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Working in the Right Spirit: The Application of Buddhist Right Livelihood  
in the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines adaptive forms with regard to the interpretation of Buddhist economic ethics in the West by Western Buddhists. A brief outline of ethics in Buddhist teachings will be followed by a presentation of Weber's image of the "world withdrawn Buddhist," allegedly not involved in any social and economic activities. Buddhist ethics, as portrayed by Weber, nowhere promotes socio-political engagement and entrepreneurial activities. Contrary to Weber's stereotyped view, which was widely accepted but rarely questioned, members of The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order have started to develop businesses and cooperatives, thus combining Buddhist teachings and involvement in the world. Their team-based Right Livelihood endeavors already have created a Buddhist economy on a small scale; their ultimate aim is to bring about a transformation of Western society. Thus, supposedly 'world withdrawn Buddhists' have become socio-economically active in the Western world.

### Buddhism Expands in the West

Buddhism has set foot in the West with an amazing variety of traditions and schools, centers and teachers. Religious interest in Buddhism has led to an “explosive growth”<sup>1</sup> in the number of both practitioners and Buddhist centers established in North America, Australia, Europe and South Africa. Henry C. Finney calculated that more than 90% of the American Buddhist groups and centers were founded during the 1970s or 1980s.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in Australia the number of Buddhists quadrupled from 35,000 (1981) to 140,000 (1991), these being organized in some 167 groups and societies.<sup>3</sup> One notes also the rapid increase of Buddhist institutions in Europe, which in Britain shot up from seventy-four (1979) to about 340 (1997) and in Germany from some forty (1975) to more than 400 (1997) meditation circles, groups and centers.<sup>4</sup> In addition to this dramatic growth, one is able to note an expansion of topics covered by Buddhist concern: Green Buddhists argue that Buddhists should take responsibility for nature and the environment, feminist Buddhists question the male-dominated shape of Buddhist practices and contents, engaged Buddhists call for socio-political involvement, to name just a few topics prominent among “white Buddhists” in the West.<sup>5</sup>

The transplantation of Buddhist traditions to modernized, industrialized countries often goes hand in hand with a call for the adaptation of Buddhist forms and contents. The so-called “Asian garb” is to be shed in favor of interpretations and forms assumed to be more in line with the new circumstances. The so-called “essence of Buddhism,” presented as timeless and universal, will be transferred unchanged, however, as many Western Buddhists assure.<sup>6</sup> Calls for new and adapted expressions are strongly brought forward from the camp of “white”, converted Westerners. ‘Ethnic’ Asian Buddhists, often neglected or simply forgotten in regional studies, despite their numerical strength and well institutionalized forms,<sup>7</sup> most often favor a conservative maintenance of their home countries’ expressions. Thus, endeavors for change and adaptation gen-

erally do not arise until the second and third migrant generation has matured, as diaspora studies show.<sup>8</sup>

This paper shall concentrate on adaptive forms with regard to the interpretation of Buddhist economic ethics in the West as presented by Western Buddhists. A brief outline of ethics in Buddhist teachings will be followed by a presentation of Weber's image of the "world withdrawn Buddhist," allegedly not involved in any social and economic activities. Buddhist ethics, as portrayed by Weber, nowhere promotes socio-political engagement and entrepreneurial activities. Contrary to Weber's stereotyped view, which was widely accepted but rarely questioned, members of The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order have started to develop businesses and cooperatives, thus combining Buddhist teachings and involvement in the world. Their team-based Right Livelihood endeavors already have created a Buddhist economy on a small scale; their ultimate aim is to bring about a transformation of Western society. Thus, supposedly 'world withdrawn Buddhists' have become socio-economically active in the Western world.

### Buddhist Ethics and the Principle of Right Livelihood

Ethics and moral guidelines are defined as *sīla* (Sanskrit) or *sīla* (Pāli) in Buddhist tradition. The reference to ethics can be found in the fundamental teachings of Buddhism, in the Four Noble Truths. The Fourth Truth, the Noble Eightfold Path (*aṭṭhangika-magga*), includes Right (or Perfect) View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Awareness, and finally, Right Meditation. Traditionally, these eight factors are divided into three groups: Right View and Right Resolve are seen as aspects of insight or wisdom (*paññā*). Right Speech, Action, and Livelihood comprise the range of virtue and ethics (*sīla*). The three remaining factors are seen as aspects of contemplation or meditation (*samādhi*). Concentrating on the second of the three Buddhist 'pillars', Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*) comprises telling the truth and not lying to one's own advantage or anyone else's. Right Speech also means omitting

meaningless and superfluous words; furthermore, it should have a unifying and conciliating effect. Right Action or Conduct (*sammā-kammanta*) is the avoidance of killing, stealing and inappropriate sexual intercourse. Right Action should encourage generosity (*dāna*) and amicable social relations.

