story to illustrate how strongly we are programmed with this idea that we are outsiders. I must have been somewhere between five and seven, and I remember, as my mother prepared my bath and I took my clothes off, asking her what my belly button was for. I distinctly remember the steam arising from that old green post-war utilitarian bathtub as she explained to me. "When god has finished making babies, he puts them up on a shelf ready to be born, and he goes along the line and makes sure that they are all finished, saying 'you're done, and you're done...' poking you in the tummy and making your belly button." Clearly at some level, I believed her.

This worldview channels our thinking in two important ways. It tells us the world is made of separate things. These objects of nature are composed of inert matter, operating according to causal laws. They have no subjectivity or intelligence, no intrinsic purpose or meaning. And it tells us that mind and physical reality are separate. Humans alone have the capacity for rational thought and action and for understanding and giving meaning to the world. This split between humanity and nature, and the arrogation of all mind to humans, is what Weber meant by the disenchantment of the world. Thomas Berry again:

Consistently we have difficulty in accepting the human as an integral part of the earth community.

We see ourselves as a transcendent mode of being. We don't really belong here. But if we are here by some strange destiny we are the source of all rights and all values" (Berry, 1999:104)

But we also know this is not true. We know that we humans are born of the earth (indeed of the cosmos) and evolved as part of her development. As Alan Watts put it so beautifully, "We do not 'come into' this world; we come out of it, as leaves from a tree. As the ocean 'waves' so the universe 'peoples'" (Watts, 1989:9) (and of course also tigers and trees and beetles, and mountains). Living as part of the whole starts from the essential insight that we are already participants: we are part of the cosmos, always in relation

with each other and the more than human world, glorious yet temporary centres of awareness and action in an interconnected whole. In a sense this is close to the idea that we are already Buddhas, yet somehow we have forgotten this.

And Thomas Berry suggests we are not so much separate beings on the earth as a dimension of the earth (Berry, 1999).

So what to do about the ecological crisis? It can be helpful to distinguish between light green and dark green responses to the sustainability challenge. Light green environmentalism is based in the belief that sustainable innovation is the path to lasting prosperity; that we must harness human inventiveness and adaptability to the challenge. Dark green perspectives argue that somehow we need to make a very different turn, to change our minds about how we are and what the earth is about. It is the approach of deep ecology, bioregionalism, ecofeminism (Steffen, 2009). The question that seems to me to be of some urgency, and that parallels the important practical work of reducing our footprint on the planet, is how we might create an in-depth, everyday and almost taken-for-granted experience of ourselves as participants, part-of rather than apart-from Gaia and the community of beings on the planet. As Charles Taylor points out in his book *A Secular Age* (2007), in the Middle Ages there was an 'immediate certainty' about the existence of god, that the natural world testified to divine purpose and action, that god was essential for the very existence of society and so on. God was simply part of lived understanding. I wonder if we could make our experience of ourselves as participants in a living, self-regulating planet, or Gaia, if you prefer, taken for granted in the same kind of way? To supplement the inventiveness of bright green with a deeper realization of dark green?

Several years ago, I had the privilege of visiting Thomas Berry at his home in South Carolina. The first thing he did was take me out for a beer, and then very kindly put me up in a local Howard Johnson hotel. In the morning, I waited for him to join me for breakfast, sitting on the little low wall outside the hotel reception in the autumn sunshine. He parked his car, walked over to me, sat on the wall next to me and immediately launched into an explanation of the nature of the cosmos and the beings that are a part of it. He explained, against the sweet background of this Southern fall, that the universe itself and every being in the universe has both psychic/spiritual and physical/material dimensions, an intangible inner form as well as well as a tangible physical structure, and that these two aspects must always go together and be understood together. He also told me that the universe is the primary reality and since "the universe brings us into being with all our knowledge and cultural achievements, then the universe must be an intellect-producing, aesthetic producing, and intimacy producing process" (Berry, 1999:81).

