Buddhism and the Discourse of Environmental Concern: Some Methodological Problems Considered

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Erosion of traditional cosmological thinking is a well-attested and significant strand in the recent history of religion in Europe and America. Undoubtedly, all of the major traditions have retained well-defined zones of resistance against the prevailing current of modernity, Christian creationism being a good example in this connection. However, as the current has grown in vigor, religious modernists have, at times reluctantly though often with enthusiasm, abandoned long-standing views on the place of the earth and the position of humanity within the created order—some of the most cherished beliefs of their tradition—and accepted, with few modifications, the modern scientific picture of the universe. Such capitulations are now, by and large, accepted and consigned to the historical past. However, the battle over humankind's position in the natural order, an order rendered incompatible with any conscious sense of meaning or responsible agency by the inexorable logic of the modern scientific method, has not yet been conceded by theologians. Under such circumstances it is perhaps unsurprising that a discourse of environmental concern, in part aimed at reintroducing meaning and purpose back into the bleak vastnesses of the modern cosmos, has taken such a prominent place in the pronouncements of leading theologians the world over.

Of course, Christianity is not the only religious tradition engaged in this rearguard action. Buddhism, too, has its eco-advocates. Indeed, Buddhism is often invoked as a far more environmentally beneficial set of beliefs and practices than Christianity could ever

be, some writers going so far as to suggest that, of all the major religious traditions, Buddhism is the best equipped to form the heart of a new global environmentalist ethic. Now, positive environmentally oriented discourse does not have its origins in any specifically religious domain, although it is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss the romantic movement's repudiation of the scientific project that so clearly contributed to its emergence.[1] Nevertheless, the politization of this discourse has become a significant theme, particularly in the latter part of the twentieth century, and no world-historical religious movement would wish to jeopardize its standing by failing to endorse such a "self-evident" collection of truths about the world and our place within it. It is clear that the benefits of taking such a stance will be considerable.

There is now much good evidence that a significant number within Buddhism[2] itself, plus those who give intellectual assent to selected elements of the Buddhist tradition as part of their armory in the fight against the worst excesses of "technological society," have declared themselves favorably disposed to ecologically motivated activity, whether it be of the shallow or deep variety. Organized Buddhism undoubtedly embodies virtues that appear, at least from the superficial perspective, in tune with the discourse of environmental concern.[3] The task of this essay will be to assess the tradition as a whole, and the methodological presuppositions underlying ecoBuddhism, and to confirm or deny the truth of these impressions. My central contention will be that, with one or two notable exceptions (Schmithausen[4] springs to mind here), supporters of an authentic Buddhist environmental ethic have tended toward a positive indifference to the history and complexity of the Buddhist tradition. In their praiseworthy desire to embrace such a "high profile" cause, or, to put it more negatively, in their inability to check the influence of a significant element of modern globalized discourse, Buddhist environmentalists may be guilty of a *sacrificium intellectus* very much out of line with the critical spirit that has played such a major role in Buddhism from the time of the Buddha himself down to the modern period.

A fundamental problem confronting any serious examination of the Buddhist tradition's "attitude to nature" is philological. The most obvious starting point ought to be the identification of a Buddhist term or terms equivalent in range of meaning to our word "nature."

However, this is more complex than it seems on the surface. In the first place, there are many canonical languages to choose from. We could simply choose to differentiate between Indic terms, on the one hand, and those originating in the East Asian area, on the other, but even if this was deemed a suitably sophisticated methodology, and I am not sure myself that it would be, a further difficulty presents itself. Each of these languages is bound to cultures that possess their own specific modes of development. Indeed, the original attempts to translate Sanskrit technical jargon into Chinese are known to have encountered many intractable difficulties, not least because of the existence of a sophisticated philosophical vocabulary in China prior to the arrival of Buddhism. Moving to the contemporary setting, we must not forget that the interpretation of textual material can never be a culture-free exercise, whether it be done by contemporary Buddhist themselves or by those who seek corroboration of their own ideas from the Buddhist tradition. As Hans Georg Gadamer has pointed out, we must be aware of the prejudgments we bring to the understanding of a text and must acknowledge the distance in historical terms between us and the text's author. Without this we are likely to deceive ourselves into thinking that we can uncritically "stand in immediate relation with the past."[5] Also, let us not ignore the fact that the languages of canonical Buddhism reflected the concerns of a segment within the wider culture and, by and large, are to be identified with the worldview of small but influential elites. The question must arise as to how far the sacred writings and their commentaries represent the understandings and practices of ordinary people who, after all, will be the prime agents in the interaction of Buddhism and the natural world, for monks, by virtue of their disciplined existences, are practically restrained from most potentially damaging activities, such as agriculture and the like. It is clear, then, that all of these matters must be examined more rigorously than has been done to date before we can confidently assert that Buddhism, of whatever form, possesses the necessary philological, cultural, and philosophical structures to accept the imposition of a discourse of environmental concern without undue distortion.

Another element, this time relating to the range of meanings the term "nature" has come to represent in the West, must also be considered. Kate Soper[6] identifies three ways in which nature has been conceptualized in modern environmentalist discussions, of

which the first, or metaphysical, relates to that part of the world which lies beyond the human or merely artificial. The nature/culture dichotomy is clearly at the heart of this definition. The second meaning is associated with "the structures, processes and causal powers. . .operative within the physical world" and therefore represents that sector of existence understood as the proper object of study in the natural sciences. The final "lay" or "surface" concept is concerned with the distinction between the "natural" as opposed to urban or industrial landscapes and is intimately bound up with aesthetic judgment. Soper accepts that the third meaning dominates the discourse of the green movement, although it is clearly dependent on and interrelated with the others.

The evolution of the modern ecological definition of "nature" and "the natural" can only be fully understood against the background of the history of Western thought itself. With this in mind, it would be unwise to neglect two other crucial distinctions: the Aristotelian tension between "nature" understood as the totality of all that exists and "nature" as the essence or active principle of things; and the medieval nature/supernature dichotomy. Although the term *supernaturalis* only seems to have emerged fairly late in the history of Christian thought, most notably in the work of Thomas Aquinas, the modern manner of construing reality entails assent to, or at the least criticism of, the notion that nature lacks many of the clues necessary for a full understanding of things. The scientific worldview, then, is clearly a rejection of the supernaturalist claims of theism, but, intriguingly, environmentalism—particularly of the ecospiritual type,[7] a form that has had a sizable impact on contemporary ecoBuddhism—represents a reappropriation of prescientific modes of thinking with its Spinozist insistence on *natura naturans* as an almost pantheist power of nature.