With regard to Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), concretized as a moral working life, there are comparatively few considerations in Buddhist literature. Typically enough, Nyānaponika (German born Theravāda monk renowned for his translations and systematizations) omits this fifth item of the Eightfold Path while explaining the fourth Noble Truth.<sup>9</sup> The rare expositions are usually in the negative, pointing to professions considered immoral and thus detrimental to the Buddhist path of enlightenment. The jobs of hangman, butcher and thief are listed as ‘non-beneficial’ (*akusala*). Likewise the professions of military men and hunters or fishermen are regarded as ‘non-salutary’ (*Majjhima* 51). Equally, Buddhists should abstain from trading with weapons, living creatures, meat, intoxicating drinks, and poison (*Āṅguttara* 5, 177). Lay Buddhists who happen to be tradesmen should not betray customers but treat them honestly.<sup>10</sup>

These ethical instructions are codified into the five resolutions or vows for lay Buddhists. A lay Buddhist pledges not to kill, not to steal, to avoid sexual misconduct, not to lie, and refrain from intoxicants such as alcohol or drugs (*Āṅguttara* 5, 174). There are additional vows for a monk or nun, including ten fundamental ones, and a further 217 to 240 depending upon the specific traditions. Generosity (*dāna*) in the form of giving alms is the other, possibly even more fundamental, of the important Buddhist ethical activities. Alms are usually given to members of the Buddhist monastic order in countries of Theravāda Buddhism. Similarly, Mahāyānists also give alms to support monks, nuns and temples.

Traditional Buddhist ethics claim no direct involvement in social reform nor provide societal guidelines. Rather, according to Heinz Bechert’s interpretation, the “original aim (of the Buddha’s teaching) was not to shape life *in* the world, but to teach liberation, release *from* the world.”<sup>11</sup> In this sense, Buddhist ethics can be regarded as a means for approaching

the final goal of liberation (*vimutti, nibbāna*). Ethical principles serve the members of the monastic order as preparation to achieve insight by means of meditation. Lay men and women strive to observe ethical standards so as to achieve a better rebirth. This is the aim of Buddhist ethics, which can be called an ethics of intention.

Buddhist ethics originated in an Asiatic agricultural society. But how is it interpreted by contemporary Western Buddhists in modern, industrial societies? In the West, does the popular image of the ‘withdrawn Buddhist’ also apply, a Buddhist who supposedly does not take any direct action in the world so as not to get involved with suffering?

#### The Image of Buddhist Withdrawal From the World

The image of the withdrawn Buddhist stems from Max Weber. It is an ideal type which Weber developed in his comparative studies about Protestant ethics. This stereotyped image has dominated scientific studies in the history of religions and Buddhist studies to a very high degree.<sup>12</sup> In his *Studies on Hinduism and Buddhism*, Weber asks to what extent “Indian religiosity” was involved in the failure of a re-investment capitalism in Asia.<sup>13</sup> Weber’s study is situated within his global research about the economic ethics of the world’s major religions (*Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen*) and always uses Protestant ethics as a point of comparison. Thus, the ethics of Protestantism serve as the criterion for evaluation. According to Weber, only ascetic Protestantism has given rise to a particular economic ethics, interpreting active involvement in this world as a religious calling and economic success as a sign of chosenness. “Weltheiligkeit” (world’s sacredness) and “methodisch rationale innerweltliche Lebensführung” (methodic rational innerworldly way of life; see *Religionssoziologie*, RS, II: 371) are key concepts of Weber.

Just as these features are characteristics of Calvinism, they are uncharacteristic for early Buddhism, according to Weber. Weber describes early Buddhism as a “specific unpolitical and anti-political profession-religion”, a “soteriology of intellectuals” (RS, II: 218). It has “not set up

the slightest social-political aim” and has been “per se apolitical” (RS, II: 245, 256). Weber characterizes Buddhist ethics as “ethics of not acting” (RS, II: 235). According to him, a “methodical ethics for the laity” (RS, II: 236) are not provided. Key words here are “Weltindifferenz” (indifference towards the world), “auesserliche Weltflucht” (external world withdrawal) and “weltindifferentes Handeln” (world indifferent acting; see RS, II: 367). Weber recapitulates, as the result of his investigation, that a religious legitimation of worldly action and effort cannot be traced in Asia: “An internal connection of services in the world with extra-worldly soteriology was not possible.”<sup>14</sup> However, is such a combination, as established by Weber, in principle possible? Provided that it is possible, which determinants and circumstances contribute to a supportive relation between inner-worldly action and extra-worldly liberation teachings, in this case, the Buddhist teaching on suffering and the way leading to the termination of suffering?

Tentative starting-points for such a combination and thus a move away from a supposedly strict indifference toward the world can be found in the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its ideal of the bodhisattva. A bodhisattva, whether nun/monk or lay woman/lay man, remains and acts in the world and nonetheless is not attached to it. According to Weber, the development of the Mahāyāna is “an adaptation to the economic conditions of existence in the world and to the needs of the laity looking for an auxiliary saint” (RS, II: 271). Nevertheless, Mahāyāna, similar to early Buddhism, does not account for rational ethics of economy, according to Weber (RS, II: 234, 277).

Despite these considerations, it is possible to give evidence that in a new social context, Buddhist teachings definitely are able to bring forth an “economic rationalism” and a “rational method of life” (RS, II: 375). Accordingly, we will present a brief portrait of the Buddhist movement The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and its interpretation of Buddhist action in the world, as follows.