Thus for him (and for many others) the devastation of the earth is the consequence of this deep cultural pathology which separates these two dimensions, seeing the universe and thus the earth as purely material. We need to move from a human-centred to an earth-centred norm of reality and value, and that is the only way we can be truly human and play our proper part in life on earth. Since we have evolved with and

out of the universe, the universe itself has an intelligent, self-creating, intimate dimension. As Jorge Ferrer, who has articulated a participatory spirituality, puts it, the human -

arises in the evolution of the cosmos, is an expression of the being of the cosmos, is the cosmos rendered self-aware, the perspectives we bring enable us to directly participate in the self-disclosure of the world (Ferrer, 2002)

If you like, we are a part of the cosmos capable of reflecting on itself and coming to know itself.

So I sat on the wall next to him and tried to absorb what at that time was an extraordinary account of reality: the universe is a “community of subjects, not a collection of objects.” And if the destruction of life on earth is the outcome of “the radical discontinuity established between the human and the non human, then the renewal of life on the planet by be based on the continuity between human and other than human in a single integral community” (Berry, 1999:80).

I have been taking this exploration a little further and trying to get into a Taoist perspective on the natural world. I thought it would help to step outside a Western perspective on ecology. What struck me most as I began to read Chinese perspectives (and I make no claim at all to be an expert) is the experience of a continuity of being and some would say the absence of any creation myths: the universe is not seen as created *ex nihilo* according to a creator’s plan, but as a “spontaneously self generating life process” (Weiming, 1998:106). As Roger Ames and David Hall put it, it is an-archic, without founding principles or arche outside of its own process of becoming (Ames & Hall, 2003). What would it be like to be brought up like that, rather than with god’s poke in the belly?

Let me try to struggle with you publicly with some of these ideas. On the one hand we have the Western perspective that places an emphasis on a world of distinct objects which are fundamentally inert (no subjectivity) but operate according to external laws; in contrast the Daoist perspective celebrates the insistent particularity of items comprising together the totality: “particular ‘things’ that are always in process are in fact processual events, and are thus intrinsically related to all other events” (Hall, 1989). We can contrast the rational concept of order of the West—in which order realizes a presupposed pattern or structure in which individual parts are replaceable; with the Daoist view of an aesthetic order that is composed of irreplaceable elements, an order arising from their intense particularity and their interaction. The particular form that arises is a ‘regularity and cadence achieved by nature... the harmony consequent upon the collaboration of intrinsically related particulars as perceived from some particular perspective (Ames, 1989).

Roger Ames has written of the need to put the ‘Te back into Taoism (1989). The Dao can be seen as Becoming-itself, the field of potentiality not in the sense of a single ordered cosmos, but as containing all possibilities. De can be seen as the ‘particular focus or intrinsic excellence of a thing’. Dao is the field or conditions for a particular De. Of the ten thousand things chapter 51 of the Dao De Ching says

*Dao engenders them*

*And De nourishes and rears them.*

*Things give them shape*

*And conditions bring them to completion.*

*Thus, all the myriad things revere Dao and honour De.*

*Why Dao is revered and De honoured*

*Is because they are constantly “self-so-ing”*

*And not because of anyone’s mandate.*

The order of things as seen from Daoism is not a rational order based on a divine plan or on scientific laws of nature, a ‘preassigned pattern of relatedness’. Rather it is an aesthetic order arising from the self-organization of particular elements. An aesthetic order is in no way predetermined but arises from the uniqueness and spontaneity of particulars in collaboration in an emergent complex pattern.

Let us have another look at this issue of rationality. Hall (1989) points out that there is, within western philosophy, a range of critiques of rationality: Critical thinkers point out that so-called rationality is actually primarily in the service of domination and control; postmodernists that rationality is self referentially inconsistent; feminists that much rational argument is defined in terms of the white European male and thus serves a limited view of the human. Rationality, while claiming to be objective, is widely criticised as supporting means-based and exploitative thinking and the interests of particular groups.

Hall takes this further. Remember that in the Daoist view order is necessarily seen from a perspective, his argument is that recourse to principles of rationality will necessarily be anthropocentric, and in the service of narrow human needs, because it is informed and constrained by the very categories—physical, logical, linguistic and conceptual—which define the human species and through which we articulate our world, our needs and our interests. Rational order presumes a single world vision, and that vision must necessarily be cast in human terms.