Buddhist scholars and activists have, in recent times, offered a range of Buddhist technical terms that they deem to correspond with the English term "nature." An obvious question in this context is, what sense of this richly nuanced term are they thinking of and are they all in agreement on the matter? I do not believe that this question has even begun to be answered, and this essay may be seen as a humble and highly provisional attempt to get such a debate off the ground. A list of the most commonly mentioned Indic equivalents of the term "nature" includes *saṃsāra, prakṛti, svabhāva,*

pratītya-samutpāda, dharmadhātu, dharmatā,[8] and *dhammajāti.*[9] The range of significances covered by such terms is vast and detailed analysis is beyond the scope of our present discussions, although sustained work on the topic would undoubtedly do much to advance our present understanding. One example will have to suffice. *Saṃsāra* in its usual sense denotes the totality of sentient beings (*sattvaloka*) caught in the round of life after life, although it may also encompass those parts of the cosmos that fall below the level of sentience and, as such, act as the stage or receptacle (*bhajanaloka*) on which the beginningless cycle of life on life unfolds. However, even in this extended manner, *saṃsāra* can hardly be regarded as *natura naturata* in any obviously Western sense for it contains hell-beings, gods, and ghosts quite apart from its human and animal residents. Indeed, above this region of physicality and gross desire lie two other more subtle regions of reality, the whole comprising the traditional Buddhist triple-decker universe. Built into this model is the possibility of movement from one level to the other through the activation of mental powers gained in meditation. *Saṃsāra*, then, incorporates elements which, from a Western perspective, encompass both the natural and the supernatural. Consideration of other terms offered by scholars as Buddhist equivalents of "nature" tend to reveal similar mismatches.

Statements of the kind "Buddhism is. . ." are problematic in that they very often fail to take account of the historical, doctrinal, and cultural diversity of the tradition. For instance, a fundamental distinction needs to be maintained between Buddhism in its Indic forms (in this category I include the Theravāda traditions of South and Southeast Asian as well as the Mahāyānist Tibetan forms of Buddhism) and the Chinese and East Asian transformations of the Indic tradition. It also makes good sense to distinguish between the historical phases in the development of Buddhist thought and practice. Heinz Bechert, for instance, chooses to divide Buddhist history into canonical, classical, and modern phases,[10] while Charles F. Keyes, in a manner possibly more conducive to our investigation of Buddhism's understanding of the "environment," distinguishes between a premodern cosmological Buddhism, on the one hand, and modernist forms, influenced by aspects of Western thought and social organization, on the other.[11] Whatever classificatory scheme we choose to use, the generalization of ideas or

practices from one historical, geographical, or cultural phase of the tradition, in an attempt to justify some monolithic Buddhist position, will be largely illegitimate.

An example should give a good illustration of this point. Frank E. Reynolds, in an important discussion of the three overlapping types of cosmological thinking present in the traditional Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia, points to the *karma/saṃsāra* complex of doctrines—his "saṃsāric cosmogony"[12]—as the point from which laypeople and monks orient themselves ethically one to another. Such interactions generate a "total field"[13] system in which one's present existence is ethically enmeshed in a vast, causally connected, and highly stratified cosmic order encompassing humans, animals, gods, and so forth, arranged hierarchically from the realms of the gods all the way down to the infernal regions. In the *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna Sūtra* (Sūtra of the remembrance of the good law),[14] classified by Chinese tradition as a work of the Hīnayānist Abhidharma and mainly important because it provided the basis for Genshin's (942–1017) famous description of hell, the Ōjōyōshū,[15] the eight levels of hell are further subdivided. Thus, a subregion of the hell of repetition (*saṃjiva*) is called the "place of excrement" because this is the place in which sinners who have killed birds and deer without regret are punished by being forced to eat dung that is crawling with flesh-eating worms. The "hell where everything is cooked," a sublevel of the burning hell (*tapana*), is reserved for those who have deliberately destroyed forests by fire, while the "bird hell" in the hell of no interval (*avīci*) contains malefactors who deliberately caused famines through the disruption of water supplies.[16] It may well be that the moral implications of these doctrines did serve to inhibit environmentally destructive behavior in the premodern period, but we should be aware of two issues before we try to import them into a modern context. First, one of the cardinal features of modernist Buddhism is precisely its embarrassment about traditional (mythological or prescientific) cosmologies. As such, it represents an erosion of tradition and an accommodation to the prevailing current of scientific thinking. Indeed, the majority of social activist, including environmentalist,[17] forms of Buddhism today can be seen to have arisen as a result of these changes in emphasis. How paradoxical, then, that the claims of modernist Buddhists to stand in good harmony with nature seem

to be premised on the scientism of the Enlightenment, a movement in European history that did so much to liberate the individual from the "thrall of nature"[18] and opened up the forces that have now led to its potential destruction. Second, until evidence is offered to the contrary, we shall have to remain skeptical of the inhibitory power of the Buddhist conception of hell, at least from the environmentalist perspective, in a premodern Asian world that was fundamentally unaffected by the factors that may have rendered large-scale ecological degradation a realistic possibility.

Reynolds terms the traditional Buddhist world system the "rūpic,"[19] or devolutionary, cosmogony. However, any positive interpretation of this hierarchically organized and interrelated vision of the universe—one is tempted to employ the term "nature" in this context—is rather undermined by the tradition's own assessment of the radically unstable nature of all conditioned things. The Indic, and specifically early Upaniṣadic and hence pre-Buddhist, roots of this way of thinking now become plain. For traditional Theravāda Buddhism, the universe is a vast unsupervised recycling plant in which unstable entities circulate from one form of existence to the next—a Joycean "*commodius vicus* of recirculation." This seems an ideal metaphor from the environmentalist perspective, for, if Buddhists envisage the world process in this manner, there is some justification in the conclusion that we should seek to replicate the processes of which we are such an intrinsic part. Two objections immediately arise, however. In the first place, environmentalists are certainly committed to the principle of the recirculation of inanimate materials, such as wood products and the like, but how far are they prepared to go in the direction of the recycling of sentiency itself? It seems to me that there are few intellectual resources in the Western thought universe to support such a move! In the second place, and from the perspective of the "ultimate evaluation of existence,"[20] the Buddhist universe lacks any genuine *telos*. It is dysteleological.[21] As we have already noted, Reynolds employs the term "devolutionary" in his discussion of the rūpic cosmogony, a term that implies a regular, though lengthy, degeneration of the physical world, a process mirrored in the inevitable moral decline of humans. The outworldly character of Theravāda cosmology is now apparent, although, to give a full account of this particular interpretation of existence, we must introduce a final element into