## The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) was founded by the former Theravāda monk Sangharakshita. Sangharakshita, born Dennis Lingwood in 1925 to working class parents near London, became a member of the Buddhist sangha in 1950. Sangharakshita (‘protector of the order’) settled down in Kalimpong (Darjeeling district) and became very active in publication activities, as co-editor of the *Mahā Bodhi Journal*. Having close contact with Tibetan refugees in the area, he started studying the Vajrayāna and received initiations in its different traditions. Sangharakshita conducted preaching tours throughout India and became active in the conversion movement of so-called untouchables, initiated by Bhimrao R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) in 1956.<sup>15</sup>

After more than twenty years of Buddhist life in India, Sangharakshita moved to England in 1967. There he started the Buddhist movement FWBO. Sangharakshita held that “the FWBO is . . . a Western spiritual movement, a Western spiritual phenomenon. It seeks to practice Buddhism under the conditions of modern Western civilization, which is a secularized and industrialized civilization.”<sup>16</sup> The FWBO seeks to give Buddhism “an up-to-date shape, fitting Western conditions.”<sup>17</sup> Even within the context of a highly industrialized and urbanized society, “the Buddhist way of life, the spiritual life” is feasible.<sup>18</sup> In order to create such a ‘Western form’, the FWBO utilizes methods and contents of various Buddhist schools and traditions.<sup>19</sup> Basic to the FWBO is its reference to “the spirit of the Original teaching,” as Sangharakshita calls it.<sup>20</sup> The movement calls itself “a fully ‘traditional’ Buddhist school.”<sup>21</sup> In addition, Western arts and literature (e.g., William Blake, Goethe and Nietzsche) are made use of, and it is noted that “we are prepared to draw on sources of inspiration outside Buddhism . . . as a bridge to an understanding of the Dharma.”<sup>22</sup>



### The Order

The focal point of the FWBO is the Western Buddhist Order. Sangharakshita explicitly started an order because he felt that the personal engagement of the individual and the spiritual fellowship of the order members should be the basis of the new Buddhist movement which he envisaged. The personal commitment to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are of prime importance. Thus, the FWBO places a major emphasis on the act of going for refuge (*saraṇagamana*), as it is considered a turning point in the life of an individual. “The Going for Refuge is really the central act of the Buddhist life. It is what makes you a Buddhist.”<sup>23</sup>

Members of the Order are men and women, single, married or those living in celibacy, some with full-time jobs and others who devote all of their energy to the further development of the FWBO. “The member of the Western Buddhist Order represents a new type of Buddhist, or rather a full-time committed Buddhist of the traditional kind working under the very different conditions of the ‘global village’ and ‘post-industrial society’.”<sup>24</sup> Many, although not all, order members live together in residential communities to enable the development of ‘spiritual friendship’ amongst each other. Such communities, most often single sex, are usually found near a center of the FWBO. Through the centers and their offers of meditation and yoga courses, study days, *pūjās* (devotional ceremonies), and the celebration of Buddhist festivals, interested members of the public and more committed “Friends” come into contact with the FWBO.

### Development and Size

In the beginning the movement was restricted to England where the first centers, shared flats, cooperatives, and projects came into being. By the end of the 1970s, the movement started to gain a foothold in other countries of Europe and overseas. Amongst its overseas branches, the FWBO highlights the relation with the Buddhist conversion movement of Ambedkar. Since 1978 there have been European FWBO Buddhists liv-

ing in the West of India for the religious instruction and education of the Neo-Buddhists there. FWBO members founded charities ('Karuna Trust' and 'Bahuja Hitay'), cooperatives, and craft businesses for the material help and medical supply of the former untouchables. After Great Britain, most FWBO centers and Order members can be found in India, where the number of 'Friends' is estimated to be several tens of thousands.<sup>25</sup>

Apart from the strong Indian branch, centers and FWBO projects were founded during the 1980s and 1990s in Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, North and South America, and various countries in Europe. In the mid-1980s, there existed eleven centers, various FWBO groups, and ten cooperatives in Great Britain. Ten years later the movement had grown to about thirty centers and thirty-five groups in Great Britain alone (1997). On a global scale there are about fifty city centers, fifteen retreat centers, various local groups, and Right Livelihood cooperatives.<sup>26</sup> Worldwide there were 187 Order members in 1982; in 1988 the number was 345. Likewise, the increase continued during the following years. In 1991 the figure was about 450, and in 1997 nearly 700 members existed. The number of supporters and 'Friends' is estimated to be approximately 100,000, the vast majority of them being Buddhists in India. The movement has established a highly productive publishing service, launching books by Sangharakshita and Order members and also producing various journals of high standards. During the 1980s and 1990s the organization grew to become one of Great Britain's principle Buddhist movements.

In the Spring of 1997, Sangharakshita stepped down as the organizational head of the Order. The responsibility for ordination and spiritual leadership was conveyed to the Preceptor's College Council, formed by eleven men and two women based in Birmingham. In this way, a smooth transference of tasks and responsibilities from the founder of the movement to a group of experienced disciples should be ensured. Contrary to the experience of many newly-created schools, the almost inevitable difficulties of succession and issues of power are being solved already during the lifetime of the movement's initiator. Only time will show whether

this model will work out successfully, or whether the FWBO will be faced with controversies and splits after Sangharakshita's decease.<sup>27</sup>

### *Sīla* and Right Livelihood According to the FWBO

The FWBO understands itself as a Western Buddhist movement. “Western” stands less for a geographic label than for a description of its contents: hinted at are the secular, industrial and urban structures of society. According to Sangharakshita, present Western society makes it more difficult to lead a Buddhist life. The main causes of this are the higher standard of living, overstimulation, and limited possibilities for the individual to develop spiritually due to societal constraints.<sup>28</sup> Thus, within this less beneficial context, the community of an order would provide the best environment to move and develop on the Buddhist path. Considerations of the social context also affect the interpretation of Buddhist norms and ethics. Thus, Buddhist ethics are reinterpreted according to the demands of the new social situation.

