

Four Ennobling Truths of Our Global Society

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This essay examines the situation of our contemporary global society, and takes the Buddhist doctrine of the Four Ennobling Truths as a heuristic device for understanding our ailing condition and seeking guidelines toward addressing it toward healing. This doctrine, said to be patterned on an ancient Indian medicinal tradition, involves a delineation of symptoms of an illness, a diagnosis of the causes behind these symptoms, a prognosis of recovery of health, and prescriptions of concrete steps to be taken toward healing. Describing some salient features of the diseased condition of our global community, the essay suggests a way of tracing its causes taking a framework presented by Buddhist philosopher David Loy that marks out institutionalized manifestations of the three poisons of greed, ill will, and delusion. It lays out scenarios of a global state of well-being, and considers pathways to this state of well-being, beginning with the cultivation of the first item in the Buddhist eightfold path, that is, Right View.

One of the features of our contemporary global scene is the increasingly dominant influence of “the West” upon “the rest,” that is, upon the vastly different “non-Western” societies and cultures throughout the world. This is especially so since the last few decades, with the seemingly inevitable, widely hailed yet also harshly critiqued, largely economically driven phenomenon of “globalization that is sweeping the face of the Earth.” [1]

In this essay, after taking a look at some features of our current global society, I will refer to core insights and teachings of a man who lived in North India roughly 2,500 years ago, for some guidelines in responding to the situation of our contemporary world.

The State of Our Global Society

According to UNICEF figures, every year 11 million children throughout the world die of hunger or malnutrition-related causes as well as preventable diseases such as diarrhea, malaria, or pneumonia. This comes out to around 30,000 children each day, or roughly 10 times more than those who died in the attacks on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, dying daily, and we can add, needlessly.

Every year, millions of people are displaced from their homes due to threats to their lives and livelihood from armed conflicts, subhuman living conditions, discriminatory situations, and other factors. According to the United States Human Rights Commission, the number of such persons recorded for the year 2004, which included refugees out of their own country, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, and others, was at 19.2 million.

Reports from UN and non-governmental agencies estimate that it would cost the following amounts annually to ensure basic services for all who need them in developing countries, given of course the political will to carry these out: US\$9 billion for water and sanitation; \$13 billion to provide basic health and nutrition, \$6 billion for basic education, and \$12 billion for reproductive health for all women.

Against this background, the following amounts are also spent annually: US\$8 billion for cosmetics in the United States; \$11 billion for ice cream in Europe; \$12 billion for perfumes in Europe and the United States; \$50 billion for cigarettes in Europe; \$400 billion for narcotic drugs throughout the world; and to top it all, \$950 billion (!) is the reported amount used for military expenditures throughout the world for the year 2003. [2]

Of these worldwide military expenses, the United States accounted for \$420 billion, or roughly 43% of the total. In second and third places are the People's Republic of China (\$62.5 billion, or 6%) and Russia (\$61.9, or 6%), followed by the United Kingdom (\$51.1 billion, or 5%), Japan (\$44.7 billion, or 4%), France (\$41.6 billion, or 4%), Germany (\$30.2 billion, or 3%), India (\$22 billion, or 2 %), Saudi Arabia (\$21.3 billion, or 2%), South Korea (\$20.7 billion, or 2%), and Italy (\$17.2 billion). [3]

The World Watch Institute's 2005 edition of its annual State of the World report devoted itself to theme "Redefining Global Security," laying out specific factors and detailed statistical figures that together make for the growing sense of insecurity on the part of more and more inhabitants of our world today. [4]

Another dimension that we can no longer ignore is the worsening ecological situation of our Earth. Every year, more than thirty million acres of tropical forests are destroyed, mostly through the activities of corporations that seek timber for commercial use. As a related figure, over 50,000 species of living beings whose natural habitat is found in these forests move toward extinction. [5]