the equation, the *mokṣa/nirvāṇa* complex. If we now return to the environmentalist perspective, it becomes clear that recycling is connected with *saṃsāra*. This is the positive part of the message. However, it is somewhat compromised by the fact that, ultimately, the Buddha's teachings point to a goal that represents the overcoming of the restrictions entailed by *saṃsāra*.

Ecology, even in its so-called deep form, must be premised on some distinction between nature and humanity, for without it our activities become, by definition, "natural" and, under such circumstances we can be held no more responsible for the adverse effects of our activities than can any other species. However, Martin Heidegger, among others, has pointed to the difficulties inherent in this fundamental distinction. For him, the problem of "construing the humanity-nature relationship as a Subject-Object antithesis is that it already presupposes a division between 'subjects' and 'objects' that is, strictly speaking, illegitimate."[22] Heidegger's point is that scientific modes of thinking, while "deeply counter-intuitive"[23] have accustomed us to regard the things of the world as "objects," with the result that we, as heirs to the Western intellectual tradition, have become alienated from an earlier, premodern "pre-understanding of the world." This is interesting because it seems to tie in with the Buddhist Yogācāra/Vijñānavāda view that the imagination of the subject/object dichotomy (*grāhya-grāhakakalpanā*) is a function of mental processes contaminated by ignorance (*avidyā*). The attainment of *nirvāṇa* as a return to this primitive mental purity, then, represents the uprooting of saṃsāric addiction. In Vasubandhu's words:

> From the non-perception of the duality [of subject/object] there arises the perception of the *dharmadhātu*. From the perception of the *dharmadhātu* there arises the perception of splendour.[24]

The term *dharmadhātu* represents the "realm of *dharmas*," those elements of existence that are held to comprise the totality of things, including human knowledge, culture, artifice, and so on, that make up the Buddhist universe, and we might, therefore, be tempted (as indeed some contemporary Buddhists are) to translate *dharmadhātu* as the "natural realm." The Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) seems to adopt a Yogācārin line in his distinctive development of a doctrine of pure nondual experience. He is careful

to note, however, that this experience will be "incompatible with Western naturalism."[25] I take this to mean that Nishida understands Buddhism's ultimate goal as a pure, nature-transcending subjectivity. This certainly meets the criteria of Heidegger's antitechnological vision of reality, but it hardly qualifies as the kind of concept to act as the basis for an authentically environmentalist ethic. Indeed, the splendid perceptions of the enlightened saint are discussed at some length in Yogācārin sources and they are not of the kind that offer much comfort for the environmentalist. The Yogācāra scholar Sthiramati (ca. 510–570), for instance, tells us that for a Buddha whose vision is purified in this way "the external world is perceived as consisting not of clay, pebbles, thorny plants, abysses, etc. but of gold, jewels, etc."[26] Of course, we may choose to interpret claims like this in an entirely metaphoric light, but it is surprising how well the purified vision of the Mahāyānist saint does correspond with Reynolds's third and final Theravādin "dhammic" cosmological type.[27] There is undoubtedly some overlap here with the later Tantric notion that, while the things of the world may appear to be conventionally "natural," from the ultimate perspective, they are merely parts of the body of the cosmic Buddha (*dharmakāya*) in one of its many forms, for example, as Vairocana.[28] Indeed, the Tantric view of the world, with its origins deep within the Indic tradition, contains much that appears to be rather inimical to the environmentalist project, not least its emphasis on the subjugation of—or, at any rate, the gaining of power over—nature.[29] In this way Tantricism, and perhaps the whole of the Buddhist dhammic cosmology, focusing as it does on the otherworldly vision of the completed saint, has something in common with the dominion ideal[30] that has been seen from the ecological perspective as such an unhelpful strand within the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Just to add one further complication, let us now turn to Buddhism in its East Asian forms. It is clear that the outworldly character of the Indic *karma/saṃsāra* complex of doctrines had some difficulty in being accepted in China during the period of the initial diffusion of Buddhism, not least because of its apparent conflict with established Confucian social ethics. The "morbid nihilism" associated with the new ideas in the minds of the Chinese intellectual elite has led to a tendency within East Asian Buddhism to characterize the "natural world" in a manner distinct from that found, for

instance, in the Hinduized states of Theravādin Southeast Asia. Of course, concern for the welfare of animals, for example, is attested in the earliest Indic canonical sources, as it is in the edicts of Aśoka, and this attitude transplanted itself easily in the Chinese context, no doubt because it harmonized with indigenous traditions. It also seems to have counteracted the negativity of Indic otherworldliness. Thus, the Liang emperor, Wu Ti (502–550), is said to have fed fish held in a monastery pond as part of his Buddhist devotions, while, in 759, the T'ang emperor is reported to have donated a substantial sum toward the construction of eighty-one such ponds (*fang sheng ch'ih*) for the preservation of animal life. Johannes Prip-Møller,[31] in his classic account of Chinese Buddhist monasteries, reports that, as late as the mid-1930s, the National Buddhist Association broadcast radio lectures on the need for animal protection, particularly around the period of "animal day," a date that traditionally coincided with the Buddha's birthday festivities. Even today, after the traumas of Buddhism's recent past in China, ethno-botanical evidence[32] exists to support the notion of monastery as nature reserve. However, not all of the evidence points in the same direction. We know, for instance, that during the high-water mark of Chinese Buddhism in the T'ang period, monasteries "engaged in multifarious commercial and financial activities"[33] that may very well have had an adverse influence on the natural environment. So, a monastery near Ningpo, having fallen on hard times around 836, was able to recoup its losses by large-scale deforestation of surrounding hillsides, while a few years later, in 841, another monastery connived with commercial fuel-gatherers to exploit timber and other forest resources for financial advantage.[34] It seems that at least some of these environmentally damaging commercial enterprises may have been associated with entrepreneurs already engaged in environmentally dubious undertakings—we could call them "monks of convenience," who seem to have opted for the monastic life as a kind of tax-avoidance strategy. Still, it would be unwise to jump to general conclusions about the activities of the monastic order on the evidence of a few bad apples.

