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Recommended Citation
Shields, James Mark, "Zen and the Art of Resistance: Some Preliminary Notes" (2022). *Faculty Contributions to Books*. 264.
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Zen and the Art of Resistance: Some Preliminary Notes

James Mark Shields

1 Introduction

In the modern Western and oftentimes Asian imagination, Buddhism generally—and Zen more specifically—is understood as being resolutely *disengaged*, promoting a form of awakening that is not only, as the classical phrase has it, not only "beyond words and letters," but ultimately "supramundane" in focus and affects. Of course, even setting aside the Mahāyāna and particularly East Asian Buddhist philosophical and doctrinal critique of dualism, as numerous scholars have shown over the past few decades, on the level of historical actuality, Buddhist and Zen teachers and institutions have long participated in (usually hegemonic) economic and political structures. The scholarship on Buddhist and Zen "social history" is large and growing. And yet, much less attention has been paid to the philosophical and doctrinal sources for political activism and, in particular, *resistance* to prevailing economic and political structures. With the possible exception of Buddhist-inspired peasant revolts of medieval and early modern periods China and Japan, the first sustained efforts to develop an "alternative" form of Buddhist engagement arose in early twentieth century Japan, with a number of groups associated with New Buddhism. While most of the New Buddhist were doctrinally influenced by Shin (Pure Land) and Nichiren teachings, several currents of New Buddhism correlate with classical Zen teachings, and thus provide possible foundations for a theory of "Zen resistance"—one that, I argue, complements the more recent Zen-inspired movement known as Critical Buddhism.

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C. S. Prebish and O. Ng (eds.), *The Theory and Practice of Zen Buddhism*,
Chinese Culture 6, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-8286-5_11

2 D. T. Suzuki and Zen Adaptability/Collaboration

Let us begin with D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966), who, for all the criticism he has faced in the past several decades was undoubtedly the single most influential voice for Buddhism (and Zen) in the postwar West. Despite having been personally involved with the "socially engaged" New Buddhist Fellowship (Jp. Shin Bukkyō Dōshikai, 1899–1916) as a young scholar, in *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture* (1938) Suzuki makes the infamous claim that Buddhism—or, at any rate, Zen, which he believed was the "essence" of Buddhism—is a tradition of thought and practice that can fit seamlessly with *any* modern economic or political system or ideology.[1] Suzuki meant this, of course, as a tribute to the "tolerance" and "adaptability" of Buddhism/Zen, as well as to highlight its supramundane, "intuitive teaching."

Historically-speaking, Suzuki is no doubt correct, but one does not have to be a radical Buddhist to wonder whether this purported adaptability, even if true, is a strength or weakness. As examples of ideologies (or, as he puts it, "dogmatisms") that might be wedded with Buddhism/Zen, Suzuki cites "anarchism, fascism, communism… democracy, atheism… [and] idealism," before going on to note, paradoxically, that Buddhism/Zen is also animated with a "revolutionary spirit" that confounds all such "isms" (more on this below). Setting aside the revolutionary aspect, Suzuki does not seem to recognize that each of these respective 'isms' is rooted in a set of fundamental values, assumptions, and "logics"—each or all of which may *not* be compatible with incontrovertible Dharmic principles (such as, e.g., the goal of ameliorating suffering of sentient beings). Assuming that we now disagree with Suzuki that Buddhism/Zen *can, in good faith,* be "wedded to" fascism—on the basis of the indisputable fact that fascism, in theory as well as practice, promotes forms of power, hierarchy, and dehumanization that cannot possibly be reconciled with Dharmic principles—how might contemporary Buddhists deal with the other "isms" on this list, including, for the purposes of this essay, the one that is by far the most powerful in the twenty-first century: *capitalism*? I have explored this question in more detail, elsewhere, but pose it here as a starting point towards thinking about what Buddhist "resistance" might mean in the twenty-first century.

Before going further, a few words need to be said about "Buddhism"—a word that, perhaps even more than "capitalism," is fraught with definitional ambiguities. First and foremost, there is not, and has never been, a single "thing"—whether we want to call it a "religion," "philosophy," "ritual tradition," or "institution"—called Buddhism.[2] Even setting aside the fact that "Buddhism" is a Western term of relatively recent coinage, the significant cultural, linguistic and sectarian variations among those who have followed some version of the Dharma render it foolhardy to suggest an "essence" (at any rate, many of the classical texts push strongly *against* the search for "essence" in anything). I see this definitional fluidity less as a limiting factor than as an opportunity, though one we must approach with the cautionary tales of a century or more of Western orientalism (both negative and more recently, partly due to the work of Suzuki, romantic and idealizing). At any rate, while there

can be no single definition of a set of rituals, practices, values and ideas as diverse as those which are labelled "Buddhist," I hold it uncontroversial to claim that, whatever else may be involved, the various Dharmic traditions provide *methods for the amelioration if not elimination of "suffering" among and between sentient beings*.[3] In short, while "Buddhism" shows significant variation in doctrine and practice across time, space, languages and cultures, it is difficult to make the case that its "adaptability" extends to ideologies or modes of thought and practice that work against the aim of amelioration of suffering for sentient beings. Fascist Buddhism is simply fascism in saffron robes.

3 What is (Buddhist) "Engagement"?

The question of Buddhist resistance brings us to a discussion of Socially Engaged Buddhism (often shortened to Engaged Buddhism), a loose movement of Buddhist monks, scholars, and lay activists that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s via the work of Thich Nhat Hanh (b. 1926), A. T. Ariatayne (b. 1931), Sulak Sivaraksa (b. 1933), and the XIVth Dalai Lama (b. 1935). Queen and King locate the roots of Engaged Buddhism in earlier south Asian figures, including especially Sri Lankan lay Buddhist reformer Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933) and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956), one of the founding figures of modern India.[4] My work on the East Asian context suggests that, in fact, there were Chinese, Korean and Japanese precedents dating back to roughly the same period as Dharmapala, including Taixu (1890–1947) and the New Buddhist Fellowship (1899–1916) as well as even more radical groups like Seno'o Giro's Buddhist Marxist Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism (Jp. Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei, 1931–1936)—though these East Asian precedents are usually missed by scholars on Engaged Buddhism.[5] As with the New Buddhists before them, the work of Engaged Buddhists has been controversial, and not simply with more "conservative" Asian Buddhist leaders. Even some scholars of Buddhism question the "authenticity" of the movement.