In what specific ways, then, does the FWBO translate the idea of Right Livelihood into action in a modern context? FWBO members endeavor to take the ethical instruction of Right Livelihood as a challenge and guideline to adjust their lives to Buddhist principles regarding economic pursuits. The members of the Order are not only careful in avoiding certain professions, but they also want to use their working time constructively for their own spiritual development.

The criterion for a morally pure profession is that the activity in which someone is engaged is to be wholesome, beneficial, and skillful (*kusala*) in a Buddhist sense, both for the individual and society. Expanding the above mentioned list of ‘non-beneficial’ professions, FWBO members consider the production and sale of superfluous luxury goods and of inferior products negatively. Jobs such as those in the advertising industry are also considered to be less constructive.<sup>29</sup> Not only is a job's specific nature important, but also its contents and purpose. Accordingly, a job has to be ethical, i.e., it must not hurt, exploit or cheat any living creature.

Careful dealing with nature and the environment is also of importance.<sup>30</sup> Expressed positively, it means that one's work should be meaningful and useful: it should be beneficial for the individual as regards his/her own spiritual growth and likewise useful for society, e.g., offering basic and useful goods or services. The goods produced or services done are expected to be of a high standard. Good quality and honesty should aim to be an advertisement for the reliability of the FWBO cooperatives.

A further criterion for a justly applied Right Livelihood activity is that, if possible, an activity should not be carried out alone, but jointly with others. This feature provides the possibility of working together in a group with people who share the same ideals and thus encourage and inspire each other. At the same time, people who work together would be able to learn to act and manage without an authoritarian hierarchy, to take over responsibilities and to make decisions according to the principle of consent. Working in structures of a cooperative nature also contributes to a positive working climate and, apart from the Buddhist ethical ideals, offers further motivation to do even unpleasant tasks with a smile.

On the basis of these considerations, FWBO members founded team-based cooperatives in the sense of Right Livelihood enterprises in the late 1970s. They started, among other things, wholefood shops, vegetarian restaurants, printing offices, home and car insurances and garden centers. In the mid to late 1980s, approximately half of the Order members and many 'Friends' worked in FWBO related cooperatives and projects. During this time the cooperatives in Great Britain achieved an annual turnover of about two million pounds, employing eighty-five people fulltime.<sup>31</sup> The FWBO's leading business has become Windhorse Trading in Cambridge. It runs a wholesale and retail gift business and was listed as one of the hundred fastest-growing companies in Britain in 1992 (growth rate of 37%). In 1996 sales were up 37% to 37.5 million pounds (US\$ 60 million) and profits were up 101% to 31.27 million pounds. In 1997, it had eighteen 'Evolution Gift Shops' in the UK, Ireland and Spain, employing some 170 Buddhists.<sup>32</sup> The fifth factor of the Eightfold Path has thus found its institutionalization in free-enterprise cooperatives.

Furthermore, regarding economic issues, the job done in a cooperative should be efficient. Thus, it should not wear out the workers by exploitation, but should yield enough money both for one's own living and Buddhist welfare projects. The latter at the same time would enable members to practice the Buddhist virtue of generosity (*dāna*). The fundamental principle dealing with donations and earnings within the FWBO runs: "give what you can, take what you need."<sup>33</sup> As Subhadramati, who has worked for nine years in a London Buddhist restaurant, explains: "We all receive the same basic money each week (enough to live on but not to save) and a set number of weeks for retreats and time off. But if anyone needs more, they ask and the team discusses it. I used to view not asking for extras as a virtue."<sup>34</sup> Whether one judges such an attitude as naive and credulous, or as a strong and strict position towards changing capitalistic society, Subhadramati valued her years working in the Right Livelihood restaurant as "a situation in which I can be wholehearted."<sup>35</sup> In the cooperatives people aim to transfer their work into a form and practice of giving. Generosity and conscious avoiding of exploitation are thus the basis of a Buddhist economy as the FWBO understands it.

Finally, leading a life according to Right Livelihood principles should be distinguished not only in its form and contents but also by way of its objective: for members of the FWBO, to be a Buddhist entails not only working on oneself individually through meditation and teachings. It should also encompass various kinds of sociopolitical activities, finding expression in projects and institutions pointing the way ahead. The bodhisattva ideal of Mahāyāna Buddhism is explicitly referred to in this context. The selfless and altruistic attitude of a bodhisattva is interpreted as sociopolitical engagement to create better conditions for the practice of the Dharma in the Western world. The aim of a Right Livelihood business is thus, apart from its economic efficiency and producing a financial surplus, to change the existing society. Already today one should start creating the "New Society," as the existing conditions are seen as detrimental to mental and spiritual growth.<sup>36</sup> In this sense the cooperatives act as bridges between the spiritual world of the FWBO and the profane environment.

At the same time they serve as a means to draw attention to Buddhist teachings and to advertise them. And last but not least, Right Livelihood businesses enable the FWBO to be financially self-supporting and thus not obliged to depend on the “old society” and its demands.

