Editor's Introduction, Issue 2.1

The Medium of the Mind

Welcome to this volume of the *Yin-Cheng Journal of Contemporary Buddhism* about the "Medium of the Mind." This is the first of two issues exploring the manifold ways that Buddhist traditions have sought to mediate and materialize the intangible—not only the ever-illusive "mind," but also ideas like emptiness, impermanence, beauty, power, health, justice, artifice, and authenticity—by engaging innovations in art, contemplative practice, medicine, and technology.

The essays in this issue explore how Buddhist practices mediate between the material and ineffable, between the seen and unseen, and between remembered and forgotten histories. James Robson traces changing Buddhist understandings of madness by recovering a lost history of Buddhist institutional efforts to apprehend, subdue, and heal the ailing mind. Essays by Hansun Hsiung, Yingtian He, Christopher K. Tong, and Marcus Bingenheimer prompt reflection on how new technologies—from the advent of optical science in late nineteenth and early twentieth century East Asia to that of large language models and artificial intelligence today—act as a canvas for perduring human anxieties and aspirations: the perennial search for external evidence of inner experience; the quest to produce scientific proof of spiritual convictions; the hope that artificial intelligence might reveal what is uniquely authentic about the human mind. In the first of a two-part series on Buddhist art, technology, and visionary literature, David L. McMahan reminds us that such concerns are always entangled with questions of affect and aesthetics. And, as Nataly Shahaf highlights in her essay about Buddhist ghost photography in early Republican China, the question of what technology makes visible is more than a matter of perception; it is also a question of ethics. By surfacing that which has been rendered invisible, images—through what they

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conceal as much as through what they reveal—bring into focus our own moral imperative to see.

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