The loss of forests also contributes to the increase in the volume of carbon dioxide accumulating in the Earth's atmosphere. Together with emissions from coal-burning power plants and from automobiles, the increase in carbon dioxide is contributing to the widely noted phenomenon of global warming, which is causing and will continue to cause damage to Earth's inhabitants in various ways. In this regard, a film that has drawn wide attention, produced by former presidential candidate Al Gore and entitled "An Inconvenient Truth," whose contents are also detailed in a book of the same title, lays out hard statistical data indicating scenarios of disastrous consequences for our entire global community over the next half-century unless radical changes in direction are taken. [6]

In short, a straightforward look at the condition of our global society would make it evident that something is awry in our world. The figures noted above are some of the prominent indicators or symptoms of the malaise that is affecting our entire global community.

The Four Ennobling Truths as Path to Well-being

Siddhartha Gautama's journey toward awakening was launched in his youth as he began to ask questions about the human condition. Born into an affluent family, he was brought up sheltered from the usual struggles of many other human beings of his time. As tradition goes, he went out of his castle and, on separate occasions, saw an aging person, a sick person, and then a corpse. Reflecting on what he saw he realized that he, too, was subject to aging, sickness, and death, and thus began to ask fundamental questions about human existence. In order to devote himself thoroughly to the quest for answers to his questions, he left home and family to become a wandering ascetic. Continuing for six years in assiduous search for the truth, he eventually settled down to sit in meditation under a banyan tree, with a resolve not to move from there until he found what he was looking for. It is there where he arrived at an experience of enlightenment, a pivotal event that transformed his life from that point on, to become an Awakened One (Buddha). His life from then on was characterized by deep inner peace, by wisdom that enables one to see "things as they are," and a compassion that embraces all beings as one's own self.

Soon after this experience of enlightenment, the Buddha began preaching to those who sought his counsel on how to conduct their lives so that they themselves may arrive at that place of deep inner peace, with wisdom suffused by compassion. One of the early formulations of his preaching came to be what is known as the Four Ennobling Truths. [7] This is a four-fold set of interrelated insights into reality, said to be modeled after the ancient Indian art of healing, the tradition of the *ayurveda*. [8] The latter involves a process

that begins with 1) a delineation of symptoms of an illness, then proceeds by 2) tracing the causes of those symptoms, goes on to 3) define the features of a healthy state of being delivered from such illness, and finally 4) prescribes steps toward the removal of the causes of illness, thereby moving one on to the path of recovery and well-being.

The first of the Four Ennobling Truths states that our human condition is characterized by *dukkha*, a compound word which in Pali, the language in which the early teachings of the Buddha came to be codified and transmitted in writing, literally means "the wheel is badly aligned." And such a condition, of course, prevents the wheel from functioning fully as it is meant to do, and causes disturbance and dislocation to all around it. This term *dukkha* has usually been translated as "suffering" or "pain," and the first of the Four Ennobling Truths is often rendered in English as "Life is Suffering." This translation unfortunately gives the impression of a negativistic view of human existence as a whole, and does not do adequate justice to the insight of the Buddha on the human condition and to his message on its overcoming. The term *dukkha* is better rendered as "dissatisfactoriness," or "dysfunction," or perhaps, "dis-ease" (with a hyphen). In short, to understand the First Ennobling Truth is to recognize the dis-eased condition, the dysfunctional character of our mode of living as human beings.

The second of the Ennobling Truths is about tracing the cause or causes of this dysfunction or dis-ease. In Buddhist terms, the root cause is described as **craving**. This is an attitude of continually grasping for things that one thinks will quench one's dissatisfaction, but which actually only fan it all the more. This attitude manifests itself in a threefold destructive group of traits, or "poisons," namely, greed, ill-will or animosity, and ignorance or delusion. Conversely, the overturning of these three poisons is thus taken as the way to overcoming *dukkha*.