In the communities and cooperatives, possibilities of living jointly are organized and trained for in a practical way. The combination of a Buddhist center, residential community and cooperative serves as a Buddhist society in miniature within the Western, industrialized world. This Buddhist society does not aim only to be a pattern and example of the ideal New Society, but also intends to criticize the existing structures and values of society by way of its attractiveness. As Sangharakshita emphasized: “I do not want to see little pockets of Buddhism here and there with the remainder of society completely unchanged. I don’t want there to be just little Buddhist oases in the midst of the desert of secular life. I want them to spread and to influence their surroundings in a positive way.”<sup>37</sup>

### Buddhist Reevaluation of Society and Work

Śākyamuni Buddha, to whom all Buddhist schools refer, never did regular work himself, neither in a payed job nor in voluntary employment. Nevertheless, the exhortation for a right way of living is placed within the basic instructions of Buddhist teachings. On the one hand, the historical Buddha himself had many lay-followers who carried out professions as merchants, blacksmiths, herdsmen or farmers. On the other hand, the FBWO, in the light of Indian history, takes the idea of Right Livelihood as containing a reminder that manual and physical work was a task assigned to India’s lower castes and thus enjoyed little prestige and respect. Even today it is difficult in India to live a religious life and to do manual work at the same time. Maybe that is one reason for including the instruction of Right Livelihood within the Eightfold Path: it should offer an opportunity to lay people to both succeed in living a Buddhist life and question the stigma of manual work. In China and Japan, the attitude towards physical work and its evaluation is completely different from that in India.

In the socio-culturally new ‘Western’ context, the FWBO raises the exhortation for a Right Livelihood, relatively little emphasized in Asia and in Buddhist texts, to be one of the central elements of its movement. The reevaluation of this ethical teaching goes beyond the activity of the individual and drafts plans for the creation of a New Society. Thus, unlike in traditional Asia, social conditions are taken into consideration and the analysis of these aims to direct Buddhist action and effort. The state of affairs of society is not ignored, but is seen as something to be actively remolded. As Order member Subhuti puts the issue in a nutshell, “the creation of a New Society is the purpose of the FWBO.”<sup>38</sup> A shift of emphasis and priority becomes apparent, compared to traditional Buddhist views in Asia.

Next to this socio-political component, the reevaluation of work becomes evident: work is valued as positive, beneficial and helpful. Parallels between the Buddhistic ethos of work outlined above and the ethos of calling of Protestant ethics become evident. Both English FWBO Buddhists and members of American Puritan sects of the 17th century have followed religious goals in their profession and activities. By way of these religious ideals, both have been motivated to work industriously and to do work of high quality. As regards social reputation, being a member of a specific religious group vouches for quality, sincerity and honesty. Members of the FWBO are still striving for that reputation, however. We can see, then, that Weber’s “economic rationalism” (RS, II: 375) is present in this Buddhist movement.

Though it seems that the FWBO-Buddhist work ethos and the Calvinist ethos of calling are structurally quite close, they diverge totally as regards religious motivation and goals. The Puritan follower, whose religion is based on the fundamental doctrine of predestination, attempts to identify a sign of his/her own state of grace, being either chosen or damned by God. Success in work is interpreted as a sign of chosenness. In particular, profit in business life is valued as a promising indication of God’s granted grace and thus serves both as a sign and confirmation “to be on the only just way: to work for God’s glory.”<sup>39</sup> Very differently, a person

jointly working in a FWBO cooperative seems to be motivated by the opportunity of personal, spiritual growth with co-followers. Also, he/she contributes to the spread of the Dharma and helps, bit by bit, to change existing society in the direction of the aspired New Society. Nevertheless, the driving force after all appears to be to gain insight and wisdom in a Buddhist sense, and to help others to achieve this. The rules of morality outlined in the Eightfold Path serve for that purpose: not until excellence in one's own speech, action and livelihood is realized can one hope to gain insight through meditation.

### Conclusion

Returning to the starting point: in a changed social context, “an inner connection of achievements in the world with an extra-worldly soteriology” (RS, II: 367) seems also reasonable with regards to Buddhism. Whether one agrees to Weber's stereotyped analysis or not, the case of the FWBO points to a more general feature. Under new socio-cultural conditions, Buddhist teachings prove to be highly adaptable and flexible. The example of the FWBO makes evident that Western concepts, such as a capitalistic work ethos, ecological considerations, and a social-reformist perspective, can be integrated into the Buddhist tradition. This feature can be valued as one of many reactions of the Buddhist religion to modern conditions.

Earlier in this article, Buddhist ethics were described as an ethics of intention. It has a pragmatic and purposeful direction. It is pragmatic and instrumental as Buddhist doctrine understands itself as a means only for reaching a specific goal.<sup>40</sup> It is compared to a raft which brings the person striving for insight across the stream of suffering.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Charles S. Prebish, “Ethics and Integration in American Buddhism,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 2 (1995): 125-139, quote 126.