There can be little doubt that the environmentalist discourse of Westernized cultures forms part of a broad critique of negative aspects of the capitalist/technological nexus and, in particular, of the twin system of mass-production and consumption wholly

oriented toward the satisfaction of material desires that has emerged most fully in recent times.[35] It is not unreasonable to suppose that the genealogy of this critique will be located within the broad pastures of European intellectual history. To illustrate this point we need only look to a figure like Arne Naess,[36] who, while nodding sympathetically but rather uncritically in the Buddhist[37] direction, has successfully erected his system of "deep ecology" on almost purely Spinozan foundations. This is not surprising, for the classical forms of Buddhism emerged as the result of social and economic factors that were uniquely Asiatic. Of course, we shall have to admit that Asia has lacked any overarching homogeneity in terms of its means of production, and this should make us suspicious of terms, such as "the Asiatic mode of production," "semi-feudalism,"[38] or, indeed, "oriental despotism,"[39] employed to describe the premodern economies of India and China. Nevertheless, there is little hard evidence to suggest the presence of indigenous economic systems that depended on high levels of industrial production in premodern Buddhist cultures, although the situation has been drastically different since the advent of the modern period.

In this light, it would be unwise to claim, as do many exponents of an environmentally engaged Buddhism, that Buddhism contains the intellectual and practical resources necessary to counteract the adverse effects of modernity. My response to such high levels of confidence is to raise two further questions: Can the supporters of Buddhism's claim to represent an authentic environmental ethic be certain that they have not fallen prey to "the myth of primitive ecological wisdom"[40] that seems a common ingredient of some recent critiques of industrialism? And, have they given sufficient thought to the genealogy of modernist Buddhism, of which they are generally a part? For, when this is done, it becomes clear that a range of features alien to the abiding character of classical Buddhism—features that tend to be connected with the arrival of Westernized forms of religion and socioeconomic organization—is deeply embedded in the contemporary Asian Buddhist heartlands. Thus, if we turn to recent Thai Buddhist critiques[41] of the negative environmental consequences of multinational logging activities and the like, we can observe that the arguments have no discernibly Buddhist character. The rhetoric employed is actually a blend of the sort of globalized environmental discourse we might meet with in

any part of today's world—in effect a romantic "summons to. . . discover in 'nature' both inner and outer, the source of redemption from the alienation and depredations of industrialism and the 'cash nexus' deformation of human relations,"[42] leavened with a good dose of nineteenth-century nationalism.

Japan provides a particularly apt illustration of the ways in which Buddhism, nationalism, and environmental discourse can mesh together. In a revealing passage, D. T. Suzuki, probably the greatest of all modern Buddhist propagandists, contrasts the occidental and oriental attitudes to mountains, concluding that Europeans have characteristically sought to "conquer" them on climbing expeditions and the like, while the Japanese treat mountains, indeed the whole of the natural realm, in a far more respectful manner. He writes:

> The idea of the so-called "conquest of nature" comes from Hellenism. . . in which the earth is made to be man's servant, and the winds and the sea are to obey him. Hebraism concurs with this view, too. In the East, however, this idea of subjecting Nature to the commands or service of man according to his selfish desires has never been cherished. For Nature to us has never been uncharitable, it is not a kind of enemy to be brought under man's power. We of the Orient have never conceived Nature in the form of an opposing power. On the contrary, Nature has been our constant friend and companion, who is to be absolutely trusted in spite of the frequent earthquakes assailing this land of ours. The idea of conquest is abhorrent.[43]

Let us note that Suzuki uncritically conflates a heterogeneous collection of cultures, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, under the heading of the "Orient," a sort of reverse orientalism. However, we should not judge him too harshly, for such lack of precision is a common foible and, in fact, Suzuki means something far more specific by the term "Orient" than appears on the surface. For him, the essence of the Orient is nothing other than the spirit of Zen. Perhaps Zen, then, with its insistence on "naturalism," particularly in the arts, may hold the key to the development of an authentically Buddhist ecological ethic.

In order to pursue this question in a more informed manner, it is necessary to place Suzuki's literary career as a Zen propagandist

in its sociohistorical context. In the early part of Suzuki's life Japanese Buddhists were still coming to terms with the trauma induced by the Meiji (1868–1912) persecution of Buddhism. In order to reassert itself in the face of official hostility, a modernist and nationalistic New Buddhism (*shin bukkyō*) emerged that placed great emphasis on the essential dissimilarities between "oriental" and "occidental" ways of thinking. The fundamental uniqueness of the Japanese character (*nihonjinron*) came to be stressed, particularly by members of the influential Kyoto school of thought, such as Nishida. In a recent discussion of these *nihonjinron* thinkers, Robert Scharf observes that they:

> would assert that the Japanese are racially and/or culturally inclined to experience the world more directly than are the peoples of other nations.[44]

It is clear from our earlier quotation that Suzuki eagerly embraced this style of thinking, and his significance, particularly for the reception of Buddhist ideas in the West, is twofold. In the first place, he was an active promoter of the notion that the Japanese uniquely respond to nature along lines that now seem entirely compatible with the aims and ideals of modern ecology. In the second, he identified Zen as the prime factor in this attitude. Echoes of these ideas are still found in the scholarly literature with social scientists and art historians, for instance, regularly claiming that Japanese culture promotes a "relative minimization of the importance of the subject as against the environment. . . ."[45] This is said to result in a valorization of nature, or, as Augustin Berque observes:

> Japanese culture. . . persistently placed nature and the natural at the acme of culturalness. . . a sense of place (*bashosei*) is particularly pronounced in cultures which, as in the Japanese case, do not enhance the subject's pre-eminence to the degree that European culture has done.[46]

This is an interesting corruption—"orientalization" is perhaps a better term—of Nishida's position as discussed above.[47] Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that the belief that all things, including those associated with the "realm of nature," possess the capacity to gain *nirvāṇa* is a distinctive feature of East Asian