The Third Ennobling Truth affirms that there is indeed a way to this overcoming, and thus to the **cessation** of dis-ease and dissatisfaction. This signifies arrival at a place of peace, a state of well-being wherein one comes to live in the light of wisdom, overflowing into attitudes, words, and acts of compassion. This state of well-being can be described as involving the overturning of the poison of Greed by its antidote, Generosity (*dana*, or the spirit of giving). It also involves the overturning of Ill-will or animosity by its antidote, Benevolence or Compassion, and the overturning of ignorance and delusion by the Right Way of Seeing, or "seeing things as they are" devoid of deception.

The Fourth Ennobling Truth presents concrete steps toward arriving at that place of peace and well-being. This involves an Eightfold Path that begins with Right View, further continuing with Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration, coming back full circle in Right View that informs all of one attitudes, words, and actions in daily life.

Elaborations on these Four Ennobling Truths, together with interrelated doctrinal formulations of the Buddhist tradition, can be found in most introductory works on Buddhism. [9] Our central point of interest in this essay is not so much on the particulars of the Buddhist teaching as such, but on how the fourfold framework of this doctrine may offer us guidelines for addressing our problematic contemporary global situation. In short, we can take it as a methodological approach that lays out four steps toward global healing: first, the delineation of the symptoms of our illness; second, the investigation into the causes of this ailing condition; third, the envisioning of a state of well-being characterized by the overcoming of those causes of illness; and fourth, the determination of steps to be taken toward this overcoming, and thereby, toward healing.

Our Global Malaise, and Its Roots

A look at some of the salient features that mark our contemporary world as outlined in our first section above cannot fail to impress upon us the criticality of the situation of our global community. This recognition is an awakening to the fact of *dukkha* analogous to that experienced by Siddhartha Gautama, but on a global scale. What we have before us is a situation that we can thus describe as global *dukkha*, a state of dysfunction and dis-ease of global proportions, affecting the lives of all of us inhabitants of this Earth. We are brought to a rude awakening of the first Ennobling Truth regarding our Spaceship Earth: "Houston, we have a problem." The first Truth seen in this way is all about us, each and everyone, as we continue in our highly problematic mode of being as a global community, of which all of us are a part, and in which our individual destinies are inextricably intertwined.

In sum, we live in a world wherein on the one hand, millions are needlessly deprived of their right to life through lack of adequate food supply, sanitary water, health services, and other basic needs, while on the other hand, the bulk of our world resources are used for military and other expenditures that have nothing to do with providing for those basic needs of the multitudes. We live in a world characterized by increasing insecurity, as animosities and enmities are fanned, and violence continues to escalate, between different groups of people throughout different regions of the world, on racial, ethnic, religious, and other grounds. Exacerbating this violent mode of being is the fact that there are sectors that profit from it, such as those involved in the manufacture and trade of arms and various kinds of weapons of destruction, as well as those whose hold on power depends on how they engender fear on the part of the populace. Further, we live in a world threatened by impending ecological destruction, with the proliferation of toxic material in the atmosphere, in the land, and in the oceans; with the denudation of vast areas of rainforests that have sustained the ecological balance of life for millions of years, and which is resulting in the extinction of thousands of species of living beings each year. This is a situation that will only go from bad to worse if we allow things to continue in this way, and will predictably bring us to the brink of global disaster over the next half-century period.