<sup>2</sup> Henry C. Finney, “American Zen’s ‘Japan Connection’: A Critical Case Study of Zen Buddhism’s Diffusion to the West,” *Sociological Analysis* 52, no. 4 (1991): 379-396, quote 383. Finney’s calculation was based on Don Morreale’s account in *Buddhist America: Centers, Retreats, Practices*. (Santa Fe, New Mexico: J. Muir Publ., 1988). Prebish justly points out that no accurately collected data is available regarding the present figure of Buddhists and Buddhist groups in the US; see Prebish, “Ethics and Integration” (note (1) above): 132. For most recent lists of Buddhist centers in the US and Canada, see Peter Lorie and Julie Foakes, *The Buddhist Directory: United States of America & Canada* (Boston: Tuttle 1997) and the update of Morreale’s *Buddhist America*; see Don Morreale, Jack Kornfield, Joseph Goldstein, *The Complete Guide to Buddhist America* (Boulder: Shambhala 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Enid Adam and Philip Hughes, *The Buddhists in Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1996), 41 and 61. Unfortunately, information on a number of Buddhist organizations for 1981 is not available. The tremendous increase is, however, mostly due to a sharp rise in the number of Asian immigrants who settled in Australia during the 1980s.

<sup>4</sup> See Martin Baumann, “Creating a European Path to Nirvana: Historical and Contemporary Developments of Buddhism in Europe,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 10, no. 1 (1995): 55-70, esp. 62-63. The updated number of centers and groups in Germany is based on the list of “Buddhist Groups in Germany” edited by the German Buddhist Union, Munich, January 1997. For Britain, see *The Buddhist Directory*, edited by The Buddhist Society, London, 1st and 7th ed., 1979 and 1997. A “Survey of Recent Studies and Sources,” by Martin Baumann, treats the various historical developments of Buddhism outside Asia and can be found in Vol. 4 (1997) of the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 194-211. A sketch is

also provided in Martin Baumann “Buddhism in the West: Phases, Orders and the Creation of an Integrative Buddhism,” *Internationales Asienforum* 27, no. 3-4 (1996): 345-362. These simple figures, however, do not differentiate between, say, Buddhist circles which meet once a week in a private room versus established centers with their own premises, residential communities, daily worships (*pūjā*) and a range of course offerings. Nevertheless, the numbers do substantialize statements about the growing interest in Buddhism in the West.

<sup>5</sup> See, among others, Fred Eppsteiner (ed.), *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1988); Ken Jones, *The Social Face of Buddhism: An Approach to Political and Social Activism* (London, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1989); Kenneth Kraft (ed.), *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Non-violence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Rita M. Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). See also the encompassing survey by Stephen Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1994). Equally promising is Andrew Rawlinson’s *The Book of Enlightened Masters: Western Teachers in Eastern Traditions* (Chicago: Open Court Press, 1997). The term ‘white Buddhist’ was taken from Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1981): 83 (3rd, updated ed. 1992); see also his “Confession of a White Buddhist,” *Tricycle* 4 (1994): 54-56.

<sup>6</sup> Prime examples are the interpretations and presentations of Lama Govinda and his 1933 founded order Arya Maitreya Mandala and Sangharakshita’s Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. An analysis of their hermeneutical approaches is provided in Martin Baumann, *Deutsche Buddhisten: Geschichte und Gemeinschaften*, 2nd enl. ed. (Marburg: Diagonal, 1995), 145-181, 299-305, and 356-363. Likewise, see the eight lectures of leading Western Buddhists at the conference of the ‘European Buddhist Union’, Berlin 1992, published as *Einheit in der Vielfalt: Buddhismus im Westen*, ed. by the German Buddhist Union (Munich: German Buddhist Union

1993).

<sup>7</sup> For the US, see Paul David Numrich, *Old Wisdom in the New World: Americanization in Two Immigrant Theravāda Buddhist Temples* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1996). See also Jan Nattier, “Visible and Invisible: On the Politics of Representation in Buddhist America,” *Tricycle* 17 (1995): 42-49; and Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka (eds.), *The Faces of Buddhism in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming in Summer 1998).

<sup>8</sup> I acknowledge that for reasons of simplicity, a partly dichotomous presentation is set up. Interests and aims to adapt vary considerably, both among Western and Asian Buddhist teachers and groups. This issue would need further elaboration, which cannot be pursued here. For related diaspora studies, see Catherine Ballard, “Conflict, Continuity and Change: Second-generation South Asians,” in *Minority Families in Britain: Support and Stress*, edited by Verity Saifullah Khan (London, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979): 109-129; Robert Jackson and Eleanor Nesbitt, *Hindu Children in Britain* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, 1993); and Roger Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain* (London: Hurst, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Nyānaponika, *Der Weg zur Erloesung*, 2nd revised ed. (Konstanz: Christiani, 1981), 53-71. In his *Das Wort des Buddha*, 5th ed. (Konstanz: Christiani, 1989), however, he gives some relevant canonical passages; see 70-71.

<sup>10</sup> A reference to Right Livelihood also can be found in the “four kinds of virtue based on purity” (*catu-pārisuddhi-sīla*). These, however, relate to the monastic order only and comprise (1) restraint with regard to the monastic obligations, (2) control of the senses, (3) purity in one’s means of livelihood, and (4) virtue in respect of the four monastic requisites (dress, food, shelter and medicine); see, among others, Nyānatiloka, *Buddhistisches Woerterbuch*, 4th ed. (Konstanz: Christiani, 1989), 162 and 210; and Sangharakshita, *A Survey of Buddhism*, 6th ed. (London: Tharpa, 1987), 168. Additionally, I was referred to Russell F. Sizemore and Donald K. Swearer (eds.), *Ethics, Wealth and Salvation: A Study in*

*Buddhist Social Ethics* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1990); P.A. Payutta, *Buddhist Economics: A Middle Way for the Market Place* (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 2nd enl. ed. 1994); and Claud Whitmyer (ed.), *Mindfulness and Meaningful Work: Explorations in Right Livelihood* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Heinz Bechert, “Foreword” in Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich (eds.), *The World of Buddhism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984): 7, italics by Bechert. See, however, most recently Perry Schmidt-Leukel, “Die gesellschaftspolitisch Dimension des Buddhismus,” *Zeitschrift fuer Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 81, no. 4 (1997): 289-305.