A recent article by Amod Lele calls the question on Engaged Buddhism by challenging Engaged Buddhists to address the fact that most of classical Buddhism was *not* socially engaged—and indeed, in Lele's view, Buddhists texts and practices were largely *opposed* to involvement in social or political concerns.[6] Lele is quite right that contemporary Engaged Buddhism fails to adequately address the ways that their movement breaks with past precedent. That said, I believe there is a (possibly orientalist) risk in assuming that categories such as the "religious," "spiritual," "social," "economic," or "political" have tried and true resonance in premodern, non-Western cultures and traditions. Second, while assuredly most classical Buddhists were focused on concerns that today we might classify as "mental" or "internal," it is also true that, as Bernard Faure has noted, the assumption that these concerns were purely individual and (thereby) disconnected from the community belies the centrality of the *sangha* in traditional Buddhist ideas

and practice.[7] Third, while it may be too much to suggest that the Buddhist Dharma *is* an ethics or politics, the central role of ethics in Buddhist thought and practice renders it "social" (and, as I have argued elsewhere, "economic" and "political") almost by definition. And finally, given the interplay between the *sangha* and political leaders in various regions of Asia, to suggest that Buddhism has ever really been apolitical is to ignore history in favor of some idealized version of Buddhist teaching.[8]

4 From Engagement to Resistance

By "resistance," I refer to a mode of being and doing that in some fashion "resists" commonplace (or "common sense") expectations, assumptions and behaviors. More specifically, I understand resistance as a modality theorized (until the 1970s, under-theorized) by progressive thinkers working in the tradition of Marx and Engels and the nineteenth century anarchists, and carried on in the twentieth century by John Dewey (1859–1952), the Frankfurt School, Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), Henri Lefebvre (1900–1991), and more recently by various streams of post-colonial, queer, and gender theory. Generally, resistance theorists attempt to explain why the opposition of some groups against others is necessary under social, economic and political structures of domination that serve to discipline and construct specific (and often harmful) forms of subjectivity.[9] Here resistance is differentiated both from the more specific category or *revolution*, but also from mere *opposition* to authority, since resistance is generally understood "to contribute, in some way, to progressive transformation of the environment by attempting to undermine 'the reproduction of social structures and social relations'."[10] In short, unlike mere opposition, resistance is directed to individual and social transformation—it has a *political* intent.[11]

Another way of framing this is to consider Erik Olin Wright's distinction between *passive* and *active* forms of social reproduction, both of which play a significant role in sustaining and perpetuating our current global capitalist society. Whereas active social reproduction comes about by institutions and structures such as the police, courts, education, media, religion and so one, passive reproduction refers to "those aspects of social reproduction that are anchored in the mundane routines and activities of everyday life… [it] is simply a by-product of the ways in which the daily activities of people mesh in a kind of self-sustaining equilibrium in which the dispositions and choices of actors generate a set of interactions that reinforces those dispositions and choices."[12] While Buddhism can have a role in a critique of political institutions and social structures, the sharper edge of Dharmic critique would seem to lie with the everyday "habits of mind and body" that are less obviously supportive of structures of suffering and alienation. In this sense, truly, the *personal is political*.[13]

Many if not most Engaged Buddhists are dedicated to an ameliorative, reformist agenda, rather than one that might be called *ruptural* or revolutionary. In part this is

due to a general commitment to non-violence (Sk. *ahimsa*), as well as to the classically-approved mental state of *equanimity*, neither of which seem to work well with revolutionary transformation. But perhaps this is making the issue too stark. I suggest that resistance—especially at the level of social reproduction—may in fact be most effective when aligned with an *interstitial* modality.[14]

5 Buddhist Criticism

In order to flesh out these issues further, in the section we will explore the concepts of Buddhist *criticism* and Buddhist *power*. For the first term I invoke the Critical Buddhist (*hihan bukkyō*) movement that arose in the 1980s and 1990s in Japan—the subject of my 2011 monograph: *Critical Buddhism: Engaging with Modern Japanese Buddhist Thought*. Matsumoto Shirō and Hakamaya Noriaki, the two Japanese Buddhist scholars who founded the movement, recognized serious problems with the way Buddhism has been both understood and practiced in the modern period, if not before. They argued that: (1) the early Buddhist tradition was established on premises that can be considered rational, skeptical, and broadly humanistic in their ethical force; (2) over time, due to various factors, these "critical" aspects had withered if not disappeared in most branches of the Asian Buddhist tradition, but particularly the Chan and Zen traditions of East Asia; (3) as a result, contemporary Asian Buddhism—and particularly Japanese Buddhism—was in need of a reformation, which might be brought about through a combination of textual scholarship and comparative analysis, utilizing resources from Western thought traditions such as the work of René Descartes (1596–1650)—that most unlikely of Buddhists. More specifically, the Critical Buddhists founded their arguments on a clear distinction between ways of thinking and valuing they called *critical* and those they referred to as *topical*, contrasting terms associated with the methodological analysis of Descartes on the one hand and his presumed foil and foe, the Italian thinker Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), on the other.[15]

So, if Buddhism must be critical, then what, exactly, does it mean to be critical, or to practice—and embody—*criticism*? For Hakamaya, to be critical implies, first and foremost, the ability and willingness (perhaps, to invoke Kant, *courage*) to make clear distinctions. He argues that it is in fact only critical thinking that can combat worldly discrimination (in the socio-political sense), which results precisely from a lack of logical/ethical discrimination, often in the name of some greater unity or harmony (e.g., racism, ethno-chauvinism, religious exclusivism, nationalism). Topicalism, a Latinate term back-translated by Matsumoto into Sanskrit as *dhātu-vāda*—implying something like the "way of locus," or simply, essentialism—stands as the primary foil or antithesis for Critical Buddhism. Defined by Matsumoto as "a substantialist monism in which the Buddha-nature is the sole foundational reality out of which apparent reality is produced"[16] and by Jamie Hubbard as "an aesthetic mysticism unconcerned with critical differentiation between truth and falsity and not in need of rational demonstration,"[17] topicalism is

a way of thinking about Buddhism, scholarship, religion, and, one might add, life more generally which is based on the notion of "a singular, real locus (*dhātu*) that gives rise to a plurality of phenomena [...] a 'generative monism' or a 'transcendental realism'."[18]

It is important to note here that Critical Buddhism is not understood by Hakamaya and Matsumoto as merely Cartesian rationalism or Enlightenment humanism in Buddhist guise, but is rather as being ostensibly founded on certain inviolable Buddhist doctrines or principles against which everything else—even other doctrines and forms of belief held sacrosanct in some Buddhist quarters—must be judged. Thus, while heavily indebted to rationalist (and, to some extent, pragmatist) philosophical methods, criticalism is founded on (Buddhist) *faith*, where faith is not to be understood as "the unity of the object of belief and believer," but rather as believing in—*holding true and abiding by*—certain key doctrines such as *pratītya-samutpāda* (dependent origination), while using one's intellect and language to judge and elaborate the meaning and practical application of these principles in relation to nature and contemporary social forms. Thus, as with Descartes, there is a limited form of skepticism at work, but one that is always secondary to the primary, ethical *telos* of Buddhist practice.

