

Countering Climate Change with Prayers? Tibetan *sMon lam* Practice, Buddhist Ecoactivism, and Extinction Rebellion

Rolf Scheuermann, Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies,
University of Heidelberg

Abstract: Is it possible to counter climate change with prayers? This paper examines the Tibetan prayer practice called *sMon lam* or resolute aspirations (Skt. *praṇidhāna*), Buddhist end-time narratives, and their potential connection to climate change and contemporary Buddhist ecoactivism. In addition to textual material and online sources, the study bases itself on fieldwork, interviews with activists of XR Buddhists Germany, and participant observation during an XR Buddhist Campaign in Berlin from September 17–19, 2022. The paper raises the question of how existing Buddhist end-time narratives have been adapted and recontextualised by Buddhist groups concerned with the environment and what role resolute aspirations play in this regard. Additionally, the paper examines processes of cultural exchange and adaptation of core (Mahāyāna) Buddhist principles, such as the bodhisattva path and Nirvāṇa.

Keywords: Resolute aspirations, Monlam, *sMon lam*, XR Buddhists, Extinction Rebellion, EcoDharma, EcoSattva

While some regions of the world do not yet appear to be strongly affected by climate change, it is becoming more visible in others. Indeed, the draft of the second part of the Sixth Assessment Report of the IPCC on *Climate Change*

2022: *Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*¹ indicates that the effects of the climate crisis are unevenly distributed. The consequences for India, where Buddhism developed, could be drastic as “rising temperatures increase the likelihood of the threat of heatwaves across Asia, droughts in arid and semiarid areas of West, Central, and South Asia, floods in monsoon regions in South, Southeast, and East Asia, and glacier melting in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region.”² Extreme heatwaves, now frequently witnessed by the inhabitants of India’s capital New Delhi, will become more probable. Furthermore, the report remarks, “extreme climatic conditions are threatening food security; thus, agro-based economies, such as those of India and Pakistan, are most vulnerable to climate change in this regard.”³ This may mean that some areas in the region could become uninhabitable in the medium term. Certain parts are already heavily affected, such as the Indian island of Lohachara, whose inhabitants had to leave after it was permanently flooded in 1991. As the erosion of Ghoramara Island in the Sundarban Delta south of Kolkata continues, some of the island’s villages are already underwater, and its inhabitants have had to relocate.⁴

With the rising frequency of heat waves, droughts, floods, and other natural catastrophes, climate change can no longer be ignored, not even in the Global North. It influences public discourse, film, literature, and art. Apocalyptic sentiments increasingly permeate these areas, with climate change described as an ecological apocalypse that could eventually lead to the extinction of human life on Earth. Against this backdrop, ecoactivist groups like the global movement Extinction Rebellion (XR) or the German Last Generation have emerged and gained momentum. With XR Faith Bridge or XR Buddhists, we also see the development of faith-oriented subgroups that follow the general principles and values of XR but do so based on their various religious backgrounds.

On the one hand, considering the individual religious beliefs of a community is essential for decision-makers who want to implement climate change actions to assess “which practices are acceptable within their religion.”⁵ On the

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2022*.

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2022*, 1459.

³ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2022*, 1467.

⁴ Ghosh, Hajra, and Mukhopadhyay, “Island Erosion and Afflicted Population: Crisis and Policies to Handle Climate Change.”

⁵ Schuman, Dokken, et al., “Religious Beliefs and Climate Change Adaptation: A Study of

other hand, the wave of apocalyptic sentiments have gained traction among religious people of various faiths whose doctrinal systems include apocalyptic narratives such as the Christian apocalypse, the Old Norse Ragnarök, the Indian *kaliyuga*, or the notion of the degeneration of the Dharma in Buddhist doctrine.

This study looks at the relationship between the well-known traditional Tibetan prayer practice of *smon lam* or resolute aspirations (Skt. *praṇidhāna*), the Buddhist end-time narratives contained therein, and their relationship with current dystopian climate change narratives. During the early phase of research for this paper, I contacted activists from the recently-formed German Buddhist environmental group XR Buddhists Germany. I then interviewed some of the group's organisers and participated in one of their events. This helped expand the scope of the study to integrate different contemporary Buddhist ecoactivist approaches to tackling climate change. From these findings, the following questions emerged: How have existing Buddhist end-time narratives been recontextualised and adapted in the current environment by Buddhist groups interested in the environment? And what role do resolute aspirations play in this regard? During the course of this research, further questions emerged in relation to the processes of cultural exchange and adaptation of core Mahāyāna Buddhist principles, such as the bodhisattva path and nirvāṇa.

This study analyses textual material, commentaries, and online sources. It also includes observations derived from previous fieldwork and interviews with activists of XR Buddhists Germany conducted during the end of August and beginning of September 2022, as well as from participant observation during an XR Buddhist Campaign in Berlin from September 17–19, 2022.

While this study offers an initial exploration into the connections between traditional Buddhist end-time beliefs and contemporary ecoactivist movements, it is important to address its limitations. At present, the degree to which the scriptural antecedents discussed hold relevance to contemporary XR Buddhists cannot be fully ascertained. While traditional Tibetan Buddhist prayers and short resolute aspirations feature in the Buddhist Climate Action Puja that was observed, it is possible that the activists are unaware of the related Buddhist end-time narratives. A more extensive ethnographic study would be required to reveal the depth of their engagement and knowledge of these traditional narratives.

Living in the End Times

Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek proclaims that we are already “living in the end times” since “the global capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero-point.”⁶ His description of this end-time scenario prominently features the climate crisis and its effects:

Its ‘four riders of the apocalypse’ are comprised by the ecological crisis, the consequence of the biogenetic revolution, imbalances within the system itself (problems with intellectual property; forthcoming struggles over raw materials, food and water), and the explosive growth of social divisions and exclusions.⁷

Traditionally, different narratives related to end times have also been prevalent in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, for example, in the messianic belief in future Buddhas, pure lands such as Sukhavatī, narratives that involve hidden lands such as the well-known Shambhala myth,⁸ or more localised narratives such as the hidden land of Yolmo,⁹ descriptions of the end of the doctrine, and explanations of the end of the universe.

This collection of end-time beliefs includes dystopian narratives, most notably the notion of the *kaliyuga* or the age of strife inherited from the Brahmanical tradition. According to Vincent Eltschinger, “from the early fourth century CE, Buddhist literati increasingly resorted to *kaliyuga* terminology and imagery.”¹⁰ Earlier, Eltschinger had already argued that Buddhist end-time prophecies “bear witness to a growing awareness of external causes of decline, such as political (Mihirakula) and socio-religious (Śaiva threats; Pūraṇa Kāśyapa paradigm) hostility.”¹¹ In this respect, contemporary threats to social order are certainly not lacking: a looming climate catastrophe, an ongoing global pan-

Three Rural South African Communities.”

⁶ Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, x.

⁷ Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, x.

⁸ Hummel and Vogliotti, “Notes on the Lamaist Apocalypse.”

⁹ Gelle, “Treasure Texts on the Age of Decline: Prophecies Concerning the Hidden Land of Yolmo, Their Reception and Impact.”

¹⁰ Eltschinger, “On Some Buddhist Uses of the *kaliyuga*,” 127.

¹¹ Eltschinger, “Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy,” 31.

demic, several large-scale wars, and the post-factual democratic developments that challenge and threaten the stability of democratic institutions around the globe. These threats may constitute an ideal environment for apocalyptic notions to thrive. Furthermore, with the transmission and translation of Buddhist doctrines to numerous cultural contexts due to the recent globalisation of Buddhism, we should also expect processes of cultural appropriation and adaptation in the realm of Buddhist end-time thinking.