Buddhism. The idea that trees and grasses, indeed the land itself, are destined for enlightenment is probably not found in Indic sources, although a belief in the partial sentience of plants may have been a feature of popular Buddhism from the earliest times.[48] The doctrine is variously claimed to have its source either in the Mahāyānist *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* or in the chapter entitled "Medicinal Herbs" of the *Lotus Sūtra*.[49] The former text, concerned primarily with the teaching that all beings are possessed of an embryo of the *Tathāgata* (*tathāgatagarbha*), is claimed to have been translated into Chinese in about 417 C.E. by Fa-hsien and Buddhabhadra. However, since no Sanskrit version is known, some scholars believe that it may be a uniquely Chinese work without an Indian counterpart. Now, while the idea of the "attainment of Buddhahood by nonsentient beings" (Japanese, *hijō jōbutsu*) may plausibly be traced to the previously mentioned Mahāyāna Sūtras, the first explicit reference to the doctrine is found in disputations between masters of the Sui period (581–617 C.E.), such as Hui-yuan and Chih-i. These debates were further developed by Chan-jan, a T'ien-t'ai writer of the T'ang (624–907 C.E.). Saichō (767–822) and Kūkai (774–835) seem to have been the first to have imported the doctrine into Japan, although it is to Annen (841–915), a prominent Tendai Esotericist, that we should look in order to find full systematization and defense of the doctrine of the innate enlightenment (*hongaku shiso*) of all things. His *Private Notes on Discussions of Theories on the Realization of Buddhahood by Grasses and Trees* (*Shinjo sōmoku jōbutsu shiki*)[50] provides the most detailed presentation of the notion, with a defense undergirded by appeal to the esoteric teaching that "this phenomenal world is nothing but the world of Buddhas."

In this connection, consideration of a painting entitled *Yasai Nehan* (Vegetable Nirvāṇa) by the Japanese artist Itō Jakuchū (1716–1800) may be instructive (see figure 1). At present housed in the collection of the Kyoto National Museum, this scroll once belonged to the Seiganji, a Kyoto temple of the Nishi Honganji form of the Pure Land or Jōdo Shin sect. Clearly Buddhist in one obvious sense, then, the painting shows a variety of vegetables arranged around a central image which happens to be a large radish (*daikon*) laying on a mat or bed of some sort. A partial clarification of the meaning of the piece becomes apparent when we realize that

the composition is a coded reference to the Buddha's death (*parinirvāṇa*) scene, which has customarily centered on a reclining Śākyamuni surrounded by mourners, all within a vaguely sylvan setting. A proper interpretation of the work is only possible once we have factored in the previously mentioned doctrine of the Buddhahood of plants (*sōmoku jōbutsu*).[51] We may also wish to know why it is that the artist has chosen to represent the Buddha by the humble—at least from the occidental perspective—radish. This makes sense when we understand more about the rise and subsequent ubiquity of the radish motif in Japanese painting from the early thirteenth century, a subject exhaustively discussed by Yoshiaki Shimizu.[52] The obvious conclusion is that the painting is a visual exposition of East Asian belief in the essential capacity of all things, including those within the vegetable realm, to reach the enlightened state. However, there is more to the painting than meets the eye. It is likely that the painting was donated to the Jōdo Shin temple in 1792 in commemoration of the death of the painter's eldest brother. The painting thus serves as a twin memorial to the Buddha and to Jakuchū's brother. The painter also happens to have been a fourth-generation member of a family of greengrocers.[53] The work can also be read, then, as a celebration of the hereditary occupation, an occupation with which Jakuchū, as the new head of the family, will have to become more fully involved.

Yoshiaki Shimizu concludes his memorable study of Jakuchū's work by noting that the complex metaphoric commemoration alluded to above tends to be absent in other cultures and must be regarded as "indigenously Japanese."[54] If this is so, the question arises for us as to how such works may best be categorized. Should they be considered mainly under the heading of "Buddhism" or are they primarily manifestations of Japanese culture? The answer to such a question has a bearing on how evidence from the East Asian cultural domain may be legitimately employed to advance the cause of an authentic Buddhist environmentalism. Indeed, this is precisely the point made by Ienaga Saburō in his consideration of the general question of the salvific role of nature in Japanese religious thought. In a discussion of such motifs in the work of Saigyō, the twelfth-century Shingon-oriented poet, Ienaga notes that the absolutization of nature as a religious category among some Buddhists of the time created a contradiction between the desire for union with a divinized

FIGURE 1: Itō Jakuchū (1716–1800), *Yasai Nehan* (Vegetable Nirvāṇa), ca. 1792 (courtesy of Kyoto National Museum)

nature, on the one hand, and a suspicion of "nature's captivating beauty,"[55] on the other. Ienaga links the former desire very firmly with indigenous factors within Japanese culture, while the latter is the Buddhist ingredient in the mixture.

At this point it might be worth adducing a further piece of evidence that, to some extent, compromises the superficial interpretation of the *sōmoku jōbutsu* doctrine. Dōgen, the Sōtō Zen author of the *Shōbōgenzō*, though admittedly not an adherent of Tendai (although he initially trained in the school), seems to allow the doctrine only in a highly restricted sense. He argues that:

> Since the plants and trees exist in [our] consciousness as reality, they are part of the universal Buddha-nature.[56]

The idealism inherent in this pronouncement is hardly of much use in supporting any conventional environment ethic. Indeed, the ubiquity of statements like this in the East Asian Buddhist context seems to reinforce the antirealist Indic and Yogācāra-derived picture of a world radically transformed in the understanding of the purified saint.[57]

What is apparent from the discussion so far is that the vegetable world, as it appears in Japanese literary sources, may be read as the locus of shifting significances. Another example of this is the banana plant (*bashō*) motif. Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694) is Japan's most celebrated poet. His name, which may be literally rendered as "Master Banana Plant,"[58] derives from the fact that he lovingly tended such a plant, a gift from a disciple, in the garden outside his hut. For Bashō the banana plant is tender, exotic, and rare. Not native to Japan, it is easily damaged by autumn winds and rains:

> The banana in the autumn blast—
> the night I hear
> rain [dripping] in a tub.[59]

In a sense, then, the plant has been torn from its natural home in warmer climes and must stand alone and defenseless in an environment that renders it stunted and unable to set fruit. Tradition informs us that the poet himself was constitutionally weak and prone to various illnesses even though he conducted a life of rigorous asceticism. In this way the banana plant speaks to Bashō's condition and underlines the universal frailty of human existence. More

generally, in Japanese literature *bashō* is both a realistic manifestation of vegetable existence and the metaphorical symbol of insubstantiality. Thus, the Nō text *Yōkyoku* talks of "the uncertainty of human life, the way of this world of banana plants and foam, yesterday's flowers are today's dream. . . ."[60] The connection between the plant and evanescence derives from the fact that the plant has a hollow core. On stripping away the outer leaves, the center is revealed as devoid of solidity, a literary allusion that seems to have its origin in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*[61] and, hence, in the Indic tradition.[62] Bashō's composition—

> The garden
> Of this temple is full
> Of *bashō*.[63]

—rather nicely illustrates the two primary meanings of this term.