What are the causes of this dis-eased situation? The second Ennobling Truth provides some guidelines for pursuing this question. In this regard, Buddhist philosopher David Loy offers insightful observations and recommendations, as he reflects on the institutional manifestations of the three poisons of greed, ill-will, and delusion as behind much of our global malaise. [10] In brief, firstly, Loy notes how our present economic system, characterized by *laissez faire* capitalism and a market-driven corporate economy, is an embodiment of institutionalized greed. This is a system that tends to aggravate the inequalities among the global populace, widening the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots," leading to the deaths of millions of children worldwide, as noted above. Secondly, the various conflicts and tensions between segments of our global family, which spawns violence on different levels perpetrated by humans against one another based on various ideological, political, religious, and other kinds of factors. All this in turn serves to perpetuate this growing sense of insecurity on a global scale, and supports the politics and culture of militarism, which is none other than institutionalized ill will. And thirdly, the corporate-owned and controlled media, with a penchant for accentuating events and features that favor the economically and politically powerful, and in the process managing to distort perceptions of truth and justice, can be considered as a form of institutionalized delusion. Loy points out how the media functions to deflect the attention of masses of people from the truth, often highlighting the sensational and the entertaining, and thus hiding those aspects from the public eye that may be disturbing to people, or that may cause many to question the way things are done by those in power.

Understanding the institutional manifestations of greed, ill will, and delusion enables us to discern how these operate in our global society, and how they indeed poison us in our mode

of being, in the way we regard ourselves, and in the way we relate with one another and with the natural world. At the core, these three poisons are rooted in a grossly mistaken view of regarding ourselves, other living beings, and the natural world around us as "Other." This deluded way of seeing things, in other words, of regarding my own self, other living beings, and the Earth as "Other," is what leads us to think, speak, and act in ways that are harmful and "poisonous" to our own selves, to our fellow living beings, and toward Earth. [11] More detailed analysis will uncover other factors behind our global malaise, but the above can serve as a reference point for understanding why we are where we are in our global society today, namely, in deep trouble. This reference point also serves as a basis for envisioning alternative scenarios for our shared future as global community.

Imagine: A Place of Peace

The third Ennobling Truth affirms: *there is* a place of peace, and it is within our reach, if only we directed ourselves to it. This is the optimistic message of the Buddha to each individual who has come to realize the dissatisfactory and dis-eased condition of one mode of life: there is a way to the cessation of *dukkha*. The question is whether this affirmation also applies to our communal mode of being as global society. The question boils down to this: is there a realistic scenario whereby we can envision the cessation of our global disease?

Can we envision a world wherein yearly eleven million children under the age of five will no longer have to die, as they had not been provided with basic necessities like food and clean water and health care and related items? Can we envision a world wherein large numbers of people will no longer have to be uprooted from their homes and communities and become refugees, due to threats to their lives from organized violence, or due to threats to their livelihood from dire economic conditions, or due to threats to their person because of harassment and discrimination for various reasons? Can we envision a world where we can settle our differences not through armed might and violent confrontation, but through a process of dialogue and negotiation involving give and take on all sides? Can we envision a world wherein we are able to maintain and sustain modes of production and consumption, and uphold values and lifestyles that do not bring about destructive effects on the natural world, or do not threaten the ecological balance of our Earth?

Following upon David Loy's suggestion to examine the three poisons in their institutional manifestations, we may be able to focus on some of the key causes of our global *dukkha*. Can we overcome, and overturn, these institutionalized three poisons, and maintain and sustain our global society based on their opposites or antidotes? In other words, is it possible to restructure our socio-economic systems in a way that not greed, but generosity comes to be the operating principle? Can we undertake changes in the way we do things, whereby economic activity takes into account and places premium on realizing the goal of providing for the basic needs of the starving millions in our human family, rather than being blindly and irresponsibly driven by the profit motive? Further, is it possible to dismantle the global military-industrial complex, that death-dealing behemoth that thrives on our mutual animosities, which thus siphons the bulk of our resources into the activities of designing, manufacturing, selling, and using all kinds of weapons of death and destruction? Rather, can we use these resources for ventures in agriculture, education, health care, scientific discovery, cultural enrichment, and other creative and life-giving activities? Also, is it possible for us to redirect the media from its penchant for deluding us about what is actually happening in our world, and use its power toward conveying those aspects of the truth that can liberate us and enrich us on different levels of our life in common?