In this respect, a remark about using terms like “apocalypse” in this paper seems necessary. The word carries certain cultural connotations, many of which stem from its predominantly Christian background. However, when using it here, it is mainly done in a secular fashion. The definition of apocalypticism proposed in the *Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements* (CDAMM) developed at the Centre for the Critical Study of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements (CenSAMM) is quite helpful in this respect. It defines apocalypticism as follows:

Belief in the impending or possible destruction of the world itself or physical global catastrophe, and/or the destruction or radical transformation of the existing social, political, or religious order of human society—often referred to as the apocalypse. While the primary focus of articles will be on accounts of apocalypses which are understood in religious terms, or initiated by divine or supernatural forces, secular uses of the term (especially when these implicitly draw on or encode religious/supernatural themes) will also be included. As a secondary aspect, the definition includes implicit reference to revelation and prophecy, thus the definition includes belief systems in which the idea of destruction of the world/societal order is understood to be attained by communication from divine or supernatural sources.¹²

In an earlier paper I argued that “the avertive character of the Buddhist eschatological enterprise ... shows closeness to the concept of avertive apocalypticism.”¹³ According to Daniel Wojcik, “avertive apocalyptic beliefs express the notion that the world is not irredeemably evil or absolutely doomed,” and

¹² CenSAMM, “Apocalypticism.”

¹³ Scheuermann, “Tibetan Buddhist Dystopian Narratives and their Pedagogical Dimensions,” 110.

“human agency is emphasized, as the actions of human beings not only may save the world from destruction, but in some cases may bring about a perfect age.”¹⁴ As I stated elsewhere, Buddhist dystopian narratives of the end of the doctrine have a pedagogical dimension, which may have “contributed to Buddhism’s extraordinary ability to maintain a restorative enthusiasm”¹⁵ throughout its history. An interesting question to observe is whether this restorative enthusiasm will also be translatable to today’s ecological crisis.

What is it that allows general Buddhist ideas and practices to be adapted to the current apocalyptic mood and circumstances and to create a restorative enthusiasm that could translate into ecoactivism? The mere presence of dystopian narratives in classical Buddhist literature and doctrine does not necessarily trigger such a process. An inevitability will be that the current situation mirrors or at least vaguely resembles some of the topics addressed in the traditional end-time accounts, thereby creating a sense of imminence that the described end times are finally approaching. While the Buddhist trope of the degeneration of the Buddhist doctrine has been influential throughout most of Buddhist history, the current deterioration of living circumstances along with the increase of catastrophic events are, from a Buddhist perspective, suggestive that the actual end of the Buddhist doctrine is finally, as long prophesied, drawing closer.

The famous Kauśāmbī prophecy of the end of the Buddhist doctrine in the *Candragarbha-sūtra* has been translated into Tibetan, and Jan Nattier has already discussed it in detail. It lays out how the doctrine deteriorates over a period of 2,000 years, subdivided into four periods of 500 years each. While the degeneration during the first two phases mainly concerns the religious sphere, it expands more and more to the social and environmental domains during the last two phases. We learn that warfare will start to break out during the third phase, while famine and disease will add to it during the fourth and final phase.¹⁶

It is, of course, true that Buddhist cosmology follows a circular model of time. Therefore, the end of the Buddhist doctrine should not be understood as the *end* in the sense of a *finis mundi* or the end of history, but rather one

¹⁴ Wojcik, “Avertive Apocalypticism,” 84.

¹⁵ Scheuermann, “Tibetan Buddhist Dystopian Narratives,” 111.

¹⁶ Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline*, 52–54.

of many ends in a sequence of endless cycles. Even though Tibetan Buddhists follow such a cyclical model of time, individual cycles span over extended periods of time that are hard to fathom. Therefore, from a practical perspective, cyclicity will not affect an individual's assessment of the situation very much, as the focus is still on the current decline of Buddhism and of living conditions overall. An issue that may instead be of concern in such a situation is the belief that a future rebirth is not necessarily limited to this world but can occur in alternative settings, such as different world systems with better conditions or pure lands of Buddhas.

For Tibetan Buddhists, there have already been many signals that the end of the doctrine is approaching in this world. During the Cultural Revolution in Tibet, many monasteries were destroyed, and monastics were forced to disrobe. In the diaspora, there have been quite a few reports about religious teachers' lavish lifestyles and misbehaviour. In an earlier article, I mentioned three examples of traditional Buddhist end-time narratives that contemporary Buddhist masters employed in the present circumstances.¹⁷ This shows that it is a common practice of modern (Tibetan) Buddhists to place present-day events in the broader context of end-time narratives. This claim is also substantiated by fieldwork conducted in the aftermath of the Nepalese earthquake of 2015 by Geoff Childs, Sienna Craig, Christina Juenger, and Kristine Hildebrandt, who attest that interviewees—especially the elderly—related the catastrophic events to Buddhist narratives of a degenerated age.¹⁸

Is the End Inevitable?

Looking at the current state of affairs, a contemporary Buddhist may conclude that the end of the doctrine is approaching. But is this end inevitable? The first of the Four Seals of Buddhism (Skt. *caturmudrā*, Tib. *phyag rgya bzhi*) states that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, and this, of course, can be applied to the Buddhist doctrine as well. Indeed, relating the Buddhist dystopian accounts of the end of the doctrine to current apocalyptic climate change

¹⁷ Scheuermann, "Tibetan Buddhist Dystopian Narratives," 106–9.

¹⁸ Childs, Craig, et al., "This is the End: Earthquake Narratives and Buddhist Prophecies of Decline," 42.

narratives could potentially instill a paralysing fear that would lead to inaction. However, evoking paralysing fear alone is not in line with Buddhist soteriology.

Concerning the famous Four Truths of the Noble Ones (Skt. *catvāri ārya-satyāni*, Tib. *bden pa bzhi*), the first two truths (the truth of suffering and the truth of the origin of suffering) may have earned Buddhism a reputation for having a pessimistic outlook. Yet, these are further accompanied by the last two truths that explain the way out of this misery: the truth of the cessation of suffering and the truth of the way that leads to the cessation of suffering.

Similarly, accounts of the degeneration of the Buddhist doctrine can also be understood as a warning that should not bring about a paralysing fear but an activating one. If the system does not offer a way out, then individuals might feel doomed and could only prepare for what is inevitable, for example, with prayers. However, we find established methods that exist in the Tibetan tradition to prevent the end of the Buddhist doctrine from manifesting. In the famous nineteenth-century compendium *mKhas 'jug* [Gateway to Scholarship] authored by the rNying ma luminary 'Ju Mi pham rGya mtsho (1848–1912), there is a list of four principles that can improve the condition of the world during times of degeneration:

1. the right view of knowing that [the law of *karman*,] cause and effect, exists;
2. the path of the ten virtues;
3. the [traditional] fields of knowledge;
4. the authentic Buddhist doctrine (*saddharma*).¹⁹

This list implies that the process of degeneration does not follow an automatism, and if not halted altogether, can at least be delayed or positively influenced by these different factors. From the perspective of causality, understanding the list as an antidote for the degeneration of the Buddhist doctrine makes sense. Through (1) training in a better understanding of the law of *karman*, individuals develop (2) virtuous behaviour, which in turn leads to better circumstances in the world in general. Through (3) training in traditional fields of knowledge (i.e., logic, language, healing, construction, and Buddhist doctrine), com-

¹⁹ Ju Mi pham, *mKhas 'jug*, BDRC, W23468, vol. 22, 77–78: [*'jig rten legs par byed pa'i chos ni*] *rgyu 'bras yod par shes pa'i yang dag pa'i lta ba*| *dge ba bcu'i lam*| *rig pa'i gnas*| *dam pa'i chos rnam* so| *'dir de tsam las ma spros* so||.

prehensive general knowledge and knowledge of the Buddhist doctrine in particular is acquired. Since knowledge of Buddhist doctrine is crucial, it is also listed as an individual point. If one trains further in the knowledge of the Buddhist doctrine, an authentic understanding of the (4) Buddhist doctrine evolves. If that happens, the Buddhist doctrine has not degenerated fully. Therefore, this implies that the end-time scenario of the degeneration of the Buddhist doctrine has been averted.