“...the attempt to be reasonable is ipso facto an attempt to establish the dominance of the human of the natural order” (Hall, 1989:105)

To give an example, the very notion of ‘the environment’ is a rational human construct that has become part of common discourse in response to the perceived planetary tragedy. But as Maurice Ash pointed out long ago (1992), the idea of ‘the environment’ first of all defines the more than human world in terms of its separateness from the human; places the human at the centre; defines it in terms of human needs, as the human environment. We seek to ‘save our planet’ when we actually seek to save ourselves and our current way of being. And when someone, such as James Lovelock, speaks from a wider Gaian perspective, we think he has gone a bit too far—either mad or bad, or maybe both. We continually place ourselves first. It is not that there is not a ‘real world’ for the Daoist; it is simply that the real world is not a world of objects: the things of the world are ‘empty’ as Buddhists say.

So we need to develop a way of making sense of our world that does not assume a single world vision: to follow Blake “May God us keep from Single Vision and Newtons sleep”. Hall turns to a Daoist perspective to begin to articulate an aesthetic order in which the ordering arises from the intense particularity of the parts and their particular qualities of interaction rather than from laws or patterns that are external.

Such a perspective is characterized by

- a) A cosmological theory or natural parity, that denies ontological privilege to any perspective: divine, human, material, ideal. This in particular excludes anthropocentrism, and ways of understanding and action based solely on human experience; a way of describing actions which is not based on rationality and end-means. Tim addressed this in interesting ways yesterday.
- b) A language which is non-referential; denotative reference is avoided; doesn't create an inventory of objects as separate entities. It is a language of deference. (See Hall, 1989:106).

While referential language characterizes an event or object through naming the individual or the class, deferential language yields to the particular perspective of those things we seek to appreciate. It is thus paved with metaphor, an allusive language which “celebrates a processive, transitory world of myriad transformations that cannot, or should not, be fixed”. The Daoist uses language in such a way as “to give way to” that which is met, seeks not to pin them down through naming but draws on vagueness and allusive metaphor to engage the world in its transitoriness and particularity. There are no Beings behind the beings of the world, only these particulars. (Hall, 2001)

Jonathan Bate (Bate, 2000) argues that Keats does just this in his poem Autumn:

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;  
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
 Until they think warm days will never cease,  
 For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.*

He describes this as “a meditation on how human culture can only function through links and reciprocal relations with nature”; as “a poem of networks, links, bonds, and correspondences...”

Mist and fruitfulness, bosom-friend and sun, load and bless, are not ‘naturally’ linked ... But Keats makes the links seem natural: the progression of one thing to another is anything but violent or surprising. The

effect of this naturalization within the poem is to create contiguity between all its elements... The world of the poem thus comes to resemble a well regulated ecosystem... biodiversity is a key to survival”(Bate, 2000-107)

Bate argues that there is there is no transcendent yearning as in Keats earlier poems, no “I”, no split between mind and substance, the poem embraces immanence and the self is dissolved into the ecosystem. So “the poem itself is an image of ecological wholeness which may grant the reader a sense of being-at-home-in-the-world” (2000:109)

So what can we take from this to help build an experience of humans as “living as part of the whole”?

- a) Take seriously the idea that our western perspective, arising as it does from ideas of divine creation, or one order expressed in scientific laws, is necessarily anthropocentric. That rationality is necessarily couched in terms that define the human condition. We cannot think our way out of the mess we have created.
- b) As a counterpoint to this learn to develop an attention for the intense particularity of ‘things’; to experience their event-ful-ness; their interconnectedness; and relation to the whole. In Daoist terms appreciate how the excellence of De arises from and returns to the field of Dao.
- c) Recognize the distancing consequences of our denotative language, how it creates a world of separate objects, and cultivate an aesthetic language of deference

In practical terms, I suggest this might include disciplines along the following lines:

1. Quieting the mind and developing tranquillity through meditation... as a means of quieting the categorizing mind.
2. Attending to all the senses and noticing how they shift and change.
3. Approaching the beings of the world with reverence, requesting permission to enter their space and engage. This is a practice we learned from Henryk Skolimowski, and is a means of acknowledging the internality, self creativity of all beings. (Skolimowski, 1994)
4. In depth detained observation of the particular in the manner of Goethian science(Bortoft, 1986); drawing, photographing, spontaneous writing.
5. Placing the particular in the context of a perceived and/or imaginative whole as Harding suggests in his meditations on Gaia. (Harding, 2006)
6. Beholding with awe.
7. Listening (with all ears) for a response.
8. Attending to synchronicities.
9. Staying with what emerges rather than hastening on.
10. Noticing impulses in the body and following them.
11. Ritual and ceremony: from bowing, prostration to vision quest and beyond.
12. Imitation and/or response through stance, gesture, vocal expression.
13. Hunting, gathering, eating.