<sup>12</sup> Weber’s image of early Buddhism is valued by leading scholars in Buddhist studies as, to a large degree, correct; see Heinz Bechert, “Max Webers Darstellung der Geschichte des Buddhismus in Sued- und Suedostasien,” in Wolfgang Schluchter (ed.), *Max Webers Studie ueber Hinduismus und Buddhismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1984): 274-292, esp. 274; and Étienne Lamotte, “The Buddha, His Teachings and His Sangha,” in Bechert, Gombrich (eds.), *The World of Buddhism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984): 41-58. Evers, scholar in the sociology of religion, confirms Weber’s division of world-involvement and world-withdrawal; see Hans-Dieter Evers, *Monks, Priests and Peasants* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), esp. 104. On the other hand, Tambiah criticizes Weber’s interpretation as exaggerated and narrow minded; see Stanley J. Tambiah, “Max Webers Untersuchung des fruehen Buddhismus: Eine Kritik,” in Schluchter 1984: 202-246, esp. 207. With regard to the sources Weber used, see Bechert’s above mentioned contribution in the Schluchter volume, 1984, 277 and Karl-Heinz Golzio, “Zur Verwendung indologischer Literatur in Max Webers Studie ueber Hinduismus und Buddhismus,” in Schluchter, 1984: 363-373.

<sup>13</sup> Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Vol. II, 5th ed. (Tuebingen: Mohr, 1972), 4. Here and following the German expressions were translated by the author. Weber’s study on the sociology of religion, *Religionssoziologie*, will be abbreviated as RS, II.

<sup>14</sup> Weber's key sentence in German is: "Eine innere Verbindung der Leistung in der Welt mit der aeußerweltlichen Soteriologie war nicht möglich," *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Vol. II, 367. The accuracy of Weber's claims cannot be discussed here, but its appropriateness seems questionable in light of the Buddhist teachings to laypeople, the concept of the *cakkavatti* king and the activities of a bodhisattva; see also Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (eds.), *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1996). There is a vast amount of secondary literature on Weber, his Protestant-Capitalism-thesis and whether similar features are traceable in Asia. Among many, see Robert N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957); the collection of papers in Constans Seyfarth and Walter M. Sprondel (eds.), *Seminar: Religion und gesellschaftliche Entwicklung. Studien zur Protestantismus-Kapitalismus-These Max Webers* (Frankfurt am Main : Suhrkamp, 1973); and Andreas Buss, "Buddhism and Rational Activity" *Internationales Asienforum* 13, no. 3-4 (1982): 211-230.

<sup>15</sup> There is a rapidly growing body of literature by Sangharakshita and the FWBO; see Sangharakshita's memoirs, *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus: The Indian Journey of an English Buddhist* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1976); *Facing Mount Kanchenjunga* (Birmingham: Windhorse, 1991); and *The Rainbow Road* (Birmingham: Windhorse, 1997). See also his autobiographical records *The History of My Going For Refuge* (Glasgow: Windhorse, 1988) and *Forthy-three years Ago: Reflections on my Bhikkhu Ordination* (Glasgow: Windhorse, 1993). An authorized biography was written by Dharmachari Subhuti, *Bringing Buddhism to the West: A Life of Sangharakshita* (Birmingham: Windhorse, 1995). Sangharakshita has laid down his understanding and interpretation of Buddhism already in 1957; see his *A Survey of Buddhism*, 6th ed. (London: Tharpa, 1987). With regard to Ambedkar, see Sangharakshita, *Ambedkar and Buddhism* (Glasgow: Windhorse, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> Sangharakshita, *New Currents in Western Buddhism* (Glasgow: Windhorse, 1990), 54.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from the programme of the Buddhist Centre Essen (Germany).

<sup>18</sup> Sangharakshita, *New Currents in Western Buddhism*, 1990, 19.

<sup>19</sup> With regard to this synthetic approach, see the *FWBO-Newsletter* 68 (1984), characterizing the three Buddhist vehicles (*yānas*) from a FWBO point of view. The same approach is outlined in Dharmacari Subhuti, *The Buddhist Vision* (London 1985).

<sup>20</sup> Sangharakshita, *Survey of Buddhism*, 1957, repr. 1987, 97. (Capitalization by Sangharakshita).

<sup>21</sup> Dharmacari Vessantara, *The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. An Introduction* (Glasgow: Windhorse, 1988), 9.

<sup>22</sup> Vessantara, *The Friends*, 1988, 9. For this point, see in detail Sangharakshita, *Alternative Traditions* (Glasgow: Windhorse, 1986) and *The Religion of Art* (Glasgow: Windhorse, 1986) as well as Dharmachari Subhuti, *Buddhism for Today: A Portrait of a New Buddhist Movement*, 2nd enlarged ed. (Glasgow: Windhorse, 1988), 94-101, for the forms of Buddhist meditation practiced, see 48-60.