This is possible because, according to Buddhist beliefs, the future is not a given. It is not predetermined and, therefore, is subject to change. It is grounded in the doctrine of dependent origination (Skt. *pratītyasamūtpāda*, Tib. *rten 'brel*), which lays out causality, i.e., how all things come into being in dependence upon causes and conditions as formulated in brief in the famous *Āryapratītyasamutpādanāma-Mahāyānasūtra*:

All phenomena that arise from causes,
The Tathāgata has taught their cause,
And that which is their cessation,
Thus has proclaimed the Great Renunciant.²⁰

There exist, of course, more elaborate explanations of the doctrine of dependent origination. Still, the primary aspect of it remains, i.e., that the Buddhist worldview is based on a system of causality and not on a mysterious act of creation. Within this system, it seems inevitable that anything that came about due to an assembly of causes and conditions will eventually come to an end. When, however, is still to be determined. On the contrary, if the causes and conditions that brought something into being are still present, that thing may continue to exist. This is in line with contemporary non-Buddhist descriptions regarding the situation of the climate crisis as described, for example, by Slavoj Žižek:

Our survival itself depends on a series of stable natural parameters which

²⁰ Scheuermann, Kemp, and Tilleman, trans., “The Sūtra on Dependent Arising (Pratītyasamutpādasūtra, Toh 520).” Cf. Toh. 212, *bKa' 'gyur* (sDe dge, BDRC, W22048), vol. 62, 125a–b: *chos gang rgyu byung de dag gi* | *rgyu dang de 'gog gang yin pa'ang* | *de bzhin gshegs pas bka' stsal te* | *dge spyong chen pos de skad gsungs* |.

we automatically take for granted (temperature, the composition of the air, sufficient water and energy supplies, etc.): we can ‘do what we want’ only insofar as we remain marginal enough so as not to seriously perturb the parameters of life on earth.²¹

A glance at Tibetan divination manuals, which I have done in an earlier paper, indicates that unfavourable predictions are often given alongside their possible remedies. The underlying implications are apparent: the future can be altered. Hence, prognostic methods are understood as tools that allow one to examine the current state of affairs of causes and conditions. They are indicative of a possible future. Hence, they are meant to enable not only predictions but also the alteration of future events.²² From a Buddhist perspective, this implies a certain degree of contingency regarding Buddhist end-time prophecies but also concerning climate change forecasts. This implies that there is hope, even if circumstances may look desperate.

I. The Example of Resolute Aspirations

Resolute Aspirations: Countering Climate Change with Prayers

At first, countering climate change with prayers may sound problematic. Prayers do not necessarily imply corresponding actions and are often associated with the idea that one transfers responsibility to a higher power instead. If someone were to suggest prayers as a core strategy to counter climate change, it would likely cause resistance from climate scientists and secular climate activists alike.

Tibetan Buddhism is a syncretic form of Mahāyāna Buddhism that incorporates various Buddhist and non-Buddhist elements. Mahāyāna Buddhism has quite a utopian perspective as it centres on the ideal of the bodhisattvas, who develop in their spiritual career a compassionate mind that extends over a vast dimension. The bodhisattva commitment to not enter into nirvāṇa until all sentient beings are liberated from saṃsāra implies that the bodhisattva will

²¹ Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, 423.

²² Scheuermann, “‘One Will Quickly Die!’” 128.

remain in the world forever. Tibetan Buddhist soteriology is generally presented as a gradual path, where individuals overcome the different aspects of the two obscurations, i.e., obscurations in the form of afflictions (Skt. *kleśāvaraṇa*, Tib. *nyon mongs kyi sgrib pa*) and obscurations concerning knowables (Skt. *jñeyāvaraṇa*, Tib. *shes bya' i sgrib pa*).

Probably the most widespread prayer practice used to counter climate change among Tibetan Buddhists is resolute aspirations (Tib. *smon lam*; Skt. *praṇidhāna*). This particular practice, often translated as wishing prayers, is based on vow-like aspirations said to be performed conjointly with accumulations of merit throughout many consecutive lifetimes. Given their vow-like nature, long-term perspective, and the underlying resolve that goes along with them, they have also been dubbed “paths of aspiration.”²³

Resolute aspirations do not constitute an independent soteriological system of Buddhist practice but form an essential part of the general Mahāyāna soteriology in that they are, for example, listed as the eighth in the set of ten *pāramitās* or perfections that are accomplished on the eighth bodhisattva level.²⁴ As such, this technique is deeply rooted in Buddhist soteriology, whose main objective is to attain Buddhahood.

Resolute Aspirations as Apotropaic Practices

While resolute aspirations occur as daily recitations in personal meditation rituals or monastic liturgies, the practice is also widely known because of large prayer festivals such as the *sMon lam chen mo* that have taken place in Lhasa since 1409. Similar festivals continue to take place today, often in holy places like Bodhgaya, Lumbinī, or Halesi,²⁵ and regularly draw large international

²³ In German, this translates to “Wege des Strebens.” See, for example, Draszczyk and Draszczyk, trans., *Vollendetes Wirken. Tāranāthas Kommentar zum ‘König unter den Wegen des Strebens nach dem Vollendeten Wirken der Edlen’*.

²⁴ The *Āryākṣayamatipariṣṭhāna-Mahāyānasūtra* states: “The eighth (stage of the) generation of the mind of awakening should be viewed as having completely purified all veils in the manner of the halo of the completely pure full moon. Its cause is the *pāramitā* of resolute aspirations.” “Phags pa blo gros mi zad pas zhush pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo,” *bKa' 'gyur* (sDe dge, BDRC, MW22084_0089], vol. 44, 177a2–3: *sems bskyed pa brgyad pa ni zla ba nye ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi rnam par dag pa'i dpe'i tshul gyis sgrib pa thams cad rnam par dag pa yongs su rdzogs par blta ste* | *de la rgyu ni smon lam gyi pha rol tu phyin pa'o*||.

²⁵ Buffetrille, “Low Tricks and High Stakes Surrounding a Holy Place in Eastern Nepal: The

gatherings. It is quite common that religious dignitaries address the gathering and request attendees to specifically dedicate prayers toward a particular cause, such as, for example, the long life of a tradition or one of its revered teachers, the well-being of the victims of a natural catastrophe, the end of a war, or to avert climate change.²⁶

The apotropaic nature of the prayers is often clearly visible in the texts, such as verses twenty-six and thirty-nine of chapter ten on the “Transfer of Merit” of Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, also known as the *Resolute Aspirations of the Bodhicaryāvatāra* (*sPyod ’jug smon lam*) in Tibetan.

[26] May the gods grant protection in the perils of illness, wilderness and the like, to the sleeping, the insane and the careless, to helpless children and the elderly!²⁷

[39] May the god let it rain at the right time, may harvests be plentiful! And may the people be prosperous, the king righteous!²⁸

Being an established apotropaic practice with a longstanding history, it is unsurprising that present-day Tibetan masters consider resolute aspirations a valuable means to counter climate change. On January 11, 2009, Orgyen Trinley Dorje, one of the claimants of the title of Karmapa, for example, addressed the gathering of the yearly Kagyu Monlam (*bKa’ brgyud smon lam*) in Bodhgaya for

Halesi-Māratika Caves,” 193–94.

²⁶ As witnessed personally during several such *sMon lam* festivals, it is customary for donations to be collected. The names of the donors are read aloud during the festival and can be combined with a message that informs the audience about the cause to which the donor would like to dedicate the donation.

²⁷ English translation from the Sanskrit original, Steinkellner and Peck-Kubaczek, “*Bodhicaryāvatāra*: Entering the Course Towards Awakening, Translation and Commentary,” 503; *suptamattapramattānām vyādhyāranyādisaṃkaṭe | anāthabālavṛddhānām rakṣām kurvantu devatāḥ ||26||*; *dgon stsogs lam myed nam na bar | 1 | byis ba rgan po mgon myed pa | |gñid log myos śiñ rab myos rnams | | lha dag sruñ ba byed par śog | |*. Minayeff, ed., “Çāntideva: ‘Bodhicaryāvatāra,’” 223, 12–13.

²⁸ Steinkellner and Peck-Kubaczek, “*Bodhicaryāvatāra*,” 504; *devo varṣatu kālena śasyasaṃpattir [(V: sasyasaṃpatti)] astu ca | sphīto bhavatu lokaś ca rājā bhavatu dhārmikaḥ || ; lha yañ dus su char ’bebs śiñ | | lo tog phun sum tshogs par śog | | rgyal po chos bžin byed gyur cig | | ’jig rten dag kyañ dar bar śog | |*. De la Vallée Poussin, *Catalogue of the Tibetan Manuscripts from Tun-huang in the India Office Library*, 629, 37b6–38a1.

the second time in a row by addressing the topic of climate change:

The climate has changed and temperatures worldwide are unbalanced. The ice packs at the earth's poles are melting and the weather is getting warmer in Tibet. We are approaching a critical situation. This is not going to affect only one ethnic group or one country; It will impact the fate of the entire globe, so we all need to work together. It is very important that we educate ourselves as much as possible, and that we take greater interest in the current scientific thinking on climate change and environmental protection.²⁹

Towards the end of his speech, he further requested the audience, among others, to keep the victims of recent natural catastrophes and floodings in mind while reciting the prayers. Hence, the focus was placed on praying for the recent victims of the effects of climate change.