One of the most striking differences between Indic and East Asian forms of Buddhism involves their attitudes to the fine arts. Both have customarily employed art for didactic purposes, and most of us are familiar with scenes of the Buddha's enlightenment and death, celestial *bodhisattvas*, the realms of gods, *yakṣas*, hell-beings, and the like. However, it is significant that art depicting actual as opposed to religious or imaginary subjects—that is, naturalist art—is almost absent from Indian Buddhist sources, although one must concede that naturalistic elements are sometimes employed to fill in gaps between the main mythological elements of the work. On the other hand, landscapes, perhaps the most celebrated of which are associated with the Zen monk Sesshū (1421–1506), and related forms of naturalistic art, like gardening, are almost a defining feature of East Asian, and particularly Japanese, Buddhism.[64] We should not neglect the fact that elements beyond the strictly Buddhist, notably Taoism, may be an additional factor here. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that Indian Buddhist artists were largely immune to the beauty of the natural world. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's insistence on the primacy of iconography in Indian religious art confirms this point. For him, the "Indian icon fills the whole field of vision at once. . .the eye is not led to range from one point to another"[65] in the manner demanded by the naturalistic artist. Instead the work acts as a geometrical representation of a transfigured, divine, and ultimately antinaturalistic realm, good examples here

being depictions of ideal worlds, such as Sukhāvati with its jewel trees, artificial birds, and absence of women, or Shambhala, whose landscape, at least in the Tibetan tradition, is subsumed into the highly geometric *maṇḍala* of Kālacakra.[66]

It is interesting that, while a considerable body of material on aesthetics is preserved in the East Asian Buddhist tradition, nothing of the kind seems to have been produced by Indian Buddhists, although Indic, and specifically Hindu, works focusing on technical as opposed to aesthetic matters are common.[67] Of course, this must be in part because of the early Buddhist teachings on the dangers associated with sense desires. Consideration of the beautiful was probably regarded as deeply suspect within a monastic tradition that inclined toward moderate displays of asceticism and, in any case, the world was seen as something to be abandoned rather than aesthetically contemplated.[68] If we turn to the forms of aesthetics that flourished in Hindu contexts during the Buddhist period, the same general conclusions can be drawn. Thus, the author of the fourth- to fifth-century *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the earliest work extant on the topic, and Abhinavagupta (late tenth century), the figure who did most to bring the discipline of Indian aesthetics to its zenith, agree that the perception of beauty is a function of the emotions (*rasa*). Of the eight or nine *rasas* mentioned in the literature, none appear to be induced by contemplation of the natural world.[69]

In conclusion, we have seen how influential segments of the Buddhist world have responded to the challenge of modernity—in particular the erosion of traditional cosmologies—by presenting a positive ecological message for consumption both within and without the tradition. This puts Buddhism in line with most other major religions. While this is to be applauded in various ways, I have sought here to suggest that uncritical endorsement of aspects of a global environmentalist discourse rooted in the economic and intellectual thought of European and American culture raises a number of intriguing and difficult questions. The most important of these is connected with the indifference, probably unconscious, of ecoBuddhism to the historical, philosophical, and cultural diversity of the Buddhist tradition itself. I have attempted to show in this essay that a range of philosophical and philological issues relating to the richness of meanings attributed to the term "nature" inevitably emerge when the concept is translated into a Buddhist

context. I have also pointed to the ambiguity of certain fundamental Indic concepts, such as *saṃsāra* or *nirvāṇa*—not least the anti-naturalistic flavor of the latter—when drawn into an environmentalist context. Aesthetically, and in a number of ways related to its history of doctrine formation, East Asian Buddhisms seem to offer more promise in this regard. However, this should not blind us to the equivocal nature of the East Asian historical record nor to the ways in which a sort of "proto-environmentalist" Buddhism has been employed in the service of Japanese and other Asian manifestations of nationalism.

Clearly there are difficulties involved in translating Western environmentalist discourse into an authentically Buddhist setting or, indeed, in calling on Buddhism to provide a rationale for ecological activity. This does not mean that the task is hopeless. I, for one, remain optimistic about the outcome. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the work, for scholars and scholarship, is only just beginning.

Notes

1. On the way in which romanticism fed into New England transcendentalism and subsequently on to American ecoBuddhism, see my "Buddhist Environmental Ethics and Detraditionalization: The Case of EcoBuddhism," *Religion* 25, no. 3 (July 1995):199–211.

2. Manifestations of this are many and varied. Indeed, the literature on the topic is growing at a fairly rapid rate. Examples include the "tree ordination movement" in Thailand, environmental awareness programs among Tibetan refugee communities in India, and the work of socially engaged Western Buddhists.

On Thailand, see Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Buddhasāsanik Kap Kān Anurak Thamachāt* (Buddhists and the conservation of nature) (Bangkok: Kōmol Khīmthong Foundation, 1990). See also J. L. Taylor, *Forest Monks and the Nation-State: An Anthropological and Historical Study in Northeastern Thailand* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993); Leslie E. Sponsel and Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel, "Buddhism, Ecology, and Forests in Thailand: Past, Present, and Future," in *Changing Tropical Forests: Historical Perspectives on Today's Challenges in Asia, Australasia, and Oceania*, ed. John Dargavel, Kay Dixon, and Noel Semple (Canberra: Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, 1988), 305–25; Leslie E. Sponsel and Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel, "The Role of Buddhism in Creating a More Sustainable Society in Thailand," in *Counting the Costs: Economic Growth and Environmental Change in Thailand*, ed. Jonathan Rigg (Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 1995); Phra Depvedī, *Phra Kap Pā* (Monks and the forest) (Bangkok: Vanāphidak Project, 1992); and Kasetsart University, *Invitation to Tree Planting at Buddhamonton* (Bangkok: Public Relations Office, 1987).