Finally then, from Wendell Berry:

When despair grows in me and I wake in the middle of the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be, I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds. I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water. And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting for their light. For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.  
(Wendell Berry, 1998:30)

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## CLOSING REMARKS

*Hilary Richards*

Thank you, for giving me this impossible task. When I was asked to take this on, I queried what it was I was required to do. I was told – draw the threads of the balloons together. Well, I think some of the balloons have taken off, some have popped, a lot of threads are dangling, which we will have to take home to work out where they are going to go and what we are going to do with them. I have made copious notes over the last couple of days and I have tried to catch what I have felt to be the essence of the superb presentations we have had. We have learned a lot about living and loving and about death and dying.

Eddy talked about solitude, intimacy and relationship – a continual nurturing and encouragement which involves compassion. He told us that beyond the struggles of encountering solitude and intimacy lies the natural self, a self that can be intimate with everything. In our practices we are learning about that self and learning to be that self. We can do that in all sorts of ways, but Eddy talked about the struggle and hard work of long term relationships. He said “The outcome is to truly find yourself and also the other person.” He said “You discover the origin of love which is the same as the origin of being.” This is extraordinarily profound.

We went on to hear Tim who talked about how to take this insight, this ideal, this privacy or this private concern out into the world and to connect with others. He talked about the idea of the Bodhisattva path. We need to learn what that means and we need to practice that. Chögyam Trungpa talked about resting or being in a tender, raw place, which is the start of the Bodhisattva path. Learn to trust this and to respond from there. Not easy, none of this is easy. No quick fixes.

Alison, in a remarkable presentation, talked about taking this out in to the world, without necessarily mentioning Buddhism. Allowing people, allowing children, allowing diverse groups of often underprivileged people to develop this innate capacity to be kind and to be wise. She told us about the sixteen fold path which came from four points; the power of the mind, the wisdom of the mind, interdependence of all things and impermanence. This is fundamental Buddhist teaching.

This conference was inspired by lots of things but, in some ways, it was inspired by John Crook's book and his thoughts about Tinbergen's doubts back in the 1960s at Cambridge University. This was the same time as 'Future Shock' and 'Small is Beautiful' were written, it was from that era. How do we find a new type of citizen? John recorded his talk on this huge subject – how do we find a way out of the decadence which we have fallen in to? He suggests we make a start through interfaith, through ethics, values, finding a safe home and through the feminine. We need to do what we feel we can to contribute best, recognising our fear and anxiety and finding ways to involve and enable others. Our powerlessness may not be problem but the solution. This still small voice- it seems powerless but, as Jin Ho indicated this afternoon, it holds enormous power, if only we can recognise it and allow it.



The last quote Peter gave was from a poem

*For a time*

*I rest in the grace of the world*

*and am free.*

His talk was to do with apples, participation, poetry and something like awe. We need to embody this as Jin Ho showed us this afternoon, in our state of being' in our gaze, in our holding and in and our hugging or embracing. If we want to we can involve Kuan Yin, the Buddha, God, Allah, the Dao - the list is huge. So, a very big thank you to all our speakers and to our organisers. Bristol Chan Group has pulled off an incredible feat from their powerlessness due to the circumstances they are encountering at the moment. It has been a remarkable event, which has moved all of us, shifted us and empowered us. John would be proud of the Bristol Chan Group and the Western Chan Fellowship, it is a pity he has not been able to be with us this weekend.

Special thanks to: Sarah Bird, Pat Simmons, Sally and Mike Masheder John Chettoe, Jon Langton, Alysun Jones, Damien Phillips, Erica Handoll and all of the Bristol Chan Group. Finally, Sally has written some words about kindness which are printed for you to take home. If you take this paper home you can contemplate it yourself, you can contemplate it with your family and friends, your local groups and sangha. It raises profound questions, which are difficult and lifelong.