Resolute Aspirations and Hope

This state of affairs, in which present-day Buddhist practitioners are constantly confronted with the chimes of the doomsday bell in the media heralding an approaching climate apocalypse, could lead to doomsday agony. There is an imminent risk that individuals feel disheartened and do not believe it is possible to engage in meaningful acts to counter climate change. Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone summarise this hopelessness as follows:

Hope is often thought of as the feeling that things are going to get better. When facing the mess we're in, it is difficult for most of us to have that. Looking into the future, we can no longer take it for granted that the resources we depend on—food, fuel, and drinkable water—will be available. We can no longer even be certain that our civilization will survive or that conditions on our planet will remain hospitable for complex forms of life.³⁰

Furthermore, while news media long considered that bad and sensational news sells best, there are increasing voices in public debate that oppose the use of

²⁹ Trinley, "The Gyalwang Karmapa's Special Address to the Kagyu Monlam."

³⁰ Macy and Johnstone, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in with Unexpected Resilience and Creative Power*, 2.

apocalyptic language—also known as climate alarmism³¹ —in discussions of climate change.

Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, therefore, suggest the practice of Active Hope as a Buddhist middle-way approach. Active Hope acknowledges our dire situation but does not give in to hopeless doomsday agony. They describe the following three-step process:

First, we start from where we are by taking in a clear view of reality, acknowledging what we see and how we feel. Second, we identify what we hope for in terms of the direction we'd like things to move in or the values we'd like to see expressed. And third, we take steps to move ourselves or our situation in that direction.³²

This is in line with what has been explained above concerning the Four Truths of the Noble Ones. It is traditionally conceived that a Buddhist first must understand that there is suffering and the cause of suffering, i.e., the first two of the four truths. After the practitioner has developed an awareness of the problem and its origination, the process continues. They are then required to comprehend the truth of cessation and the truth of the path that can be applied to overcome all problems.

Hence, regarding climate change, one first needs to understand that there is a problem and a cause of the suffering. There is climate change and it is caused by greenhouse gas emissions and their effects. This will eventually lead to drastic—if not catastrophic—consequences. To avoid this insight leading to doomsday agony, one then needs to establish constructive hope, i.e., a sense that there is a path that can be followed and that one's action's will have an effect. This has already been demonstrated by Jennifer R. Marlon et al., who examined what makes people hopeful or doubtful concerning measures against climate change and how this relates to climate change mobilisation.³³

The practice of resolute aspirations fits well into such an approach. Resolute aspirations conjoin dystopian narratives that can be used to acknowledge

³¹ See, for example, Schellenberger, "Why Climate Alarmism Hurts Us All."

³² Macy and Johnstone, *Active Hope*, 4–5.

³³ Marlon, Bloodhart et al., "How Hope and Doubt Affect Climate Change Mobilization."

one's situation with utopian counternarratives. A recent anthology entitled *A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency* contains writings by many well-known Buddhist teachers. It is telling that the majority of contributions authored by Tibetan masters take the form of resolute aspirations. Most of these works directly link climate change to narratives of degenerate times, such as the introduction to *The Mandala of the Four Energies in the Kaliyuga* by Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche:

Many highly realized masters of the past prophesied that events could occur in the Kaliyuga (our present era), such as the melting of great mountain snow caps and glaciers, and other disasters involving the four elements. Peoples' activities in general have changed in ways that have brought about global warming.³⁴

The remaining text consists of a homage to the Buddha, a description of the causes that led to the degenerate times we live in, and a prayer to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to offer protection from the effects of the degeneration that may cause the end of the world. It then culminates in the following verse that gives a utopian outlook:

Grant your blessings that the world might enjoy the glory of peace and happiness
And that all living beings might swiftly and without obstruction
Accomplish all their aspirations that accord with the sacred teachings, just
as they wish!³⁵

In general, resolute aspirations constitute a Buddhist literary genre in which we find both dystopian and utopian narratives, and such a positive twist at the end is typical. Quite frequently found in resolute aspirations are formulations to evoke rebirth in pure lands such as Sukhāvatī.³⁶ Furthermore, resolute aspi-

³⁴ Dudjom Rinpoche, "The Mandala of the Four Energies in the Kaliyuga," 93–94.

³⁵ Dudjom Rinpoche, "The Mandala," 98.

³⁶ For example, at the end of the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhānarāja* [King of Prayer of Excellent Conduct] of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*. Cf. *bKa' 'gyur* (*sDe dge*, BDRC, W22048), vol. 101, 5315 ff.

rations often also aim at gaining the ability to actually bring about a pure land oneself. This entails the combination of vigorous religious training through extended periods of time (and rebirths) in conjunction with continuous resolute aspirations. The practice of resolute aspirations is grounded in the understanding that practitioners can shape and effectively bring about utopian worlds through the power of their merit in combination with continuous aspirations. Therefore, invoking a utopia through prayers can be considered a creational act, i.e., a particular form of “worlding” practice.

Furthermore, resolute aspirations are already considered an apotropaic practice to counter unwanted circumstances. Accordingly, using resolute aspirations to remember dystopian narratives helps to remind the individual of a possible (but not inevitable) future. The utopian narratives contained therein instill hope. Resolute aspirations are considered an apotropaic practice to help ease or prevent the worst and turn utopia into a reality.

In this way, engaging dystopian narratives in the form of a coming climate apocalypse can fulfil a similar function to engaging Buddhist contemplations on impermanence and death meant to produce fear of death in a Buddhist practitioner. Taken alone, instilling such fear is not helpful. However, if practised alongside contemplation on the preciousness of human rebirth and instructions on the Buddhist path, it is said to function as a necessary motivation for a practitioner at the beginning stage.

Hence, for a Buddhist environmentalist, daily recitations of resolute aspirations can complement secular forms of climate change ecoactivism because they can help to create a deeper understanding of the situation, foster an imagination of the world one wants to live in, and constitute an active spiritual support for this endeavour. As Chris Johnstone and the Buddhist ecophilosopher Joanna Macy argued in *Active Hope*, “the best way of anchoring a vision is to act on it and make it part of our lives.”³⁷ In this way, resolute aspirations may help to strengthen hope and the conviction that one’s action can be effective.

³⁷ Macy and Johnstone, *Active Hope*, 164.

II. The Example of Extinction Rebellion Buddhists Germany

The Organisation

Contingency issues have generally played an important role in religious traditions at all times, but even more so in times of great uncertainty and change. Decisions about how people conceive of the environment, value it, and, accordingly, engage in actions to protect it are influenced by their worldviews and, thus, their religious beliefs. Climate Scientists have warned for decades that human-made climate change threatens the world's ecosystem and many Buddhists have taken an interest in environmental issues.

Possible motives for ecoactivism can be found in the core of the Buddhist doctrine, as has been summarised aptly by Leslie Sponsel and Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel:

The central preoccupation of the Buddha, and accordingly Buddhism, is with removing the causes of suffering and eliminating it. Environmental problems and crises contribute to suffering in numerous and diverse ways, indirectly as well as directly. In the teachings of the Buddha, 'beings' refers to all living creatures, "seen and unseen." Therefore, ecological and environmental concerns are inherent in Buddhism.³⁸

It is thus unsurprising that several Buddhist environmental groups have developed around the globe during the past decades. A relatively new grassroots movement, Extinction Rebellion, started in the UK in response to the 2018 IPCC Special Report on the impact of 1.5°C global warming³⁹ and quickly expanded around the globe. In the words of XR UK, the 2018 IPCC report implies "that we only have 12 years to stop catastrophic climate change," asserting "that we have entered the 6th mass extinction event."⁴⁰ The imminence of the looming apocalypse is expressed by using an x-shaped hourglass in a circle as the organisation's symbol.

While XR's non-violent "rebellion" is mainly organised through local groups who share a location, community groups also connect members based

³⁸ Stanley and Natadecha-Sponsel, "Buddhist Environmentalism," 318.