Along these lines, the proper question to ask from the perspective of Critical Buddhism is not "What is Buddhism?" but rather "What is the *purpose* of Buddhism?" Hakamaya, in his attack on so-called topical thinking, criticizes the notion that *satori* or awakening is the goal of Buddhism; rather, he argues, the goal is *dharma-pravicaya*—"the clear discrimination of phenomena."[19] But even this is not really the end or *telos* of Critical Buddhism; it is rather its mode or method. The *goal* of Critical Buddhism is instead "the realization of 'wisdom' (*bodhi*) for the practice of 'great compassion' (*mahākaruṇā*)"[20]—in short, the aspiration and subsequent work to ameliorate the suffering of sentient beings. Although they do not invoke Aristotle, the Critical Buddhist argument suggests that the Dharma is really a form of *phronesis* or practical, embodied and "engaged" wisdom—what moderns following Marx would call *praxis.*[21]

6 Buddhist Power

For the Critical Buddhists, then, at the very root of Buddhism is *criticism*, which might be understood as a form of *resistance* to the everpresent temptations of greed, hatred and delusion—temptations which they suggest have occluded many of East Asian Buddhism's own teachings. That said, as with the Engaged Buddhists, the "politics" of Critical Buddhism tend towards the liberal and reformist rather than the progressive or revolutionary. This is where we might benefit from a brief analysis of *power* in a (modern) Buddhist context. While "power" is often understood, at least in its popular usage, in Machiavellian, "zero-sum" terms—what we might call *power-over*—I suggest that a Buddhist understanding of *power* benefits

from being put into conversation not with Descartes or Vico but rather Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677)—that arch-heretic of the radical European Enlightenment.

Above all, the aim of Spinoza's work is *joy* (L. *gaudium*), understood as an active affect that marks the increase of our power to act and think.[22] Here, joy" is not a static state, like contentment (or equinaminity?), but "rather a dynamic process that continues only so long as our powers continue to increase."[23] The manifestation of joy, however, relies on an increase in power—these two are intrinsically, we might say causally, related. But we need to be careful here, lest we fall into Machiavellian or Nietzschean traps. Power in Spinoza includes a strong measure of "sensitivity," or the capacity to be affected, and thus is intrinsically connected with *others* and *community*:

> The greater our mind's ability to think, the greater its capacity to be affected by the ideas of others; the greater our body's ability to act, the greater its capacity to be affected by other bodies. And we have greater power to think and to act, Spinoza explains, the more we interact and create common relations with others. Joy, in other words, is really the result of joyful encounters with others, encounters that increase our powers, and the institution of these encounters such that they last and repeat.[24]

Joy, again, is intrinsically connected to *power*, understood in this relational, expansive rather than restrictive sense. Spinoza's understanding of power is, in turn, rooted in his *pantheism*—or, as I would prefer to call it, his *dynamic naturalism*, according to which "everything—and especially every living thing—is a dynamic process, an organization of matter rather than an inert lump of matter."[25] "Power is therefore not a fixed attribute of any particular material thing, but an attribute of the relationships through which a complex body is continually regenerated and persists in being."[26] Power, then, is the capacity to subsist, or, to add a normative spin that moves us away from Social Darwinian ideologies towards Spinozan *joy*, to flourish.[27] Thus the principle Spinozan virtue of *fortitude*, or constancy, defined by Stewart in quasi-Buddhist terms as "the 'mindfulness' that we possess insofar as we exercise genuine understanding of ourselves and our world."[28]

In their progressive reinvigoration of Spinoza, Hardt and Negri argue that instituting "happiness" is not only "a political but also an ontological project." At the same time, it is also an existential one, since happiness in Spinozan thought is intrinsically connected to "power," understood as an expanded subjectivity: "With each increase of our power we become different, adding to what we are, expanding our social being. Being is not fixed once and for all in some otherworldly realm but constantly subject to a process of becoming. Human nature is similarly not immutable but rather open to a process of training and education."[29] A similar conclusions is reached by Gilles Deleuze, who describes Spinozan sagehood in the following terms: "Humility, poverty, and chastity become the effects of an especially rich and superabundant life, sufficiently powerful to have conquered thought and subordinated every other instinct to itself. This is what Spinoza calls Nature: a life no longer lived on the basis of need, in terms of means and ends, but according to a production, a potency, in terms of causes and effects."[30]

A recognition of boundless human possibility is of course, foundational to European Enlightenment thought, and particularly to humanism. It is also, *mutatis mutandae*, foundational to classical Buddhist doctrine. And yet it may well be that classical Buddhism has a leg up on the Enlightenment when it comes to recognition of the limits of this "freedom," which is better understood as a shaping of conditions than a breaking away from them. After all,

> This does not mean that there are no limits to what we can do or that we can break absolutely from the past to create a clean slate: there are no leaps in nature, as the evolutionary biologists like to say. What it does mean, though, is that change is possible at the most basic level of our world and ourselves and that we can intervene in this process to orient it along the lines of our desires, towards happiness.[31]

Hardt and Negri argue that, over time, the Spinozan "joy" in community was forgotten (or suppressed?) as eighteenth-century happiness "is turned inward in the nineteenth century and made sentimental." They blame Thomas Jefferson, in particular, for introducing the claim to happiness as a political right, which "cedes to narratives of individual contentedness." As such:

> Happiness is separated from reason, to which it was so strongly tied in the eighteenth century, and becomes and remains today merely a passion, something we feel, not something we do—an individual sentiment stripped of political meaning. Sympathy and pity present mechanisms of association and social constitution, but ones that are powerless and even block our power.[32]

Although this may unfair to Jefferson, who, as Stewart has shown, was for much of his life a dedicated Epicurean (and possibly Spinozan), the point stands that "happiness" or "joy" has lost much its philosophical and political resonance—it's Spinozan *oomph*—as least as it is normally understood in locutions such as the "pursuit of happiness."[33] I will return to this below in a discussion of happiness-within-community.