On first impression, even bringing up scenarios as the above will make us liable to the accusation of dreaming of a Utopia, a Nowhereland inhabited by NoRealPeople. Get real, man. No way, Conway. This is the kind of response given by so-called realists or

pragmatists to John Lennon's song "Imagine," namely, dismissing it as merely an unrealistic dream.

A "dream," however, may also be taken differently, not as something to be dismissed offhand as unrealistic, but precisely as a scenario that makes us aware of how far we are from it, and conversely, which also encourages us and inspires us to take active effort toward transforming our present situation, to bring us closer to that scenario. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "dream" continues to function in this way in American society: it has not only encouraged and inspired individuals to think, talk, and behave in accordance with this dream, but it has also led to the institution of legislative measures, backed by judicial decisions, and executive action, that protect civil rights and outlaw discrimination of any kind, based not only on race, but also on color, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, and so on. Appropriate punitive measures for those who violate this legal provision against discrimination are now in place, and this serves as an effective deterrent for blatant acts of violation.

The eradication of all inequalities and discriminatory attitudes and acts remains an ongoing task on the part of all. But it can also not be denied that U.S. society has taken up this dream articulated by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and has included it as part of its own vision of a wholesome and viable human society and community, having taken steps toward its institutionalization in its legal, political, and social system.

Similar "dreams" may be recalled as we survey our human history, ideas that were ahead of their time and deemed preposterous then, but which came to be actualized gradually or in different stages, as human beings developed and deepened in self-awareness and self-understanding on what it means to be human.

One example is the abolition of slavery as an institution. Slavery in institutional and legalized form is by now considered as a relic of our checkered past. [12] What used to be taken for granted as an acceptable social fact in different cultures in human history gradually came to be regarded as inhuman, and therefore untenable as a blatant violation of our human dignity.

Another "dream" that took some time to be given legal and social recognition is that of the equality of women and men insofar as rights of citizens are concerned. When the framers of the U.S. Constitution wrote that "All men are created equal," from the social context of their time, what they and those who read this sentence meant, was precisely *men*, and not women, and only those men whose color of skin was of a certain type and who also owned land. Consequently, those who were not men, namely, the women in society, or who were males but of a different skin color, and/or who did not own land, were thus deemed as not equal to those who were. And again, needless to say, American society, or Western society in general, has moved in the direction of broadening the understanding of who is included in the category of those to be regarded as equals, with legal, judicial, and executive measures that support this broadened direction.

All this is not to say that the "dream" of equality has been realized on all levels of social and political existence. This is simply to note that at the very least, legal measures have been instituted to ensure basic protection for individuals from being treated in inhumane ways or from being treated as less than equal before the law.

What the above examples convey to us is the message that the scenarios involving a wholesome and life-affirming, harmonious, and ecologically sustainable global society, which may seem like an unrealistic "dream" at this point of our history, are looming right there before us as an ongoing challenge, invitation, and opportunity. We may all come to see more clearly, and agree, someday, that a global society wherein millions of children die

yearly of preventable causes, and large segments of the global population live in squalor and dehumanizing poverty, while the world resources are being used toward military purposes and expenditures on peripheral items, is a blatantly absurd, deranged, dysfunctional, diseased, and thereby *unacceptable* kind of world. We may also collectively come to realize that the ways we are consuming goods as well as the ways we dispose of our waste material, and thus the ways we are harming our Earth in irreparable ways, are irresponsible and even suicidal ways of living. We may then be brought to our collective senses, and agree that we need some radical changes in the way we do things as a global community.

We are faced with an enormous task of moving our collective future toward an entirely different direction from where we appear to be heading at present. The third Ennobling Truth inspires confidence, and affirms that the place of peace, a state of well-being, wherein the causes of our dis-eased condition have been eradicated, is within our reach. But how can we begin to shift our directions, and forge our way to that place of peace?