³⁹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Global Warming of 1.5°C*.

⁴⁰ Extinction Rebellion UK, "FAQs - Extinction Rebellion UK."

on shared self-identity, such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, profession, or faith. One of these groups is XR Buddhists, a community of Buddhists from different traditions who support the demands and values of XR. XR Buddhists has been active since 2019 in the UK and Germany.

On July 25, 2022, the German Buddhist Union (Deutsche Buddhistische Union, DBU), a national umbrella organisation of more than sixty German Buddhist organisations, shared an announcement of XR Buddhists Germany via their social media channels that informed followers about the group's actions in Berlin from September 17–20, 2022.⁴¹ While social media posts of the DBU generally do not receive many reactions, this post invited more than eighty very mixed comments. Apart from approval, several people expressed their discomfort with DBU for advertising the activities of XR Buddhists Germany, which was not perceived by all as a Buddhist organisation. Consequently, this debate caught my attention, and I contacted the group to learn more about their activities. The following observations are the result of interviews with two of the organisers ahead of these events, as well as of my participant observations during the actions in Berlin.

Overview of the Activities of XR Buddhists Germany in Berlin, September 17–20, 2022

XR climate change activists set up a tent camp at Invalidenpark, a park area next to the Federal Ministry of Economy and Climate Protection for the Autumn Rebellion of XR Germany. The group of XR Buddhists Germany activists was heterogeneous concerning age and gender but seemed to consist entirely of German Buddhists, primarily converts. The community's headquarter was a meditation tent (Figure 1) at the centre of the camp. During the Autumn Rebellion in Berlin, XR Buddhists Germany organised and co-organised several events (Table 1). Most activities offered were traditional Buddhist practices such as a lecture by a Buddhist monk, sitting and walking meditation sessions, or a guided *metta* and *tonglen* (Tib. *gtong len*) meditation. Some of the events were directed towards an XR audience and took place at the tent (e.g., public talk, guided meditations, organisational group meetings, etc.), which also offered a space for individual meditation sessions.

⁴¹ See the Facebook page for Deutsche Buddhistische Union.



Figure 1 The XR Germany tent Camp in Berlin with the XR Buddhists Germany tent in the centre; photo: Rolf Scheuermann.

Table 1 Events (co-)organized by *XR Buddhists Germany* during the Autumn Rebellion in Berlin, September 17–20, 2022; source: Rolf Scheuermann

Time	Action	Location
Saturday, September 17, 4–6 p.m.	Lecture “Helpful Buddhist Insights and Practices for Activists” (Tenzin Peljor, German Buddhist monk of the Tibetan Gelug tradition) ⁴²	Meditation tent
Saturday, September 17, 8–9 p.m.	<i>Buddhist Climate Action Puja</i> (incl. <i>EcoSattva Vows</i>)	Meditation tent
Sunday, September 18, 10–11 a.m.	Introduction to sitting and walking meditation for activists	Meditation tent, Invalidenpark
Sunday, September 18, 3–5 p.m.	Warming Stripes-Walking Meditation in Cooperation with <i>XR Faith Bridge</i>	From Henriette-Herz-Platz to Lustgarten (Pleasure Garden) on the Museum Island, Berlin.
Sunday, September 18, 8–9 p.m.	How to accept yourself and others and transform feelings? - Metta and Tonglen Meditation	Meditation tent
Monday, September 19, 3–4 p.m.	Walking Meditation	Friedrichstraße/Französische Straße to the <i>Deutsche Bank</i> branch office, Friedrichstraße 181, Berlin
Monday, September 19, 4–5 p.m.	Silent Sitting Meditation	In front of the <i>Deutsche Bank</i> branch office, Friedrichstraße 181, Berlin

⁴² Unfortunately, I cannot say anything about the public lecture by the invited Buddhist monk Tenzin Peljor, as my train arrived only afterwards.

During the interviews ahead of the action days, both activists told me that offering meditative practices at the Autumn Rebellion entails a twofold benefit. In addition to the event, it was also regarded as a means to support other activists suffering from stress and burnout. Furthermore, I was told that in addition to the organisation of formal events of XR Buddhists Germany, the group members were also active in the XR awareness and action care teams that counsel activists or train them in the areas of de-escalation, mediation, and so on. In the following, I will highlight some events and discuss a few noteworthy observations.

The Buddhist Climate Action Puja

On Saturday evening, a Buddhist Climate Action Puja was recited by a group of approximately ten activists in the meditation tent. The short ritual was compiled by one of the group members and was made of several individual prayers and practices.

The short ritual consisted of the following elements: (1) paying homage to Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha (in Sanskrit); (2) the threefold refuge (in German and Pāli); (3) the five precepts of refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, incorrect speech and intoxicants (in German); (4) the recitation of the mantra *oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*; (5) the XR “Solemn Intention Statement” (in German); (6) the bodhisattva vow (in German); (7) the aspiration prayer of the four immeasurables of loving kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity (in German); (8) a short seven-branch prayer focussing on prostration, offerings, confession, rejoicing in the good deeds of others, requesting the Buddha to teach, requesting the Buddha not to pass into *parinirvāṇa*, and dedication (in German); (9) an offering of the outer maṇḍala (in German); (10) an offering of the inner maṇḍala (in German); (11) the *Heart Sūtra* (in German); (12) the EcoSattva Vows (in German); (13) the dedication (in German); (14) the short *bodhicitta* prayer from Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (in German); (15) the recitation of the mantra *oṃ śānti* (in Sanskrit).

Apart from short recitations of the mantras *oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ* and *oṃ śānti*, the practice did not entail extended phases of mantra meditation. There were also no breaks between the recitations dedicated to contemplation and the silent meditation. However, the group remained informally in silent meditation for two or three minutes after the recitation had ended.

As is evident from the above list, the Buddhist Climate Action Puja is a *métissage* of practices that stem from different Buddhist traditions, though

predominantly the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.⁴³ It was surprising that there was such a strong focus on Mahāyāna practices—with the inclusion of the bodhisattva vow, a Mahāyāna sūtra, and even the use of mantras—in a Buddhist inter-faith practice to be recited by followers of diverse Buddhist traditions. This may, of course, have been a deliberate choice of the person that compiled the text of the *Buddhist Climate Action Puja*. However, the influential American ecobuddhist, scholar, and extinction rebellion activist David Loy considers the bodhisattva ideal—at least a modern interpretation of it—an apt spiritual paradigm:

Although the bodhisattva ideal is usually understood as a Mahāyāna development, the bodhisattva path is increasingly perceived by contemporary Buddhists in a nonsectarian fashion, as an inspirational archetype that embodies a new vision of human possibility—in particular, an alternative to rampant, self-preoccupied individualism, including any approach to Buddhist practice that is concerned only with one’s own personal awakening. Understood in a more socially and ecologically engaged way, as ready to grapple with the collective and institutional causes of dukkha, the bodhisattva seems to be precisely the spiritual paradigm we need today.⁴⁴

The stress on Mahāyāna practices could make sense in the context of climate change activism for several reasons. While ecoactivism may start with individual eco-anxiety, a more altruistic perspective that takes the well-being of other humans, sentient beings, and even the entire planet’s ecosystem into account may foster pro-environmental behaviour. Accordingly, a recent study in China by Ying Xu et al. concluded that “awareness of the ecological crisis and altruism can stimulate people’s pro-environmental behaviours.”⁴⁵ However, it remains a question of how appealing or appropriate a practice focused on the bodhisattva ideal might be for practitioners of non-Mahāyāna traditions. At least while talking to participants during the XR Autumn Rebellion, I did not meet individuals

⁴³ This is particularly interesting since most of the participants did not have a background in Tibetan Buddhism. The largest group were people related to the Earth Holder community.

⁴⁴ Loy, “Ecodharma: A New Buddhist Path?,” 67–68.

⁴⁵ Xu, Li, and Chi, “Altruism, Environmental Concerns, and Pro-environmental Behaviors of Urban Residents: A Case Study in a Typical Chinese City.”

who identified themselves as adherents of a non-Mahāyāna tradition.

Two of the individual practices contained in the Buddhist Climate Action Puja practiced by XR Buddhists Germany during the autumn of 2022 actions in Berlin are of particular interest: (a) the EcoSattva Vows, a quite recent ecobuddhist practice, and (b) the XR “Solemn Intention Statement.”