7 Boundless Abodes

Above I made the claim that the Buddhist tradition(s), for all their variation, are rooted in a fundamental—however quixotic/bodhisattvic—commitment to reducing if not eliminating *suffering* as a condition of sentience. The *goal* of Buddhadharma is most often understood in terms of the universal achievement of this condition, originally called *nirvāṇa*/*nibbana*; in English, usually translated as enlightenment or awakening. Although this is often understood classically in purely negative terms —i.e., the *end of suffering*—it is important to emphasize that there are also positive components to this condition, best exemplified in the Four Boundless Qualities (or Abodes; Sk. *brahmavihārā*): *loving-kindness* (*maitrī*/*metta*); *compassion* (*karuna*); *empathetic joy* (*mudita*); and *equanimity* (*upekṣā*/*upekkha*), all of which are assumed to not only *cohere with*, but I suggest, *instantiate*, awakening.

The first point to note about these "abodes" is that the first three are clearly "ethical"—in the sense that they make little sense out of a context of social relations (or, at the very least, relations with non-human sentient beings). However else they may be understood, loving-kindness, compassion and empathetic joy *require* a "move" towards the "other"—and one that implies an opening (or erasure) of "self" rather than a closure, as might be the case in an agonistic move. The fourth abode, *equanimity*, seems distinct—and indeed, some scholars (e.g., Bhikku Bodhi) have suggested that it must be understood as the pinnacle or crowning abode. And yet, I want to make the case here that equanimity is also a condition that implies a dynamic "expansion" of being, one rooted in something like "resistance." Here goes.

Although often defined as a "pure mental state" that is cultivated on the "path to *nirvana*," I argue that such an understanding severely limits the potential value of equanimity within a Buddhist or Dharmic framework. Again, this is *not* to suggest that classical Buddhist texts and interpreters did not privilege the mind over the body—it would be foolish to argue that they did not. And yet, the point I want to push is that, according to fundamental Buddhist logic, there can be no "pure" mental state; mental states are themselves conditioned by and imbricated in material states, including but not limited to one's physical body. It may be instructive to compare *upekṣā*/*upekkha* to the classical Greek *ataraxia*, which is often also translated as equanimity or tranquility. Etymologically, the term derives from a direct negation (*a*-) of *tarachê*, disturbance or trouble. First employed by Pyrrho the Skeptic to refer to the goal of complete freedom from distress, the term was picked up by Stoics and Epicureans. For Pyrrho, *ataraxia* emerges from the ability to suspend judgment regarding all matters of "non-evident belief." For the Epicureans, *ataraxia* was understood more specifically as the complete absence of *mental* suffering, and contrasted with *aponia*, which indicated the absence of *physical* suffering. While both are Epicurean goals, the former state is considered higher (and more difficult to achieve), since physical pleasure is transient compared with mental pleasure. For the Stoics, *ataraxia* plays a less central role; while still important, it is considered a byproduct of living a life of virtue according to nature.

There are certainly resonances here: *upekkha* is, like the Pyrrhonist *ataraxia*, a manifestation of fortitude against the vicissitudes of everyday life (sometimes numerated as eight: loss and gain, good- and ill-repute, praise and censure, sorrow and happiness). More than simply a state of calm, it is thus a form of *resistance*—though I hesitate to invoke the loaded term "will."[34] One distinction here is that the Buddhist "abobe" is clearly broader in scope than the Pyrrhonian state; if anything, it seems closest to the Epicurean understanding, though only if *ataraxia* and *aponia* are combined. But then, in line with the Stoic insistence on virtue, *upekkha* must/will extend outwards towards fellow sufferers. It is a *foundation* for loving-kindness, compassion and empathetic joy, not an *alternative*.

According to Buddhaghosa, the "far enemy" of *upekkha* is greed and resentment, while the "near" (and thus, one assumes, more dangerous) enemy is indifference or apathy.[35] This point is elaborated by Bhikku Bodhi, who writes:

> The real meaning of upekkha is equanimity, not indifference in the sense of unconcern for others. As a spiritual virtue, upekkha means stability in the face of the fluctuations of worldly fortune. It is evenness of mind, unshakeable freedom of mind, a state of inner equipoise that cannot be upset by gain and loss, honor and dishonor, praise and blame, pleasure and pain. *Upekkha* is freedom from all points of self-reference; it is indifference only to the demands of the ego-self with its craving for pleasure and position, not to the well-being of one's fellow human beings.[36]

8 Buddhist Freedom/Buddhist Agency

I am intrigued by the invocation of the term "freedom" in both the Greek understanding of *ataraxia* and at least Bhikkhu Bodhi's interpretation of *upekkha*. It is not uncommon for Buddhist awakening to be framed in terms of "freedom"—albeit this is usually understood more specifically as *liberation from suffering*. Rather than get bogged down here in the philosophical question of "free will" in Buddhist tradition, I will follow this thread in a direction that is somewhat more ethical or political.

Let us begin with *agency*, which is the aspect of individualism and "freedom" that, I argue, resonates most strongly with classical Buddhist understandings.[37] Agency is best understood as the capacity of people to act as "conscious[ly] reflecting initiators of acts in a structured, meaningful world"—in other words, as a manifestation of *power*.[38] Here agency is intrinsically connected to creativity and improvisation, but does not deny the reality of various constraints, "both those generated by social structures within which people act and the internalized constraints embodied in beliefs and habits."[39] Rather than see these constraints as negatives, working against "freedom," a Dharmic view of agency would recognize the value of at least certain forms of constraint, particularly those imposed upon oneself as part of a commitment to ameliorating suffering (i.e., "entering the stream"). Of course, Buddhist tradition also clearly recognizes and warns against the forces of habits that stem from addiction or from unreflective passivity. This is precisely why agency is foundational: Buddhist awakening *requires* a recognition of the capacity for the free determination and active realization of "better" forms of living as an individual and in community. And yet, to shift to the term *autonomy*, the Dharmic path, like that of Aristotle, highlights the inextricable interdependence of self and other beings, such that agency does not imply a complete separation of the individual, but rather a balance of sorts between personal responsibility (and liberation) and the movement towards others (via the virtues of loving-kindness, compassion and the bodhisattva ideal).[40] Once again, this tracks back to a Buddhist sense of "agency" as well as an evocation of "power" in Spinoza's sense: "the *capacity* of actors to accomplish things [or 'produce effects'] in the world."[41]

When formulated thus, I see a strong parallel here with the mode of discourse or *habitus* that Sallie King has called the "prophetic voice"—which she associates with some though perhaps not all contemporary Engaged Buddhists.[42]

By definition, a "prophet" is one who calls out the problems of the status quo, whether religious, ideological, political, economic, or most often, a combination of all of these. One of the great strengths, arguably, of the biblical traditions is precisely this strain of "prophecy," which has played a not insignificant role in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim "resistance" (i.e., to kings, caliphs, priests, and mullahs) over the centuries. I believe it is fair to say that the prophetic voice is relatively weaker within Asian Buddhist traditions, though there are certainly exceptions, such as Japan's Nichiren. But we also have to consider that "prophecy" need not entail aggression or persecution: one could make the case that certain Mahāyāna texts (e.g., the *Heart Sutra*) and thinkers (e.g., Nagārjuna, Dōgen), who clearly break with many if not most of established Buddhist "norms" are manifesting the prophetic voice—a voice of resistance, a counter-power.

