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Introduction to the Special Issue on “Applied Buddhism: Past and Present”

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Both “Engaged Buddhism” and “Applied Buddhism” are terms coined by the late Thich Nhat Hanh. The latter represents Nhat Hanh’s vision of engaged, spiritual practice in the twenty-first century. The two concepts, however, are interrelated. In Nhat Hanh’s words, “Nowadays we are using the term ‘Applied Buddhism,’ which is just another way of referring to Engaged Buddhism.”¹ Applied Buddhism was considered by Nhat Hanh as a strengthened practice for the long-term development of Engaged Buddhism. This development does not shy away from borrowing the spiritual teachings of other traditions, “from Christianity to Judaism and, from Asia, Taoism and Qi Gong,” as well as the “latest discoveries in neuroscience, quantum physics, social psychology and other secular disciplines.”² This vision led to the establishment of the European Institute for Applied Buddhism (EIAB) in 2008. The EIAB was entrusted with the mission of promoting the creation of healthy, peaceful, and sustainable communities based on five principles: 1) non-Buddhist teachings can become Buddhist teachings if they are properly applied in everyday life, 2) the use of the Four Noble Truths as one’s spiritual compass, 3) be motivated by the Bodhisattva aspiration, 4) what is transmitted to others must come from one’s practice and transformation, and 5) the importance of working as a strong community of practice.

Although Engaged Buddhism has its roots in Nhat Hanh’s antiwar activism during the 1950s, it has since developed into a variety of forms that address the political, economic, and spiritual needs of different people in different countries

¹ Thich Nhat Hanh, “The History of Engaged Buddhism,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 6 (2008), p. 36.

² European Institute of Applied Buddhism, *Newsletter*, August 2018, p.16.

at different times. This has happened under the leadership of Sulak Sivakrasa, B. R. Ambedkar, Maha Ghosananda, Robert Aitken, and others. The seed of Nhat Hanh's inspiration has grown into a multiplicity of offerings. In a similar vein, we may expect Applied Buddhism to flower in variegated ways. This was the principle behind the Conference on Applied Buddhism: Past and Present, which I helped organize and coordinate for Emmanuel College at Victoria University, with the sponsorship of the Buddhist Education Foundation of Canada, in 2016. This two-day conference had panels on "Future Directions for the Integration of Buddhist Psychology and Psychotherapy," "Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy in Canada," "Buddhist Education: From Past to Present, East to West," and "End-of-Life Care." Two additional panels—"Globalization of the Buddhist Sangha" and "Humanistic Buddhism from the Perspectives of Temple Leadership"—were intended for ordained members to discuss such topics. John Makransky delivered the conference's keynote speech.

The present issue is inspired by the experience of coordinating that conference. This is not to say, however, that this issue of the *Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies* represents the conference proceedings. The only paper that has a resemblance to the original conference presentation is Makransky's article, which was thoroughly edited and partly rewritten for this publication. Other contributors to the present issue, who also presented at the 2016 conference, include Lewis Lancaster, Philip D. Stanley, and Henry C. H. Shiu, all of whom submitted entirely different papers for this issue.³ The rest of the conference

³ The topic of Lancaster's presentation was "Social and Religious Issues: Future Role of Lay Buddhists"; Stanley's presentation was entitled "The Benefit of Integrating Meditation with Both

presenters, including Tony Toneatto, Lynette Monteiro, Cuilan Liu, and Sean Hillman, were invited to contribute to this issue but had to decline due to their hectic schedules. Invitations were then extended to Albert Allen, Nicolas Beaulieu, and Khenpo Kunga Sherab.

In this volume, Makransky's keynote script serves as the centrepiece that sets the tone of our understanding of Applied Buddhism in a way that is more expansive than, but does not completely depart from, the vision of Thich Nhat Hanh. Makransky encourages us to look deeply into the challenges of applying Buddhist teachings and practices in the contemporary world and suggests three models of Applied Buddhism that can help solve such challenges.

Lancaster's study of Maritime Buddhism is undoubtedly a research topic that is close to his heart. In his article, he emphasizes an "appeal to dynamics" approach to show how the spread of Buddhism is essentially an expansion of cultural features and practices. Lancaster's historical research not only documents the development of Maritime Buddhism but also helps us understand the nature of Applied Buddhism as a social and cultural feature of the West in the twenty-first century.

Nicolas Beaulieu and Albert Allen were Buddhist Education Foundation of Canada Fellows in Buddhism & Psychiatry in 2016–17 and 2019–20, respectively. Beaulieu contrasts the Buddhist notion of non-self (*ānatman*) with Western psychotherapeutic approaches and applies his findings to broaden the

Ethics and View in Applied Buddhism: The Role of Challenging Implicit Worldviews in Personal Transformation," while Shiu's presentation looked into the "Characteristics of Buddhist Studies in Modern China."

therapeutic repertoire. Allen examines three Buddhist approaches to anger—cognitive-attentional contemplative techniques, mindful awareness of anger, and heart-anger—and applies them to a trauma-informed Buddhist practice in order to transform the suffering of what Buddhists consider to be one of the six root afflictions (*kleśa*), or, which cloud the mind and lead to unwholesome actions (*karma*).

Moving away from the theoretical applications of Buddhist teachings and practices, the next two articles demonstrate the practical applications of Buddhism in modern-day Canada. Shiu investigates the meaning and practice of chaplaincy in the Buddhist context and the requirements to become accredited as a Buddhist chaplain in Canada. He also examines a joint professional training program offered by Emmanuel College and Knox College, which was designed to fulfill the accreditation requirements of the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario with a Buddhism focus. Khenpo Kunga Sherab applies the traditional Tibetan Buddhist *lo-jong* (Tib. *blo sbyong*), or “mind training” practice, to his experience of working as a Buddhist prison chaplain. In his article, he discusses the details of how he adapted this training practice to secular therapy models of mental health to help prisoners.

Philip D. Stanley concludes the volume with an emphasis on the Three Trainings of ethics, meditation, and wisdom as the spirit behind Applied Buddhism. He argues that secular mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) often favour meditation to the exclusion of the other two elements of the Three Trainings. He specifically draws on the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika schools to demonstrate the benefits of applying these teachings to MBIs.

In Thich Nhat Hanh's vision, Engaged Buddhism was perhaps something that belonged to the previous century. However, its full development in the name of Applied Buddhism has yet to be seen. The present issue does not cover all areas of Applied Buddhism. For example, in-depth discussions of the contributions of Applied Buddhism to environmentalism and to dying, death and bereavement were not included here. Yet we hope that the articles will spark an interest in further studies of Applied Buddhism. I am grateful to Paul Crowe and the editorial board for accepting my proposal for this special issue. My thanks also go to Sarah Haynes, who co-edited the issue with me.