The EcoSattva Vows

The EcoSattva vows are based on a short text formulated by Joanna Macy, a Buddhist practitioner, environmental activist, and religious studies scholar focusing on system theory and Buddhism. In her book, *Active Hope*, which she co-authored together with the physician and coach Chris Johnstone, she presents the following five vows, but does not attach the name “EcoSattva Vows” to them:

I vow to myself and to each of you:

- To commit myself daily to the healing of our world and the welfare of all beings.
- To live on Earth more lightly and less violently in the food, products, and energy I consume.
- To draw strength and guidance from the living Earth, the ancestors, the future generations, and my brothers and sisters of all species.
- To support others in our work for the world and to ask for help when I need it.
- And to pursue a daily practice that clarifies my mind, strengthens my heart, and supports me in observing these vows.⁴⁶

The German text that was used by XR Buddhists Germany for the Buddhist Climate Action Puja corresponded more or less to the above version, even though the introductory phrase was a bit more elaborate and resembled the following updated version of the text made up of six vows that can be found on the website of the organisation, One Earth Sangha:

Based on my love of the world and understanding of deep interdependence

⁴⁶ Macy and Johnstone, *Active Hope*, 200–1.

of all things, I vow:

- To live in [*sic*] Earth more lightly and less violently in the food, products and energy I consume.
- To commit myself daily to the healing of the world and the welfare of all beings; to discern and replace human systems of oppression and harm.
- To invite personal discomfort as an opportunity to share in the challenge of our collective liberation.
- To draw inspiration, strength and guidance from the living Earth, ancestors and the future generations, as well as siblings of all species.
- To help others in their work for the world and to ask for help when I feel the need.
- To pursue a daily spiritual practice that clarifies my mind, strengthens my heart and supports me in observing these vows.⁴⁷

One Earth Sangha, a relatively new ecobuddhist movement, offers a virtual EcoSattva training in eight sessions and concludes by taking the six EcoSattva Vows. According to the One Earth Sangha website, the modified version has been produced “in a collaboration between Joanna and One Earth Sangha’s co-founders, Kristin Barker and Lou Leonard.”⁴⁸ The significant changes are the following: (1) the first two vows have changed place; (2) the second vow (formerly the first) was expanded to explicitly cover the topics of systems of oppression and harm; (3) the inclusion of an additional vow that focusses on the cultivation of patience regarding discomforts along the path. Maybe even more important is that this new vow introduces the idea of “collective”⁴⁹ liberation that was previously absent from the formulation. This vow is a remarkable example of a newly formed Buddhist ethical guideline that emerged through cultural exchange processes during the globalisation of Buddhism at a time of crisis.

⁴⁷ One Earth Sangha, “EcoSattva Vows.”

⁴⁸ One Earth Sangha, “EcoSattva Vows.”

⁴⁹ The presentation is probably in line with David Loy’s idea of “collective realisation.” Cf. Loy, “Ecodharma,” 57. The idea of collective liberation is not novel to Tibetan Buddhism. The different motivations of bodhisattvas are frequently explained with the help of three similes: (1) the king-like bodhisattva, (2) the boatman-like bodhisattva, and (3) the shepherd-like bodhisattva. The idea of collective liberation resembles the simile of the boatman-like bodhisattva. Like a boatman who crosses the river with his passengers, such a bodhisattva reaches the other shore of the ocean of saṃsāra along with the beings carried across.

XR ‘Solemn Intention Statement’

Highly interesting is also the inclusion of the XR “Solemn Intention Statement” into the Buddhist Climate Action Puja. The origin of this short text that is often recited during XR gatherings is unknown:

Let’s take a moment, this moment, to consider why we are here.

Let’s remember our love, for this beautiful planet that feeds, nourishes, and sustains us.

Let’s remember our love for the whole of humanity in all corners of the world.

Let’s recollect our sincere desire to protect all this, for ourselves, for all living beings, and for generations to come.

As we act today, may we find the courage to bring a sense of peace, love, and appreciation to everyone we encounter, to every word we speak, and to every action we make.

We are here for all of us.

If one reads the text, it is understandable why it has been added to the liturgical text of the *Buddhist Climate Action Puja*. The reader is first instructed to pause for a moment and develop peace of mind. This is followed by an encouragement to engage in contemplations that focus on developing appreciation and love. The wording sounds almost like a religious—even Buddhist—text. With the inclusion of this statement, we find a secular environmentalist piece of writing being recited in the context of a Buddhist ritual, which is quite extraordinary.

Public Walking and Sitting Meditation

On Sunday, September 18, and Monday, September 19, XR Buddhists Germany offered two public walking meditations. The Sunday session was organised in collaboration with XR Faith Bridge, which is an interfaith community of XR. Accordingly, more people participated than on Monday, and a crowd of over one hundred people walked the distance of approximately 600 metres from Henriette-Herz-Platz to Lustgarten in Berlin.

The walking distance was covered in over one hour with a form of walking meditation derived from Sōtō Zen. Each group member advanced merely one step with each complete breathing cycle. Participants were dressed in

coloured clothes that ranged from light blue (cooler) to red (warmer) and were placed to form a line in a way that resembled the warming stripes used to visualise the data that portrays the long-term trends of climate change. The group came to a halt in front of the Altes Museum (old museum) at Lustgarten and formed a human circle. Inside this circle, the XR logo was formed with branches of trees. In this position, the group sang prayers and individual participants were encouraged to hold short speeches to express their motivation for engaging in climate change activism.

On Monday, a further walking meditation that covered a distance of two hundred metres was organised from Friedrichstraße/Französische Straße to the Deutsche Bank branch office at, Friedrichstraße 181, Berlin. The group of approximately twenty-five people consisted mainly of XR Buddhists Germany community members. Participants were dressed in black and had German language signs hanging around their necks that read “Deutsche Bank. Stopp der Finanzierung von Kohle, Öl & Gas (Deutsche Bank. Stop financing coal, oil and gas)” (Figure 2) to protest the bank’s practice of corporate finance. After arriving at the Deutsche Bank branch office, a letter was handed over to the branch manager. Afterwards, the group continued with silent sitting meditation on the street in front of the branch office.

Walking meditation is a practice for developing mindfulness based on bodily activity. Even though both protest marches remained peaceful, what I could observe as a participant was a shift from contemplative meditation practice to performance as a public environmental action. This was observable through the staged arrangement of the group according to colours that resembled warming stripes on Sunday, or the uniform black clothing with protest signs around members’ necks on Monday, as well as through the organisational form of a registered political demonstration with police escort. Furthermore, on Sunday, the event started with motivating megaphone announcements of general XR join-in shouts, such as “What do we want? Climate justice. When do we want it? Now.” This exhibited a remarkable field of tension between solemn Buddhist practice and environmental action. It needs to be stated that this was undoubtedly also one of the factors that made the protest march very successful from the activists’ point of view. The silent and peaceful protest march seemed to puzzle by-passers and drew much attention. I had expected some form of hostility towards the protest march but did not witness any.



Figure 2 A participant of the XR Buddhists Germany walking meditation with a sign that reads “Deutsche Bank. Stop financing coal, oil & gas”; photo: Rolf Scheuermann.



Figure 3 Art installation “A better world is possible” at the XR tent camp in Berlin; photo: Rolf Scheuermann.

Conclusion

Until recently, many people may have had the impression that an atomic apocalypse is no longer a realistic scenario and a thing of the past. Due to the recent war of aggression that Russia has waged against Ukraine, this perception has changed drastically. Similarly, a climate apocalypse is beyond anything to which people generally can relate. What Günther Anders addressed in his “Theses for the Atomic Age” and dubbed the “supra-liminal” may apply as well to climate change:

The greater the possible effect of our actions, the less are we able to visualize it, to repent of it or to feel responsible for it; the wider the gap, the weaker the brake-mechanism. To do away with one hundred thousand people by pressing a button is incomparably easier than to slay one individual.⁵⁰

While we may be “unable to picture the immensity of such a catastrophe,”⁵¹ a regular engagement with Buddhist practices, such as resolute aspirations with their associated utopian and dystopian narratives rooted in an understanding of dependent origination, may make the supra-liminal more approachable.