King is concerned with Engaged Buddhist leaders—modern day bodhisattvas. Here I want to focus on ordinary "stream enterers." Bronwyn Finnigan's 2017 essay on "The Nature of a Buddhist Path" provides some useful material for the sort of claims I am making; i.e., to understand the practice of Buddhism along lines that are critical, naturalistic, and "political." Finnigan, echoing certain Mahāyāna thinkers, including Dōgen, suggests that: "the goal of the Buddhist path is not a separate and distinct event that is caused by acquiring and engaging various modes of wisdom, living, and mental discipline. Rather it marks their point of perfection or completion (the *telos*) and thus is actualized in their very engagement."[43] Moreover, Finnigan links this "constitutive" understanding of the path to the Four Abobes: "The perfection of these distinct modes of living is analyzed in relation to the cultivation of the four immeasurable attitudes (loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity)." Rejecting a simple understanding of the abodes as "emotions" (the nature of which is under dispute among scholars), Finnigan argues that each abode is better understood as "an intentional attitude that is (1) about or directed towards certain kinds of objects construed in certain kinds of ways, and (2) made manifest in certain kinds of bodily and behavioral responses, where (1) and (2) are constitutive of the relevant attitude rather than related to it either as cause of effect."[44] This constitutive, holistic understanding of the four abodes brings them into line with a reading of Buddhist ethics as a sort of "virtue ethics"—a claim made some decades ago by Damien Keown and criticized or nuanced since by other scholars. I concur with Finnigan that those who dismiss this connection because of the Aristotelian presupposition of a "self" miss the diversity of contemporary elaborations of virtue ethics, which do not always rely on such.[45]

Despite not being a scholar of East Asian Buddhism, it comes as no surprise to see Finnigan look to Zen and Dōgen—hero of the Critical Buddhists—in support of her claims, citing the "awakening" of the Japanese Sōtō Zen master to a conception of enlightenment that locates it very much in the mundane—in the midst of this-worldly or "secular" activity. In Dōgen's words: "When you find your place where you are, practice occurs, actualizing the fundamental point. When you find your way at this moment, practice occurs, actualizing the fundamental point."[46] This prioritization of the "immediate"—not in the sense here of some mystical experience but simply of what Heidegger might call the "ready to hand," was

picked up in the early twentieth century by the Japanese New Buddhists, who I have argued are perhaps—along with Dharmapala—the first truly Engaged Buddhists of modernity.

9 New Buddhism: Secular and Social

The Japanese New Buddhist Fellowship (Shin Bukkyō Dōshikai) which lasted from 1899 to 1915, was an attempt by several dozen young lay Buddhists to reinvent Buddhism as pan-sectarian, non-institutional, and—as I have argued—palpably *secular* (in the sense of this-worldly and even "materialistic"). In constructing their "new" or "revitalized" Buddhism, the New Buddhists borrowed freely from Russian, European and American thought traditions, especially liberal and progressive social and political theories of the mid-late nineteenth century (distinguishing them from the Critical Buddhists more limited adoptions). In July 1900, a magazine called *Shin Bukkyō* (New Buddhism), was launched as the new movement's mouthpiece. The first edition of the first volume begins with the groups "manifesto" or *sengen.* "Humanity," it begins, "is in a state of decline. Society has been corrupted to its roots, and the rushing water of a great springtide threatens to drown us all, as at the time of the Great Flood. Moreover, religions, which are supposed to give light to darkness and provide solace, have been losing strength year by year." This is quickly followed by a scathing attack on "old Buddhism" (*kyū bukkyō*) as being little more than a rotting corpse, its adherents weeping "tears of joy" over their palatial buildings and fine brocades.[47]

Here I want to highlight two particular characteristic features of the work of the New Buddhists: *secularism* and *social(ism)*. First and foremost is an unabashed affirmation of "this world"—and concomitant assertion that Buddhism is *all* about worldly suffering and release (Jp. *genseishugi*).[48] Whereas other Buddhist reformers such as Nakanishi Ushirō had contrasted the "materialism" of the "old" Buddhism with the "spiritualism" of the new, and, in similar fashion, the "scholarship" of traditional monastic Buddhism with the "faith"-orientation of the new, lay Buddhism, the New Buddhists to some extent reverse these, so that it is the "old" Buddhism that focuses on "spiritual" matters, while New Buddhism is content with addressing "real," "practical" issues of this life—poverty, hunger, and so on.[49] Moreover, while they began the movement as self-identified "puritans," some, including Sugimura Jūō, were hesitant to push this idea too far, lest it begin to sound overly "renunciative," "severe," or "pessimistic." Here, again, their "puritanism" was of a different sort than the "passive" and "world-denying" asceticism (Jp. *kinyokushugi*) of the monks and priests. Rather, it denoted a sincere, focused and "pro-active engagement" with the world (Jp. *sekkyokuteki na katsudō*)—one that was also not averse to seeking "pleasure". Indeed, in one of the most striking characterizations of Buddhism I have ever encountered, at one point the New Buddhists assert that Buddhist awakening is entirely about "joy":

> They [that is, "old Buddhists"] cannot eat meat or have wives, cannot sleep at night or rest in the day. In addition, they cannot enjoy themselves, laugh, get angry or sad—this, they say, is what makes them different from everyone else. But New Buddhists have no interest in this. Our New Buddhism is simply about having faith in the power to experience the ordinary joys of life (*tada heibon naru yorokobi o nasan to suru chikara o shinkō ni uru nomi*). And what is faith but the passion that comes from being struck by the actuality of the cosmos. In bringing back enjoyment and lightheartedness, we gain the strength to advance our mind and spirit. Our New Buddhism is a religion rooted in the ordinary, whose faith is in the actual, and whose fruits are of this world (*kekka wa genseshugi nari*).[50]