## HOW CAN WE CULTIVATE KINDNESS?

*Sally Masheder*

The teaching of the Buddha tells us that as we follow his path and carry out the practices, wisdom (understanding) and compassion (kindness) co-arise in our hearts. It has sometimes been said that Zen Buddhism is stronger when it comes to wisdom than it is when it comes to kindness, which suggests an imbalance exists which we would do well to address. Even if that statement is only partly true, few would argue with the suggestion that there is plenty of room for much more kindness, both in our troubled hearts and in our troubled world.

That being so, a number of important questions arise:

- Often we feel kindness in our hearts but we do not act on it. Why is this? What are the obstacles to that enactment?
- How can we actively foster the conditions that enable kindness to be expressed?
- Should there be any limits to the expression of kindness? If so, how are we to judge where and when to impose such limits, given the imperfect nature of our understanding?
- How far should we extend our kindness, given the unfathomable need and our finite resources?
- How do we look after ourselves so that we do not become exhausted?

It is hoped that out of our discussions will emerge an appropriate self-awareness when it comes to kindness, along with a wish to cultivate this important quality at all levels of our existence. We would do well to bear in mind a benediction which is widely used in other Buddhist traditions:

*May you be happy.*

*May you be well.*

*May you be free from pain and suffering.*

## CONCLUDING APPRECIATION: THE SEARCH FOR NEW WORLD-VIEWS

*John Crook*

I was exceedingly disappointed not to be able to attend this conference. As most of you know, I had been suffering from lumbar pain, bad balance and poor walking making movement etc. difficult. This has been exceptionally troublesome as I was additionally prevented from attending a brief meeting convened by Archbishop Rowan Williams at Lambeth Palace on the climate situation and the gathering of religious leaders by the Global Peace Initiative of Women in Copenhagen to consult on the climate conference there. I was hoping to discuss points from my recent book<sup>1</sup> with participants at all these events. For the same reasons, I was unable to complete a text for use at this conference, although I did send a brief audio disc with some suggestions.

In reading and editing these papers, I am struck by their detailed attention to serious matters with deep implications. Although perhaps not all the questions we hoped to be addressed by the conference were covered, these proceedings merit extensive reading and study by all. As we face the oncoming dilemmas of transition to some workable state of society that responds effectively to the Peak Oil and Climate crises, matters of psychology, work, education and the implementation of holistic philosophy will need more such detailed attention as the writers have given us here. We have made a good start.

I have recently been studying 'The Transition Handbook' by Rob Hopkins<sup>2</sup> in which he not only presents the truly alarming environmental crisis that we face with relentless clarity but also puts forward ways and means whereby local communities can make transitions creating functional adaptations to the inevitable effects already forecast. In particular, he faces the fact that many people are in denial of the seriousness of our dilemma. He puts forward ways by which workshops and individual initiatives can stimulate communal responses. He demonstrates his points by references to such activities in the Devon town of Totnes and other places. This is excellent stuff and everyone should consider how he/she might respond to his suggestions. What is lamentable, of course, is the way in which almost none of this appears in national politics as the recent, extremely limited, prime ministerial debates have shown.

Yet, there is a further difficulty. The current crisis has developed within the context of general dissatisfaction with the quality of life that consumer capitalism has entailed. There has been a general assumption that economic prosperity brings happiness. The evidence refutes this. Economic growth has in fact gone hand in hand with a rise in psychological distress, mental disorder, family breakdown, social exclusions of several types and falling levels of trust in government and politics generally. Strikingly, recent work in China shows that the lifting of millions out of poverty has been associated with decreases in life satisfaction at every level of income in both urban and rural areas. Comparable distress is only too clear in the UK; the nation has probably never before reached such a low state of social morale.

Professor Derek Bok makes a strong case<sup>3</sup> that it is time to rethink the function of politics to promote well-being rather than wealth. Research on happiness has shown that it has great social and environmental benefits and can contribute to prosperity, but most people have little idea as to what brings them lasting satisfaction. Bok's book parallels Hopkins's in its general stress on the need for a fresh world-view encompassing both environmental and socio-personal issues. Anyone familiar with the Buddhist Dharma knows that it is precisely in this direction that it points.