A traditional Buddhist approach to countering climate change through resolute aspirations differs quite a lot from the approaches that ecobuddhist groups like XR Buddhists Germany seem to follow. The traditional Buddhist approach emphasises a transformation that starts with the individual. The individual tries to undergo a transformation meant to bring about a better understanding of reality, train the mind through meditation and engage in meaningful actions. Even the altruistic path of the bodhisattva needs to begin with the bodhisattva understanding their individual suffering, which enables them to generate compassion towards others who encounter similar circumstances.

While the ecobuddhist approach of groups like One Earth Sangha still seems to subscribe to the need to transform the individual, it centres on a more systematic transformation. The EcoSattva Vows, for example, do not address individual liberation but focus on collective liberation, particularly of all life

⁵⁰ Anders, “Theses for the Atomic Age,” 497.

⁵¹ Anders, “Theses for the Atomic Age,” 496.

on our planet. Accordingly, the Earth takes an important role and is often also personified or portrayed as a living organism, such as in the formulation of one of the EcoSattva Vows: “To draw inspiration, strength and guidance from the living Earth.”

A further impressive example of personifying the Earth stems from the Earth Holder community, a branch of Thich Nhat Hanh’s Plum Village Community that applies his teachings on engaged Buddhism in the context of the present-day ecological crisis. Several members of XR Buddhists Germany seem to belong to this organisation. One of the group’s practice texts available for download via their website is “Beginning Anew with Mother Earth.”⁵² The contemplative text takes the shape and form of an inner conversation with Mother Earth and consists of the following parts:

1. a salutation to Thich Nhat Hanh and Mother Earth,
2. developing an appreciation for her kindness,
3. developing regret for one’s ill-behaviour toward her,
4. relating to one’s own feelings of grief or fear about the state of the world,
5. expressing regret and promising to change one’s behaviour in the future, and
6. inviting Mother Earth to speak to one, offering a special name that represents one’s activity as a protector of Earth.

While Buddhism, notably Mahāyāna Buddhism with its stress on the bodhisattva ideal, values an altruistic perspective that expands beyond the individual and encompasses all sentient beings, the focus on Mother Earth and its inhabitants seems entirely novel. This holds true in particular if one considers that Buddhism generally conceives this universe as merely one among many such world systems within a multiverse of universes in which beings can take rebirth. The personification of the Earth could indicate an influence of the Gaia hypothesis.

Furthermore, associated practices appear to be, in general, quite fluid and allow combinations of techniques that initially come from different traditions (e.g., XR’s Buddhists Climate Action Puja), formation of new practices (e.g.,

⁵² Bell, “Beginning Anew.”

“Beginning Anew with Mother Earth”) and vows (e.g. EcoSattva Vows), or even the use of secular texts in the liturgy (e.g., XR Solemn Intention Statement). This flexibility is also visible on the level of the doctrine in that ecobuddhist movements seem to broaden their focus to more modern debates, as expressed in the modification of one of the EcoSattva Vows where the aspect “to discern and replace human systems of oppression and harm” was added. In this way, ecobuddhist groups can be categorised as socially engaged Buddhism since—in addition to climate change—they also target specifically political and social systems of injustice such as race, gender, colonialism, or capitalism.

A further point where a Buddhist environmentalist approach deviates from a more traditional Buddhist one reveals itself in the performative character of activities such as public walking and sitting meditation or prayer recitations. In general, Buddhist meditation chiefly serves the purpose of individual transformation. Public walking and sitting meditation or recitations of prayers in the framework of climate change protest marches, however, have a different objective. Of course, participants may still value the meditative aspect of these activities and benefit from them individually. Still, events such as those organised by XR Buddhists Germany in Berlin in September 2022 primarily focus on attracting public attention. While the walking meditations in Berlin mainly led along pedestrian walkways and therefore did not interrupt the traffic, one of the organisers related to me that the routes of earlier walking meditations led across streets, thereby blocking car traffic for a substantial period.⁵³

As should be clear now, these public meditation practices aim to evoke emotions such as fear and create awareness of the problem of climate change in the observers, thereby putting pressure on political decision-makers to act. In a very literal sense, the prime objective of Buddhist climate change activist groups, therefore, is what a Tibetan Buddhist traditionalist might consider a “worldly” one in that they attempt to change the circumstances of this world or this life for themselves and others, as well as for future lives on this planet. From a traditional Buddhist perspective, such attempts to counter climate change can be classified as virtuous activities, given that they are pursued in a non-violent fashion. Still, their objective is quite different from that of Buddhist practice in general, which focuses not primarily on better circumstances in this

⁵³ Blocking streets by different means to interrupt car traffic is a common practice of XR.

and future lives but on attaining nirvāṇa or salvation from the cycle of rebirth. However, worldly and other-worldly goals are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They can, of course, be harmonised conceptually and through individual practice, as was done in Tibet in the literature on the stages of the path and the idea of three types of beings that originated with the writings of the Indian master, Atiśa Dīpaṃkāra Śrījñāna (980–1054).⁵⁴

While resolute aspirations are usually embedded in a path meant to overcome wrong views and negative emotions, environmental activists employ methods to stir emotions in others purposefully. Climate activists generally engage in what Christine Hentschel has dubbed “edgework in the Anthropocene.” She understands climate activism as affective workouts that “grapple with the limits of agency in the face of ecological crisis through an intense affective and imaginative exercise at the edge.”⁵⁵ Hentschel developed this train of thought further in an unpublished chapter of her forthcoming book, parts of which were presented during a lecture at the University of Heidelberg. She explained that edgework in the Anthropocene “never simply concerns a person’s decision, will and skill, but is intrinsically collective and engages humanity as such.”⁵⁶ As a consequence, she proposes “to read these affective workouts as some kind of dramatic, nervous self-portraits at the edge. So, the question is not only ‘What will we achieve, but also who will we have been as the world was going down?’”⁵⁷ This understanding implies hard work and sacrifice on the side of the edgeworkers who attempt to influence the emotional states of individuals to mobilise them.

Edgework in the Anthropocene is emotionally demanding, and it is unsurprising that XR offers to counsel activists. In this respect, XR Buddhists can play an essential role in the XR awareness and action care teams. Here, there appears to be a particular demand for specific Buddhist competencies in dealing with stress and anxiety. I am tempted to dub these “inner climate change measures” by leaning on a formulation used by Thaye Dorje, the other claimant

⁵⁴ For an overview of this doctrine, see for example Scheuermann, “When Sūtra Meets Tantra,” 50–53.

⁵⁵ Hentschel, “Stretches of Imagination at the End of Times: Affective Workouts Against Apocalypse,” 4.

⁵⁶ Hentschel, “Devices for Studying Apocalyptic Imaginations in the Anthropocene,” 5:50–5:59.

⁵⁷ Hentschel, “Devices,” 6:38–6:51.

of the Karmapa title, who published the following message on his website on September 21, 2019, for the occasion of the United Nations International Day of Peace with the theme “Climate Action for Peace”:

One way in which we might approach this is to reflect on the role of “inner climate change”. In our global media, and in other facets of our lives, it feels as though there has been a sea change in the amount of anger and other heated emotions that are expressed. With unguarded minds, we have given rise to afflictive emotions. Anxiety, fear, anger have helped create storms, which sweep us up and cause internal devastation and destruction. Without paying closer attention to the environment of our minds, we are in danger of facing an inner climate emergency.⁵⁸

This quotation brings us back to the traditional Buddhist approach exemplified by resolute aspirations employed to tackle problems both in the inner and outer worlds. For ecobuddhists, it remains essential to tame the mind while engaging in environmentalist actions. The agitations that may go along with this might seem like a contradiction. Still, from a traditional Mahāyāna perspective, a bodhisattva should act as an example in the world while keeping, of course, mental balance and remaining untainted by saṃsāric upheaval.

At the core of the bodhisattva path lies the practice of developing the spirit of awakening or *bodhicitta*, which is often expressed as twofold. This twofold categorisation goes back to the following line of Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra*:

[15] Briefly, this spirit of awakening is to be known as twofold: as the mental resolution to strive (*praṇidhi*) for awakening and the actual striving (*prasthāna*) for awakening.⁵⁹

In traditional Tibetan commentaries, the difference between the two is often

⁵⁸ Dorje, “Peace Day 2019: Karmapa’s Message on ‘Inner Climate Change’.”