Tibetan sources include: Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, "A Tibetan Buddhist Perspective on Spirit in Nature," in *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment Is a Religious Issue*, ed. Steven C. Rockefeller and John C. Elder (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 109–23; Bstan-dzin rgya-mtsho, Dalai Lama XIV, *On the Environment* (Dharamsala: Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, 1994).

The Buddhist Perception of Nature Project was initiated by its international coordinator, Nancy Nash, in 1985 and is influential in both Tibetan and Thai circles; see *Tree of Life: Buddhism and the Protection of Nature*, ed. Shann Davies (Hong Kong: Buddhist Perception of Nature Project, 1987).

For essays representing ecoBuddhist and related matters, see Allan Hunt Badiner, ed., *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990); and *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Nonviolence*, ed. Kenneth Kraft (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

3. The most detailed examination to date of the evidence for and against may be found in Lambert Schmithausen, "The Early Buddhist Tradition and Ecological Ethics," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 4 (1997):1–42.

4. Ibid.

5. John C. Maraldo, "Hermeneutics and Historicity in the Study of Buddhism," *Eastern Buddhist* 19 (1986):23.

6. Kate Soper, *What Is Nature? Culture, Politics, and the Non-Human* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995), 155f.

7. See notes 17 and 36 below.

8. David J. Kalupahana claims that "Dependent arising [*pratītyasamutpāda*] is often referred to as dharmatā which is the Buddhist term for nature"; David J. Kalupahana, "Toward a Middle Path of Survival," in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 252.

9. Donald K. Swearer, "The Hermeneutics of Buddhist Ecology in Contemporary Thailand: Buddhadāsa and Dhammapiṭaka," included in this volume, 24.

10. Heinz Bechert, "Sangha, State, Society, and 'Nation': Persistence of Traditions in 'Post-Traditional' Societies," *Daedalus* 102, no. 1 (1973):85–95 (reprinted in *Post-Traditional Societies*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt [New York: Norton, 1972]).

11. Charles F. Keyes, "Communist Revolution and the Buddhist Past in Cambodia," in *Asian Visions of Authority: Religion and the Modern States of East and Southeast Asia*, ed. Charles F. Keyes, Laurel Kendall, and Helen Hardacre (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 43f.

12. Frank E. Reynolds, "Multiple Cosmogonies and Ethics: The Case of Theravada Buddhism," in *Cosmogony and Ethical Order: New Studies in Comparative Ethics*, ed. Robin W. Lovin and Frank E. Reynolds (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 203–24. The three types mentioned here are the saṃsāric, the rūpic, or devolutionary, and the dhammic. There may be some justification in regarding these as, respectively, psychological, mythological, and supramundane or purified visions of existence.

13. For a discussion of this phrase, see Charles F. Keyes, *The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia*, SHAPS Library of Asian Studies (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 88f.

14. *Shōbōnenjokyō* in *Taishō shinshu Daizōkyō*, ed. Daizōkyō Kankōkai, 85 vols. (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932), 17, text 721 (hereafter cited as T.).

15. T. 84, text 2682.

16. For a full discussion of the Buddhist hells, see Daigan Matsunaga and Alicia Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Concept of Hell* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1972), particularly 107–36.

17. I accept that not all Buddhist environmentalists are going to be modernist in their approach. Elsewhere, I offer four types of contemporary Buddhist environmentalism—ecospiritual, ecoconservative, eco-apologetic and ecojust—in which only the latter is strictly modernist. See my "Getting to Grips with Buddhist Environmentalism: A Provisional Typology," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 2 (1995):173–90.

18. Soper, *What Is Nature?* 29

19. Reynolds, "Multiple Cosmogonies and Ethics," 209f.

20. Schmithausen's term, in Schmithausen, "The Early Buddhist Tradition and Ecological Ethics," 4.

21. On this term in the context of the Buddhist understanding of the world, see Ian Harris, "Causation and 'Telos': The Problem of Buddhist Environmental Ethics," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 1 (1994):45–56.

22. Soper, *What Is Nature?* 47

23. Erazim Kohák, *The Embers and the Stars: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Moral Sense of Nature* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 11.

24. *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* 37, discussed in Ian Harris, *The Continuity of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra in Indian Buddhism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 149.

25. Andrew Feenberg, "The Problem of Modernity in the Philosophy of Nishida," in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism*, ed. James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 156. Also Kitarō Nishida, *An Inquiry into the Good* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 72. Intriguingly, Heidegger may have borrowed some elements in his later thought from Nishida and other Kyoto philosophers. On this important topic, see Graham Parkes, "Heidegger and Japanese Thought: How Much Did He Know, and When Did He Know It?" in *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments*, ed. Christopher E. Macann, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

26. *Sūtrālamkāravṛttibhāṣya* (Peking Tanjur, *Sems-tsam*, vol. Mi), 210 b8f; quoted in Lambert Schmithausen, "Buddhism and Ecological Responsibility," in *The Stories They Tell: A Dialogue among Philosophers, Scientists, and Environmentalists*, ed. Lawrence Surendra, Klaus Schindler, and Prasanna Ramaswamy (Madras: Earthworm Books, 1997), 71, n. 73.

This quotation seems to coincide with the deeply un-naturalistic decriptions of Buddhist Pure Lands, such as Sukhāvati, found in the early Mahāyāna Sūtras.

27. Reynolds, "Multiple Cosmogonies and Ethics," 213f.

28. Toni Huber, for instance, discusses the connection between the landscape of a region of southern Tibet and the *yidam* Cakrasaṃvara in Toni Huber, "Traditional Environmental Protectionism in Tibet Reconsidered," *Tibet Journal* 16, no. 3 (1991):70f.

29. Cf. David L. Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors* (London: Serindia, 1987), 235f; and Schmithausen, "Buddhism and Ecological Responsibility," 68.

30. Gen. 9.2, for example.

31. Johannes Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries: Their Plan and Its Function as a Setting for Buddhist Monastic Life* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag; and London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 161–63.