All of these suggestions tend to miss an important issue. It is not enough to consider only the local, the small and the personal. Everything 'small' arises within the 'big'. Co-dependency is not only local; it is planet-wide. What may suit Totnes may not suit London. Approaches at local levels will need to be related to overarching national and trans-national policies. This gap is still not bridged and there is little thought going on about it. As Niko Tinbergen has remarked, what is needed is 'a new type of citizen' and this, I argue, depends on changing our basic, global world-view.

A world-view summarises attitudes and practices of a community, a group or an individual and determines the overall effect of behaviours and policy. Our current world-view is based in consumer capitalism, which, beginning in the West, now determines virtually all economic and ecological policies. It is fundamentally based in the concept of endless wealth advancement through profit-based investment in non-sustainable energy exploitation and so structured that the unthinking greed of senior officials has led to gross corruption and financial crises. What is wrong here is the absence of clear moral values based in an understanding of world-mind relations. The dualisms of the Western religions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism split thought between the worldly and the spiritual and cultivate mutually divisive metaphysical beliefs that have no scientific basis and which lead to conflicts distracting us from the truly serious problem we are considering. Much science too, based in Cartesian dualism fails to relate the mind with matter, society with the world. While the hypothetico-deductive methods of science are fine for the study of mechanism, they fail when faced with the problems of their place in a totally integrated cosmic or planetary system. Holistic scientific approaches are now developing again and they are essential.

As I argue in my book, the holism of Buddhist philosophy based on Gautama's original insights can provide an overarching understanding of world-mind relations based in the subjective empiricism of yogic investigation and clearly argued, reasoned understanding. Here is the basis for a holism that focuses on the total co-dependency of mind and matter on this planet and hence the co-dependency of thought, feeling and action, economics and ecology, wind and sun shine. Such co-dependency makes essential those ethical values that sustain qualities of homeostasis in the world. These too are provided by the precepts of the Dharma.

Of course, this does not mean that conversion to Buddhism is the necessary answer to all our problems. It does point however to the need for a holistic world-view that relates these Buddhist values and interpretations to other similar perspectives in some world philosophies and some existing world-views stemming from both the Asian and European 'enlightenments'. As we have heard, Lama Thubten Yeshe

and Thomas Berry, coming from such different cultures, none the less focus their concerns within the field of the same holistic themes. In several ways our conference has emphasised this need for a profound holism as a world-view that can function at many levels, in education, in ethics, in participatory perception, in philosophical and personal understanding.

As Teacher of the Western Chan Fellowship, I would like therefore to recommend that the contrasting issues we have discussed here be increasingly inter-related within an overarching world-view that can be understood worldwide by all educated people. Science and economics in the service of capitalism have spread from the West to all cultures using the English language and provided a global overview. In spite of fears and denials, there is therefore a common, world-wide potential for reasoned communication on forming a global philosophy through using all the modern electronic devices now available. Furthermore, new universities world-wide, as far apart as Saudi Arabia, Singapore and China,<sup>4</sup> are establishing intercultural relations that can foster such debate. Rather than current trash and clever hearsay, we need a serious debate among these educated and often deeply concerned people world-wide, understanding varying approaches to planetary holism and integrating them in an educative global path to eco-transition and global well-being. In this vital movement, Buddhists have the orientations and practices to play a major role. Let us all go to it, considering indeed our responsibility as lineage holders focussed on the universal good.

#### NOTES

1. Crook, J.H. 2009. *World Crisis and Buddhist Humanism*. New Age Books, Delhi
2. Hopkins, R. 2008. *The Transition Handbook*. Green Books.
3. Bok, D. 2010. *The Politics of Happiness. What Government Can Learn From The New Research on Well-being*. Princeton University Press. (Reviewed in Nature, April 29.2010)
4. Wildavsky, B. 2010 *The Great Brain Race: How Global Universities Are Reshaping The World*. Princeton University Press.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### WORLD CRISIS AND BUDDHIST HUMANISM END GAMES: COLLAPSE OR RENEWAL OF CIVILISATION

*Review by Jake Lyne*

*WCF has purchased a stock of Dr John Crook's major new book and is able to offer it at a discounted price.*

This is a book that will have an immediate appeal to Buddhists, since it provides a sophisticated, readable overview of the history of ideas within Buddhism and shows clearly the significance of a 'buddhistic' insight to meeting 21st Century challenges.