Second, and related, is the New Buddhist insistence on "social" (Jp. *shakaiteki*) and even "socialist" (Jp. *shakaishugi*) Buddhism. While the political leanings of the core members varied from moderately liberal to radical, the New Buddhists had generally positive relationships with secular leftists activists and thinkers—including several of the most prominent anarchists and socialists of the period. It was, they asserted, a natural move from a modern, "this worldly" Buddhism to one that is directly engaged in proposing Buddhist solutions to major social problems such as poverty, inequality, and imperialism.[51]

Finally, since I invoked the spirit of Spinoza above, let me add that the New Buddhists also claimed that the most appropriate metaphysical foundation for Buddhism—should it need one—was *pantheism* (Jp. *hanshinron*). Though they failed to explore this connection in much detail, I suspect that there is a nod to Spinoza and the "alternative" tradition of Western philosophy that he represents—one in which the interdependence of being and the lack of clear boundaries between "matter" and "spirit" provide a basis for cultivating a form of "practical wisdom" or *prajña* that can "resist" the illusions to which we, as social creatures living in ideological structures, are so prone.

10 Conclusions

When considering the implications and significance of Buddhist politics—especially a politics or ethic of resistance—it is useful to recall that the Dharmic traditions of thought and practice may contribute less to an analysis and evaluation of *social order* than to *social reproduction*. While theories of social order and theories of social reproduction both seek to explain social conditions, including integration and stability, theories of social order tend to assume "Hobbesian" predation as a counterfactual, building up laws, civic structures and states as a bulwark against ("natural") disorder. Theories of social reproduction, on the other hand, see in many of the structures of "social order" precisely the roots of despair and suffering: "The problem of social reproduction is grounded in the latent potential for people collectively to challenge structures of domination, oppression, and exploitation. The theory attempts to explain the mechanisms that generate sufficiently stable forms of cooperation and system integration to mute such collective tendencies for transformation."[52] And of course, "social reproduction" can take many forms beyond

capitalism or neoliberalism—religion, as well, is often complicit and thus a legitimate target of critique. It is important to recall, once again, that this may have little to do with the deliberate (i.e., malicious) intentions and actions of powerful actors. Rather, the correspondence of "ideology" and a particular culture is often—and more assiduously—generated by the "micro-processes of the formation of beliefs and dispositions," which include various institutions of socialization that enable young people to function and (for the fortunate few) "succeed" in that society. While these micro-processes do not always work, of course, they are powerful, and over time function collectively as serious limitations on the horizons of human possibility, both individual and collective.[53]

Finally, *power* is too-often understood by liberals, progressives and perhaps most conservatives as a zero sum phenomenon ('power over') whereby an increase in one's power means a decrease of limit in the power or agency of another being. But if power is understood in relation to integrity, agency, and "freedom," as noted above, it need not imply "domination" (in fact, domination would indicate a *lack* of power or freedom). In particular, Buddhism might contribute to a better understanding of *social power*—i.e., "the capacity to mobilize people for cooperative, voluntary collective actions of various sorts in civil society"—in hopes that this can replace or ameliorate our current reliance under neoliberal capitalism on *economic power*.[54] As such, Buddhism might even be a voice in the construction of "countervailing power" and, eventually a truer democracy rooted in empowered participatory governance.[55] But this will require more work.

Notes

1. D. T. Suzuki. *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture* (Kyoto: Eastern Buddhist Society, 1938), 36–7.
2. While I appreciate Faure's work on dismantling overgeneralizations about "Buddhism" in order to restore "the complexity and richness of the Buddhist tradition," such a sentiment can be taken too far, such that it becomes impossible to make any claims at all about "the Buddhist tradition." See Bernard Faure. *Unmasking Buddhism* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 4.
3. Though there are countless sources in the Buddhist canon for this basic teaching (e.g. the Four Noble Truths), in thinking through what this means for ethics I default to the Buddhist formulation of the "Golden Rule" as found in the *Saṃyutta-Nikāya*: "For a state that is not pleasant or delightful to me must be so to him also; and a state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?" (cited in Peter Harvey. *Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 33). What may be missed but needs to be underscored here is that this logical reflection is derived from a naturalistic, even Epicurean premise—which Schmidt-Leukel calls a "fundamental insight" of classical Buddhism—that all beings "[…] yearn for happiness and recoil from pain" (*Majjhima-Nikāya* 51; Perry Schmidt-Leukel.

"Buddhism and the Idea of Human Rights: Resonances and Dissonances." In *Buddhist Approaches to Human Rights: Dissonances and Resonances*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Hans-Bernd Zöllner [Berlin: Verlag, 2010], 54).

4. See Christopher Queen and Sallie King (eds). *Engaged Buddhism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).
5. See, e.g., Queen and King. *Engaged Buddhism*, where the only East Asian examples noted are postwar Taiwanese Buddhist humanism and Japan's Sōka Gakkai (and the latter only with some noted ambivalence as to whether it qualifies as "engaged Buddhism"). See also James Mark Shields. *Against Harmony: Progressive and Radical Buddhism in Modern Japan* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
6. See Amod Lele. "Disengaged Buddhism." *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 26 (2019), 239–90. I have written an extended response to Lele's excellent and timely provocation, which has yet to be published.
7. Faure, *Unmasking*, 17, 69; see also Schmidt-Leukel, "Human Rights," 47–48.
8. As Faure puts it: "[H]istory reveals that Buddhism has always been engaged and involved in political and social life—perhaps too much at times" (Faure, *Unmasking*, 130).
9. See Kathleen Knight Abowitz. "A Pragmatist Revisioning of Resistance Theory." *American Educational Research Journal* 37 (4): 878.
10. See Abowitz, "Pragmatist Revisioning," 878, citing J. C. Walker. "Rebels With Our Applause? A Critique of Resistance Theory in Paul Willis' Ethnography of Schooling." *Journal of Education* 167, 2 (1985), 65.
11. Space and scope prohibit further investigation here, but I should note that Dewey's work on *transactional* modes of inquiry is particularly germane to classical Buddhist approaches to knowledge (and skepticism): "Transaction is the condition of seeing things not in isolation, nor in terms of their "true" nature or essence, but in terms of their systemic context, their tentative and preliminary status as points of inquiry, their place in an organic world of expanding space and time" (Abowitz, "Pragmatic Revisioning," 878–9).
12. Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (London and New York: Verso, 2010): 274–6.
13. I am reminded of Damien Keown's recent argument that classical Buddhism lacks a true "moral philosophy" such as one finds in ancient Greece, which echoes Jay Garfield's claim that premodern Buddhism lacks anything like a social or political theory. See Damien Keown. "It's Ethics, Jim, but Not as We Know It': Reflections on the Absence of Moral Philosophy in Buddhism." In *A Mirror is for Reflection: Understanding Buddhist Ethics*, edited by Jake H. Davis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 17–32; see also P. Bilimoria et al. (eds). *Indian Ethics* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 280. While I take the point that ethics and politics are largely under-theorized in classical Buddhist texts, I question the rather sharp lines that Keown and Garfield seems to draw between these and related categories. Garfield, in particular, seems to limit "politics" to modern, liberal theories of government and the state.