<sup>23</sup> Sangharakshita, *New Currents in Western Buddhism*, 1990, 85. Likewise, see Subhuti, “Buddham saranam gacchami,” *Golden Drum* 1 (1986): 12-13; and Subhuti, *Buddhism for Today*, 1988, 140-144.

<sup>24</sup> Subhuti, *Buddhism for Today*, 1988, 140. For the importance of the order, see 129-173. For non-members’ accounts of the FWBO, see, among others, Batchelor, *Awakening of the West*, 1994, 323-340; Baumann, *Deutsche Buddhisten*, 1995, 164-181; and Sandra Bell, “Change and Identity in the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order,” *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 17, no. 2 (1996): 87-107.

<sup>25</sup> See Dharmachari Nagabodhi (Terry Pilchick), *Jai Bhim! Dispatches from a Peaceful Revolution* (Glasgow: Windhorse, 1988) and the issues of the FBWO magazine *Golden Drum* 10 (1988); 25 (1992); and 31 (1994). For a general and scholarly, non-FWBO-biased account of the neo-Buddhist movement, see Timothy Fitzgerald, “Buddhism in Maharashtra: A Tri-partite Analysis: A Research Report,” in *Dr. Ambedkar, Buddhism and Social Change*, edited by A.K. Narain and D.C. Ahir (New Delhi: D.K. Publ., 1994): 17-34; and Alan Sponberg,

“TBMSG: A Dhamma Revolution in Contemporary India,” in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* edited by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996): 73-120. For a comparison of the reformistic interpretations of Ambedkar and those of Sangharakshita, see Martin Baumann, “Neo-Buddhistische Konzeptionen in Indien und England,” *Zeitschrift fuer Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 43, no. 2 (1991): 97-116.

<sup>26</sup> For the figures relating to Great Britain, see *The Buddhist Directory*, ed. by the Buddhist Society London, 7th ed. 1997, 121-122. For current information, see the movement’s webpage, URL: <http://www.fwbo.org/>. A four-part video series of the history of the FWBO (1964-1979) is also available.

<sup>27</sup> For the Preceptor’s College Council, see most recently Guhyapati, “Vital Connections,” *Dharma Life* 5 (1997): 60-61. Some previous internal problems as regards exerting control and power as a centre’s chairman were quite openly discussed in *Dharma Life* 7 (1998), 8-9 and 56-61. This was, however, also done in response to an article in the national newspaper *The Guardian*, Supplement, late October 1997, criticising the FWBO.

<sup>28</sup> Sangharakshita, *New Currents in Western Buddhism*, 1990, 26-33.

<sup>29</sup> Dharmacari Virachitta, “The Practice of Right Livelihood,” *Golden Drum* 12 (1989): 5.

<sup>30</sup> See *Golden Drum* 16 (1990): “Buddhism and the Environment” and Saramati, “How Green is the Path?” *Dharma Life* 2 (1996): 16-22. With regard to a correspondence between a profession and the five ethical principles of a lay Buddhist, see Dharmacari Sanghaloka, “The Modern Context” *Golden Drum* 12 (1989): 6-7; and Subhuti, *Buddhism for Today*, 1988, 74-88.

<sup>31</sup> Dharmacari Tejamati, “Working Inside the Movement,” *Golden Drum* 12 (1989): 8-9. See most recently Vajraketu, “Marketing Values,” *Dharma Life* 6 (1997): 24-27.

<sup>32</sup> Figures from last page of *Dharma Life* 5 (1997). See earlier, “Transforming Work” *Golden Drum* 39 (1995): 13; and Dharmacari Vajraketu,

“The Dana Economy,” *Golden Drum* 22 (1991): 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> Subhuti, *Buddhism for Today*, 1988: 77. Likewise, Dharmacari Vajraketu, “Working for the World” *Golden Drum* 4 (1987): 7. See also *Golden Drum* 22 (1991) “The Art of Generosity.”

<sup>34</sup> Subhadramati, “Working Wonders: Subhadramati’s Experience of Practising Right Livelihood in a Buddhist restaurant,” *Dharma Life* 5 (1997): 38-41, quote 41.

<sup>35</sup> Subhadramati, “Working Wonders” *Dharma Life* (1997), 41.

<sup>36</sup> See Subhuti, *Buddhism for Today*, 1988, 129 and Subhuti, Sangharakshita, *A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition* (Birmingham: Windhorse, 1994), 219-263. Apparently, the FWBO internet homepage contains a hyperlink “Creating a New Society.”

<sup>37</sup> “Den Westen Integrieren: Interview mit Sangharakshita,” interview done by Martin Baumann and Christian von Somm, German translation in *Spirita: Zeitschrift fuer Religionswissenschaft* 1 (1992): 58-61, quote 60; quoted also in Subhuti, *Sangharakshita. A New Voice*, 1994, 253.

<sup>38</sup> Subhuti, *Buddhism for Today*, 1988, 129.

<sup>39</sup> Max Weber, *Die Protestantische Ethik*, ed. by J. Winckelmann, 7th ed. (Guetersloh: Mohn, 1984), 347.

<sup>40</sup> See Michael Pye, *Skillful Means. A Concept in Mahāyāna-Buddhism* (London: Duckworth, 1978).