32. On the influence of Buddhist temples on the dispersal of certain plant species, see Sheng-ji Pei, "Some Effects of the Dai People's Cultural Beliefs and Practices on the Plant Environment of Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province, Southwest China," in *Cultural Values and Human Ecology in Southeast Asia*, ed. Karl L. Hutterer, A. T. Rambo, and G. Lovelace, Michigan Papers on Southeast Asia, 24 (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1985), 321–39.

33. D. C. Twitchett, "Monastic Estates in T'ang China," *Asia Major*, n.s., 5 (1956):123.

34. Ibid., 138; also D. C. Twitchett, "The Monasteries and China's Economy in Medieval Times" (a review of Jacques Gernet's *Les aspects économiques du bouddhisme dans la société chinoise du Ve au Xe siècle* [Saigon: École Française d'Extrême Orient, 1956]), *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 19, no. 3 (1957):536–37, 541.

35. Jan Patocka uses the term "prehistoric" to characterize such a culture: Jan Patocka, *Essais hérétiques sur la philosophie de l'histoire*, trans. Erika Adams (La Grasse: Éditions Verdier, 1981); quoted in Kohák, *The Embers and the Stars*, 21.

36. See Arne Naess, "Through Spinoza to Mahayana Buddhism or Through Mahayana Buddhism to Spinoza?" in *Spinoza's Philosophy of Man: Proceedings of the Scandinavian Spinoza Symposium 1977*, ed. J. Wetlesen (Oslo: University of Oslo Press, 1978), 136–58; Naess, *Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement* (Delft: Eburon, 1992); and Naess, "Spinoza and Ecology," in *Speculum Spinozanum, 1677–1977*, ed. Siegfried Hessig (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 418–25.

37. This is discussed in my "The American Appropriation of Buddhism," in *The Buddhist Forum Volume IV: Seminar Papers 1994–1996* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1996), 125–39, particularly 133–34.

38. Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 182.

39. Cf. Karl August Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

40. Kay Milton, *Environmentalism and Cultural Theory: Exploring the Role of Anthropology in Environmental Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 109f.

41. See, for example, Chaiwat Satha-Anand and Suwanna Wongwaisayawan, "Buddhist Economics Revisited," *Asian Culture Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (1979):37–45. See also Sulak Sivaraksa, "Buddhism and Contemporary International Trends," in *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Nonviolence*, ed. Kenneth Kraft (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

42. Soper, *What Is Nature?* 27.

43. D. T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 334.

44. Robert H. Scharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 124. See also his "Whose Zen? Zen Nationalism Revisited," in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism*, ed. James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 48. For a detailed analysis of *nihonjinron* thought, cf. Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness* (London: Routledge, 1986).

45. S. N. Eisenstadt, "The Japanese Attitude to Nature: A Framework of Basic Ontological Conceptions," in *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*, ed. Ole Bruun and Arne Kalland (London: Curzon Press, 1995), 190.

46. Augustin Berque, "The Sense of Nature and Its Relation to Space in Japan," in *Interpreting Japanese Society: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. Joy Hendry and Jonathan Weber, JASO Occasional Papers, 5 (Oxford: JASO, 1986), 103.

47. See note 25 above.

48. On this important topic, see Lambert Schmithausen, *The Problem of the Sentience of Plants in Earliest Buddhism*, Studia Philologica Buddhica, Occasional Paper Series, 6 (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1991).

49. See *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, translated from the Chinese of Kumārājīva by Leon Hurvitz, Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies, 94 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 101f.

50. Recently published for the first time in moveable type, together with modern Japanese translation and notes, by Fumihiko Sueki, *Heian shoki Bukkyo shiso-shi no kenkyu* (Shunjusha, 1995). Also see Fumihiko Sueki, "Annen: The Philosopher Who Japanized Buddhism," *Acta Asiatica* 66 (1994).

51. For a detailed discussion of *sōmoku jōbutsu*, see part 1 of William LaFleur, "Saigyō and the Buddhist Value of Nature," parts 1 and 2, *History of Religions* 13, no. 2 (November 1973):93–128; no. 3 (February 1974): 227–48. A condensed and revised version of this article may be found in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 183–209.

52. Yoshiaki Shimizu, "Multiple Commemorations: *The Vegetable Nehan* of Itō Jakuchū," in *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of*

Japan, ed. James Sanford, William LaFleur, and Masatoshi Nagatomi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 201–33, particularly 217f.

53. Ibid., 229.

54. Ibid., 233.

55. Quoted by LaFleur, "Saigyō and the Buddhist Value of Nature," in Callicott and Ames, *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*, 204.

56. T. 82:97c–98a, text 2582; quoted in Sanford, LaFleur, and Nagatomi, *Flowing Traces*, 214.

57. See note 24 above.

58. For consideration of the link between the poet and the plant, see Donald H. Shively, "Bashō—the Man and the Plant," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 16, no. 1–2 (1953):146–61.

59. *Bashō nowaki shite / tarai ni ame o / kiku yo kana*; quoted in ibid., 152.

60. Quoted in ibid., 148.

61. William LaFleur, *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 68–69; and ibid.

62. There is no shortage of Indic references to the insubstantiality of the plant kingdom, for example, Candrakirti's frequent depiction of *saṃsāra* as a forest. See my "How Environmentalist Is Buddhism?" *Religion* 21 (April 1991):101–14, particularly 108f.

63. *Kono tera wa / niwa ippai no / Bashō kana*; quoted in R. H. Blyth, *Haiku* (Tokyo) 4 (autumn-winter 1952):127.

64. Cf. note 43 and ensuing discussion above.

65. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (New York: Dover, 1956), 29.

66. For more discussion on the depiction of the mythical kingdom of Shambhala, see Marylin M. Rhie and Robert A. F. Thurman, *Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet*, rev. ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 378–79, 482.

67. For information on works concerned with the technicalities of Indian art, see P. Hardie, "Concept of Art," in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, vol. 6 (London and New York: Grove's Dictionaries, 1996), 633–35.

68. Having said this, one or two examples of "nature mysticism" may be detected, for instance, in early Pali texts. On this, see my "How Environmentalist Is Buddhism?" 107.

69. On the theory of *rasa*s, see Raniero Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta*, 2d ed. (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1968), xvff.