14. Some leftist scholars, in fact, complain that the recent obsession with "resistance" among progressives in fact is a step back from "revolution"—a complaint that has long precedent in Marxist critiques of non-revolutionary forms of anarchism and socialism, dating back to Marx himself. There is an interesting philosophical question here, and one that is not without political implications: *At what point does "engagement" become "resistance," and "resistance" become "revolution"?* Or are there qualitative distinctions between these three 'modes'?
15. See James Mark Shields. *Critical Buddhism: Engaging with Modern Japanese Buddhist Thought* (London: Ashgate, 2011).
16. Matsumoto Shirō. "The Doctrine of *Tathāgata-garbha* Is Not Buddhist." In *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Paul L. Swanson, and Jamie Hubbard (Honolulu: University of Hawai 'i Press, 1997), 171.
17. Jamie Hubbard. "Topophobia." In *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Paul L. Swanson, and Jamie Hubbard (Honolulu: University of Hawai 'i Press, 1997), vii.
18. Matsumoto, "*Tathāgata-garbha*," 171.
19. Hakamaya Noriaki. "Critical Philosophy versus Topical Philosophy." In *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Paul L. Swanson, and Jamie Hubbard (Honolulu: University of Hawai 'i Press, 1997), 74.
20. Yamaguchi Zuiho, quoted in Hubbard, "Topophobia," xvi.
21. While Damien Keown ("It's Ethics") suggests that the apparent lack of Buddhist "moral philosophy" may have to do with a lack within the classical Indian *imaginaire* of anything like *phronesis*—a strong claim with which I will not currently engage—it is certainly *not* the case that "practical wisdom" is foreign to the East Asian intellectual traditions. If anything, a case could be made that it is *all* practical wisdom, all the time. Keown goes on to suggest (citing Jay Garfield) that classical Buddhism, at least, also lacks a concern with politics, understood as "the philosophy of human affairs" (25). As is obvious from my work over the past decade, I respectfully disagree—unless one limits a definition of politics to "affairs of the state.".
22. "Spinoza's moral philosophy is a version of eudaimonism. The goal is living well and, through virtue and understanding, achieving happiness and even 'blessedness (*beatitudo*)'" (Steven Nadler. "On Spinoza's 'Free Man'." *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1, 1 [2015], 105). The *locus classicus* of eudaimonism is of the *Nichomachean Ethics* (1098a10), where Aristotle defines *eudaemonia*—"happiness" or "human flourishing"—as "activity of the soul in accord with virtue… in a complete life." While Charles Goodman rightly sees resonances here with classical Buddhism, he points out that Buddhist texts tend to see "virtue" as being the all-in-all, such that it is plausible for someone of advanced meditative practice to feel "happy" while suffering tremendous physical pains (what we might call a Christian or Stoic turn, as opposed to the more moderate Epicurean/Spinozan one). "Unlike

Aristotle, Mahayana Buddhists such as Santideva held that happiness could exist without any contribution from favorable external circumstances. This claim creates the possibility of holding that only the virtue that makes this special kind of happiness plausible has any value at all." See Charles Goodman. "Modern and Traditional Understandings of Karma." In *A Mirror is for Reflection: Understanding Buddhist Ethics*, edited by Jake H. Davis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 136.
23. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 379.
24. Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 379.
25. Matthew Stewart. *Nature's God: The Heretical Origins of the American Republic* (London: Norton, 2014), 294. A character in Bernard Malamud's novel *The Fixer* on reading Spinoza: "Later on I read through a few pages and kept on going as though there were a whirlwind at my back. … I didn't understand every word but when you're dealing with such ideas you feel as though you were taking a witch's ride. After that I wasn't the same man…" Same character describing the meaning of Spinoza's work: "That's not easy to say… But what I think it means is that he was out to make a free man of himself —as much as one can according to his philosophy, if you understand my meaning—*by thinking things through and connecting everything up…*" (quoted in Gilles Deleuze. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* [San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988], 1, my emphasis).
26. Stewart, *Nature's God*, 294.
27. Compare the concept of *de* as expressed in the Chinese classic *Daodejing*, especially as interpreted by Roger Ames and David Hall in their *Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation—"Making this Life Significant"* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), especially 59–61, where *de* resonates with Machiavellian *virtù.*
28. Stewart, *Nature's God*, 296.
29. Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 378.
30. Deleuze, *Spinoza*, 3.
31. Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 378; see also Peter Hershock. *Valuing Diversity: Buddhist Perspectives on Realizing a More Equitable Global Future* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), on Buddhist "virtuosity.".
32. Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 379. Matthew Stewart goes even further, dismissing virtually all philosophy after the eighteenth-century: "When the halcyon days of the philosophy of mind came to an end around the turn of the nineteenth century, a host of professor who called themselves 'philosophers' arose in defense of the hallowed prejudices about mind and soul"; this includes "reactionary Scottish sentimentalists" along with Kant (Stewart, *Nature's God*, 259–60).
33. Here is Jefferson's take on Epicurus, from his *Syllabus*: "Happiness the aim of life. Virtue the foundation of happiness. Utility the test of virtue"; and on the four essential Epicurean virtues: "1. Prudence; 2. Temperance; 3. Fortitude; 4. Justice" (cited in Stewart, *Nature's God*, 285). Stewart shifts blame away from

Jefferson onto John Locke, whose commitment to Spinozan materialism was mixed, at best.