Pathway to Peace: Arriving at Right View

The fourth Ennobling Truth is about concrete steps in the direction of realizing the place of peace in our lives. Toward this realization, the Buddhist tradition lays down an eightfold path that begins with Right View, and continues with Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, and so on. Our question then is this: what concrete steps can we take toward the realization of this dream, of a wholesome and life-affirming, harmonious and ecologically sustainable global community?

Taking cue from the eightfold path, a Right View can certainly be the starting point for these concrete steps. How can this Right View launch us on to the path of global healing? A key feature of this Right View is the acknowledgement of the criticality of our global situation, outlined above. Acknowledging that here is a problem is the very first step toward being able to resolve that problem. Conversely, the lack of awareness and appreciation of the fact that there is indeed a problem will just enable that situation to continue unattended. In the language of the Twelve Step Program, acknowledging that one is ill and in need of help is an important prerequisite and the first step for one's healing.

We may be able to conceptually agree that "there is a problem," as we attentively take note of what we see and hear from various accounts, as we read books, reports, and so on. We may read the statistical figures outlined above, and concur that our world is indeed in a "problematic situation." But we may still gaze at all this from an outsider or kibitzer standpoint. One may be led to say things like, "if only the government could do something about this," or "if only those world leaders got their act together," or "if only they'd pass a law to this effect," and so on. But these utterances still come from a third-person standpoint that is not as yet involved directly in the matter.

Gautama's sight of the aging person, the sick person, or the corpse as he ventured outside his castle could have stayed on this level of an outsider standpoint. But as he came to realize that he himself was subject to these realities, he came to see things in an entirely different light, namely, as a matter of his own concern, one that involved his own individual destiny as well as that of every other human being.

Right View then is arrived at as one actually sees, and also hears, touches, tastes, smells, feels, in short, *directly experiences*, the pain and suffering of many of our fellow inhabitants of our Earth community, as *one's very own pain and suffering*, thus enabling one to realize the dis-eased character of our global society. Right View is the perspective of one who can no longer stay as a mere outside observer, and for whom the global situation becomes a matter of one own intimate concern. There are of course varying degrees of intensity in the

way one experiences global *dukkha*, but a threshold is crossed as one comes to realize that one's own life, as well as the life of all living beings, is in the balance.

Right View is based upon a vision of the interconnectedness of all beings in the Universe, which the Buddha realized in his own experience of enlightenment. In other words, Right View overturns a fundamentally mistaken view of myself, of living beings, and of the Earth, as "*Other*," and sees all from the perspective of the Self-less (*anatta*). [13] Those who follow the Buddha in taking on the eightfold path as a way of life can experience this interconnectedness, in realizing this realm of the Self-less. This is a realization which, in due course, comes to shed light on all aspects of one's life, including the social, economic, political, cultural, and ecological dimensions of one's being.

It is important to underscore here, however, that one does not have to be a follower of the Buddha to arrive at what Buddhists refer to as Right View, namely a stance or a worldview that affirms the interconnectedness of all beings and all things in the Universe. Developments in various disciplines, including biology and physics as well as the social sciences, and insights based on philosophical reflection and perspectives from different world religions, converge in the direction of affirming this interconnectedness as a reality that underlies our very existence. [14] What matters most, however, is whether the ways we think, speak, and behave toward one another and toward the world as a whole, on the individual as well as corporate and institutional levels of our existence, can be grounded upon this perspective of interconnectedness, or not. What is crucial for our shared future as global community is whether we can collectively take steps to restructure our social institutions in a way that they may reflect and embody this perspective of our interconnectedness.

If this vision of interconnectedness is taken by our global community as "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations" in the same way as the basic affirmations made in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, are taken, it can then become the basis for working toward reforms in our global economic, social, political, and cultural institutions in a way that these would reflect this vision more closely. [15]

Again taking Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "dream" as an example, the appropriation of this dream as their very own inspired and empowered many individuals and groups in American society to give themselves in selfless and heroic ways to work for changes in social and political institutions, toward its progressive actualization. Mass demonstrations, protest marches, media campaigns, educational efforts, and social and political actions on many different fronts all contributed to gradually changing the consciousness of many people, toward the acceptance of basic ideas that were implied in that dream. Admittedly an unfinished task to this day, needing much more effort and vigilance, nevertheless great strides have been made in assuring those who live in this society of legal protections and public recognition of their civil rights as well as of basic human rights.