However, the scope of the book goes beyond Buddhism and will interest a much wider audience. John Crook's scientific background is in evolutionary psychology. During his career he became especially interested in the scientific study of human behaviour in the context of environment, which necessarily leads to an attempt to understand the influence of language, thought, culture and human experience. Human behaviour is an issue of central importance in our world with its burgeoning population, the threat of global warming; and with the potential for human conflict, supported as it is by extremely dangerous weapons, to be a serious threat to survival.

In contrasting western philosophical dualism with a buddhistic perspective, John Crook shows how our world is shaped by our world view and how a shift in world view is a necessary precursor to a more healthy way of living on this vast though finite planet. Most people have only a tiny and short-term influence in life, but ideas are powerful and can live on, e.g. witness the power of the theory of evolution in shaping the way we understand the world. This book contains fundamental ideas that were developed around two thousand years ago, but more or less failed to penetrate the 'western' world. They are now being introduced through many sources, but few authors are able to present them so clearly or with such relevance as in this publication.

People who have been on meditation retreats with John Crook will already have a sense of the message in this book, though it is unlikely that anyone will have been fully aware of the range of his thought, and perhaps even he wasn't until he began to write this! Our challenge is to widen the readership of this important book in the hope that the ideas it conveys are disseminated so that they may be of long term benefit.

### KOANS OF LAYMAN JOHN: STORIES AND POEMS BY JOHN CROOK

These stories from a modern Chan Master tell us of enlightening interactions with teachers. The poems offer us spontaneous verses expressing a Zen spirit touching on the many emotions that paint the colours of human experience.



## BUY BOOKS & MALAS FROM WCF

- *World Crisis and Buddhist Humanism*  
WCF price: £11 inc p&p within UK
- *Koans of Layman John*  
WCF price £5 inc p&p within UK

To Order:

Send your delivery name and address with your payment cheque or postal order made payable to "Western Chan Fellowship" to: Jeremy Woodward, 46 Wood Park, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0PP  
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More details at: <http://tinyurl.com/wcfbooks>

- *Western Chan Fellowship Malas*  
These malas are available to purchase. They have been made for us in Myanmar from rosewood and jade and are designed to be used with John Crook's Aspirational Prayer – more details here:  
<http://swindonchan.org/index.php?pageID=24>  
They are £7 'as is' with nylon cord and a big green tassel. A restringing service is available –  
<http://swindonchan.org/images/malaKnots.jpg> Contact [membership@westernchanfellowship.org](mailto:membership@westernchanfellowship.org)



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The retreats below are scheduled in 2010. Keep an eye on the website for any updates and to read full booking details: <http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/retreats.html>

- 26TH JUNE – 1ST JULY: *Everyday Chan – Buddhism Everyday*
- 24TH JULY – 31ST JULY: *Silent Illumination*
- 21ST AUGUST – 26TH AUGUST: *Western Zen Retreat*
- 2ND SEPTEMBER – 5TH SEPTEMBER: *Core Sutras – The Roots of the Dharma*
- 10TH OCTOBER – 15TH OCTOBER: *An Introduction to Chan:  
Following the Path of Bodhidharma*
- 16TH OCTOBER – 23RD OCTOBER: *Huatou Retreat*
- 1ST NOVEMBER – 6TH NOVEMBER: *Western Zen Retreat*
- 30TH NOVEMBER – 6TH DECEMBER: *Mahamudra on the Tantric Path*
- 4TH DECEMBER – 11TH DECEMBER: *Silent Illumination*

## OTHER RETREATS

In addition, though outside the WCF programme, it may be of interest that Simon Child will be leading the following retreat:

- 15TH OCTOBER – 20TH OCTOBER: *Western Zen Retreat, New York, USA*

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*May you be happy.*

*May you be well.*

*May you be free from pain and suffering.*

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