34. Keown cites Oswald Spengler (!), who contrasts the Western "will" with Eastern… lack?: "In the ethics of the West everything is direction, claim to power, will to affect the distance… You 'shall', the State 'shall', society 'shall'—this form of morale is to us self-evident; it represents the only real meaning that we can attach to the word. But it was not so either in the Classical, or in India, or in China. Buddha, for instance, gives a pattern to take or to leave, and Epicurus offers counsel. Both undeniably are forms of high morale, and neither contains the will-element." (Keown, "It's Ethics," 30). Though we shouldn't take Spengler too seriously, the connection between Buddhism and Epicureanism is astute, reflecting the shared commitment to a form of resistance embedded in passive social reproduction.
35. Buddhaghosa Bhadantácariya. *Vishudimagga: The Path of Purification.* Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli. 4th edition. Section 2.101.
36. Bhikku Bodhi. "Toward a Threshold of Understanding." *Access to Insight* (Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, 1988).
37. See G. A. Cohen. *History, Labor and Freedom: Themes from Marx* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988) on agency and freedom in Marx.
38. Göran Therborn. *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1980).
39. Erik Olin Wright. *How to Be an Anti-capitalist in the 21st Century* (London: Verso, 2019), 122–3.
40. Elsewhere I have argued for a correlation between Buddhist understandings of a "social self" and Marx's "species being" (James Mark Shields. "Liberation as Revolutionary Praxis: Rethinking Buddhist Materialism." *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 20 [2013], 477–82). Here let it suffice that classical Buddhism contributes a sophisticated understanding of selfhood that privileges *agency* while questioning *autonomy* as an ideal. I see a parallel here, once again, in the work of scholars looking at Buddhism and human rights. For instance, Meinert and Zöllner argue for a Buddhist "moderate" approach to human rights, one that balances the need to "protect individuals against powerful institutions threatening or suppression from the outside and from within" with the danger of a reliance on "false claims to universality coded in the form of legal rights… this is, in fact, where Buddhism might be able to offer a great deal and possibly could make a major contribution to the discussion of, and demand for, *multiple foundations* of human rights regulations" ("Introduction" to *Buddhist Approaches to Human Rights: Dissonances and Resonances*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Hans-Bernd Zöllner [Berlin: Verlag, 2010], 11)—or, *mutatis mutandis*, multiple foundations for anticapitalism. This seems a better "balance" than the one presented by proponents of "Buddhist economics" such as E. F. Schumacher and P. Payutto; i.e., between capitalism and socialism/communism.

41. Wright, *Utopias*, 111.
42. Sallie B. King. "Conclusion: Buddhist Social Activism." In *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, edited by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 401–36. B. R. Ambedkar heads King's list of "prophetic voices" among Engaged Buddhists, followed by Sulak Sivaraksa and A. R. Ariyaratne.
43. Bronwyn Finnigan. "The Nature of a Buddhist Path." In *A Mirror is for Reflection: Understanding Buddhist Ethics*, edited by Jake H. Davis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 38.
44. Finnigan, "Buddhist Path," 39.
45. "[I]t is open to defenders of, say, a neo-Aristotelian approach to ethics to insist that virtues are character traits that, when perfected or made excellent, mutually constitute and sustain well-being or a good way of living (*eudaemonia*). If plausible, virtue-ethical reconstruction of Buddhist ethics on a constitutive metaphysical foundation need not be inconsistent with Buddhist view on the self" (Finnigan, "Buddhist Path," 41).
46. Cited in Finnigan, "Buddhist Path," 47; see also K. Tanahashi (ed.). *Moon in a Dewdrop* (New York: North Point Press, 1985), 72.
47. At the end of the manifesto we find the New Buddhist Fellowship's *Statement of General Principles* (*kōryō*), summarized in the following six points: 1) We regard a sound Buddhist faith as our fundamental principle; 2) We will work hard to foster sound faith, knowledge, and moral principles in order to bring about fundamental improvements to society; 3) We advocate the free investigation of Buddhism in addition to other religions; 4) We resolve to destroy superstition; 5) We do not accept the necessity of preserving traditional religious institutions and rituals; 6) We believe the government should refrain from favoring religious groups or interfering in religious matters.
48. While the modernistic emphasis on free inquiry and a rational, ethical and scientific outlook were also in evidence among the figures representing the earlier Buddhist Enlightenment, the New Buddhists—at least some of them—pushed the envelope much further in this direction, to the point where it could be legitimately asked what was left of "religion" (or "Buddhism") as conventionally understood.
49. While the New Buddhists did attempt to clarify a new Buddhist "faith," in doing so they radically transformed the ordinary sense of the term, so that it became a synonym for "moral commitment" or "sincere engagement" (or perhaps, in traditional Buddhist terms, "right intention").
50. SB 2, 12 (December 1901), p. 393.
51. Though this flirtation with socialism was considerably dampened by the crackdown following the 1911 High Treason Incident (during which twenty-four people, including Buddhist priests Takagi Kenmyō and Uchiyama Gudō were incarcerated for allegedly plotting to assassinate the Meiji Emperor), the spirit of Buddhist political resistance was picked up in the 1930s by Seno'o Girō and his more explicitly Marxist Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism.

52. Wright, *Utopias*, 278. This insight on the part of twentieth-century Buddhist socialists like Seno'o Girō was the inspiration for the title of my 2017 monograph: *Against Harmony.*
53. As Wright puts it, the processes of ideology formation generate "at least a rough correspondence between the kinds of social subjects needed for the social structure to be reproduced and the kinds of social subjects produced within the society" (Wright, *Utopias*, 285) One result is that "[p]eople can have many complaints about the social world and know that it generates significant harms to themselves and others, and yet still believe that such harms are inevitable, that there are no other real possibilities that would make things significantly better, and that thus there is little point in struggling to change things, particularly since such struggles involve significant costs" (286).
54. This is contrasted to *economic power* (associated with capitalism, which uses *bribery* as a method of persuasion, and *state power* (associated with both authoritarian and neoliberal states, which rely on force and ideology as primary methods of persuasion). That is not to suggest, of course, that social power is entirely distinguishable from economics or politics, but that these will be subordinate to a commitment to human social flourishing (thus, a "social economy"). See Wright, *Utopias*, 112–13, 121, 192; see also Steven Lukes. *Power: A Radical View*, 2nd edition (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
55. *Countervailing power* refers to "a wide variety of processes that reduce—and perhaps even neutralize—the power advantages of ordinarily powerful groups and elites in the contexts of these governmental institutions…" (Wright, *Utopias*, 165). Further, "if 'democracy' is the label for the subordination of state power to social power, 'socialism' in the term for the subordination of economic power to social power" (121).

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Ethics (Oxford, 2018), as well as the following two journal special issues: Japanese Religions and the Meiji Restoration: A Reconsideration (Journal of Japanese Religions 7, no. 3, 2018) and Radical and Revolutionary Buddhism(s) in Thought and Practice (Politics, Religion & Ideology 15, no. 2, 2014).