In similar ways, the vision of interconnectedness of all beings may be one that can also serve as a source of inspiration and empowerment, a common basis for all of us to cooperate in working for changes in the socio-economic, political, cultural, and other institutions that affect our multi-dimensional lives. This would enable us to work together to counteract the destructive directions of the three institutional poisons outlined above. Particular aspects and features of this vision call for further elaboration, with ongoing reflection and articulation as to its implications in the socio-economic, political, cultural, ecological and other dimensions of our communal life in our Earth community. [16] Following upon this, educational efforts; media campaigns; and forms of mass action on the social, economic, political, and other spheres are called for as we muster our collective resources toward realizing this shared dream of a transformed world. This essay, reflecting

on how the Buddhist doctrine of the Four Ennobling Truths may be applied to our global society, is offered as one small contribution in this direction.

References

1] I will not get into the particulars of the globalization debate here, And invite readers to the following works: Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich, "One with Nineveh: Politics, Consumption, and the Human Future" (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2004); Joseph Stiglitz, "Globalization and Its Discontents" (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002); and David Korten, "When Corporations Rule the World," 2nd ed. (West Hartford, Conn. and San Francisco: Kumarian Press and Berrett-Koehler, 2001).

2] <http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Facts.asp> (accessed October 1, 2006).

3] <http://www.globalissues.org/Geopolitics/ArmsTrade/Spending.asp> (accessed October 1, 2006).

4] Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World 2005* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005).

5] <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org> (accessed October 1, 2006).

6] Al Gore, "An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergence of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It" (Emmaus, Pa.: Rodale, 2006).

7] Also known as the Four Noble Truths. Departing from this, I follow the translation of *arya-satya* as "truth which ennobles," hence, "Four Ennobling Truths."

8] *Ayus* means "life," and *Veda* refers to revealed wisdom set forth in sacred scriptures. Thus, *ayurveda*, roughly translated, refers to "lifegiving wisdom," that which tends to healing of illness.

9] As one example, see Ruben L.F. Habito, "Experiencing Buddhism: Ways of Wisdom and Compassion" (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), pp. 37-55.

10] See David Loy's essay in *BRIDGES, Vol. 13*. Also, see Loy's other works including "The Great Awakening: A Buddhist Social Theory" (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003) and "A Buddhist History of the West: Studies in Lack" (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

11] I take an approach different from Loy, who traces the arising of the three poisons to a sense of lack. I develop my analysis of our dysfunctional global situation in my "Healing Breath: Zen for Christians and Buddhists in a Wounded World" (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006).

12] However, this is not to say that actual forms of slavery have been eradicated totally in our human community in this twenty-first century of our common (Western) era. Cases of indentured service, dehumanizing work conditions, bondage of women and children used in the sex industry, and other modes of relegating human beings to the status of virtual slaves, continue to be reported, and call our attention as needing to be addressed.

13] See Habito, "Experiencing Buddhism," 47-55.

14] See Fritjof Capra, "The Hidden Connections: Integrating the Biological, Cognitive, and Social Dimensions of Life into a Science of Sustainability" (New York: Random House, 2002); Fritjof Capra, "Web of Life" (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1996); Ken Wilber, ed., "The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes: Exploring the Leading Edges of Science" (Boston and London: Shambala, 1982); and David Bohm's work, featured in Ted Bastin, ed., "Quantum Theory and Beyond" (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

15] United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948, Preamble.

16] See David Korten, "The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community" (Bloomfield, Conn. and San Francisco: Kumarian Press and Berrett Koehler, 2006) for one outstanding example of work in this direction.