⁵⁹ Steinkellner and Peck-Kubaczek, “*Bodhicaryāvatāra*,” 127; *tad bodhicittam dvividhaṃ vijñātavyaṃ samāsataḥ | bodhipraṇidhicittam ca bodhiprasthānam eva ca* ||15||. Minayeff, ed., “Çāntideva: ‘*Bodhicaryāvatāra*,’” 159, 9–10. *byañ chub sems de mdor bsdū na | | rnam pa gñis su šes bya ste | | byañ chub smon pa’i sems dañ ni | | byañ chub ’jug pa ñid yin no | |*. “Byañ chub sems dpa’i spyod pa la ’jug pa,” *bKa’ gyur dang bstan ’gyur*, la, 1b1–40a7.

expressed as the wish to go and the actual going. The former needs to precede the latter (cause and effect), but once the latter has arisen, the former continues to influence the latter positively along the path. The practice of resolute aspirations is thus essential to the bodhisattva path. It should, in turn, be also considered critical to the ecobuddhist approach, which acknowledges the importance of motivation. Joanna Macy, who considers enthusiasm “a valuable renewable resource,” exemplifies this.⁶⁰ In this sense, continuous practice of resolute aspirations may be important to fight climate change, both from a traditional and an ecobuddhist approach. In other words: (aspiration) prayers remain essential to counter climate change.

That a Buddhist approach to climate change, particularly the bodhisattva path, can be a valuable contribution to countering climate change is echoed in a statement by David Loy. Please also note the aforementioned personification of the Earth in these words that explain the importance of the EcoSattva and bodhisattva approaches, which he seems to consider as synonyms or at least to overlap in their aims:

I wonder if the bodhisattva path may be the single most important contribution of Buddhism to our present situation. In these urgent times, is the earth today calling upon all of us to become bodhisattvas/ecosattvas?⁶¹

In a more recent interview with Roger Walsh and John Dupuy for *Integral Life*, a digital media community, Loy further questioned whether seeking nirvāṇa or dwelling in emptiness may become problematic and that a new understanding may be required.⁶² From a more traditional Buddhist stance that considers nirvāṇa as the prime objective of the path, such a statement is certainly astounding.

When Buddhism spread to different countries throughout history, it always showed great flexibility, underwent cultural adaptations, and thus re-invented itself in very diverse cultural settings. With the globalisation of Buddhism, the doctrine advanced again into very different cultures and did so during a time of crisis that could have acted as a fertiliser for apocalyptic think-

⁶⁰ Macy and Johnstone, *Active Hope*, 213.

⁶¹ Loy, “Ecodharma,” 72.

⁶² Loy, Walsh, and Dupuy, “From Bodhisattva to Ecosattva: Integrating Personal Practice and Global Activism,” 08:43–08:53.

ing. Earlier expansions of Buddhism involved the evolution of new techniques and the appropriation and inclusion of local concepts. While different conceptual understandings of what nirvāṇa means or entails developed, it largely remained unchallenged as the goal of Buddhist soteriology.

The examples and arguments presented in this paper raise the question of the extent to which ecobuddhist activism, particularly EcoDharma and the EcoSattva approach, is still in line with previous traditional Buddhist approaches. Might they even be witnesses that hint at the formation of a new form of Buddhism? In other words, are we looking here at Buddhist ecologists and ecologically-oriented Buddhist practitioners, or is this instead a new form of Buddhism in an early phase of formation, a product of cultural exchange processes and hybridisation during a time of crisis?

In the wake of the approaching apocalyptic scenario of climate change, the status of Buddhist soteriology seems to face understandable challenges, and the idea of the protection of the Earth appears to gain ground as a further goal of Buddhist practice. Traditional Buddhist techniques such as walking meditation, sitting meditation, or resolute aspirations are not only employed for personal development in the framework of Buddhist soteriology. Still, they are also being used to support ecobuddhist activities that target a mostly non-Buddhist public.

Furthermore, new practices evolve, such as “Beginning Anew with Mother Earth” or the EcoSattva Vows. Established techniques that originate from different Buddhist traditions merge with new practices or secular texts, as seen in the Buddhist Climate Action Puja case. The EcoSattva Vows and their associated EcoSattva training further incorporate Western notions regarding social (e.g., racial, gender, colonial, and capitalist) injustice.

These developments, though occurring in their own particular contexts, resemble the syncretic formation of Tibetan Buddhism that incorporated and harmonised doctrines inherited from many different Buddhist traditions, predominantly from India and China, but also pre-Buddhist local practices and ideas. This is an exciting time for those who study the textual witnesses that describe the different phases of the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet and the formation of Tibetan Buddhist traditions. While there are only written witnesses left to observe in the Tibetan case, we are now becoming eye-witnesses to the dynamics that unfold during a period when Buddhism spreads once again to other countries while the world is facing one of its most significant

challenges in history. In this respect, the dynamic development of ecobuddhist groups such as XR Buddhists Germany, One Earth Sangha, or the Earth Holder community and their attempts to engage with climate change from a Buddhist perspective are exciting objects of study.

Of course, observations such as these are hardly more than a snapshot and only scratch the surface. Further studies are required, and it is still too early to predict whether the processes described in this paper will result in the development of new Buddhist traditions or whether they are just loose ends in the long history of Buddhism.

Bibliography

- sDe dge pha phud* [The sDe dge-edition of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon]. Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Chodhey Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1982–1985. Resource ID of the Buddhist Digital Research Centre (BDRC) W22084 and W23703.
- Anders, Günther. “Theses for the Atomic Age.” *The Massachusetts Review* 3, no. 3 (Spring 1962): 493–505.
- Balcerowicz, Piotr, ed. *World View and Theory in Indian Philosophy*. Warsaw Indological Studies series vol. 5. New Delhi: Manohar, 2012.
- Bell, John. “Beginning Anew with Mother Earth: An Earth Holder Practice.” *Earth Holder Community*. August 28, 2023. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yre5Q1vaHu7xPz855mjADnUHV_40HEW4vPuzMs0X088/edit?usp=sharing.
- Buffetrille, Katia. “Low Tricks and High Stakes Surrounding a Holy Place in Eastern Nepal: The Halesi-Māratika Caves.” In *Revisiting Rituals in a Changing Tibetan World*, edited by Katia Buffetrille, 163–207. Brill’s Tibetan Studies Library, Volume: 31. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- Buffetrille, Katia, ed. *Revisiting Rituals in a Changing Tibetan World*. Brill’s Tibetan Studies Library, Volume: 31. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- CenSAMM. “Apocalypticism.” In *Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements*, edited by James Crossley and Alastair Lockhart. January 15, 2021. Accessed September 23, 2022. <https://www.cdamm.org/articles/apocalypticism>.
- Childs, Geoff, Sienna R. Craig, Christina Juenger, and Kristine Hildebrandt.

- “This Is the End: Earthquake Narratives and Buddhist Prophecies of Decline.” *HIMALAYA* 40, no. 2 (2021): 32–49. <https://doi.org/10.2218/himalaya.2021.6587>.
- Dorje, Thaye. “Peace Day 2019: Karmapa’s Message on ‘Inner Climate Change’.” *Thaye Dorje, His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa*. September 21, 2019. Accessed September 23, 2022. <https://www.karmapa.org/peace-day-2019-karmapas-message-on-inner-climate-change/>.
- Draszczyk, Tina, and Alexander Draszczyk, trans. *Vollendetes Wirken. Tāranāthas Kommentar zum ‘König unter den Wegen des Strebens nach dem Vollendeten Wirken der Edlen’* [Perfect Deeds. German Translation of Tāranātha’s Commentary on the Bhadracaryāprañidhānarāja]. With commentary by Khenpo Chödrag Rinpoche. Buddhismus authentisch & zeitgemäß [Authentic and Contemporary Buddhism]. Wien: Bodhi-Verlag, 2007.
- Dudjom Rinpoche, Kyabje. “The Mandala of the Four Energies in the Kaliyuga.” In *A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency*, edited by John Stanley, David Loy, and Gyurme Dorje, 93–99. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009.
- Earth Holder. Earth-Based Mindfulness Practices. *Earth Holder Community*. Accessed September 23, 2022. <https://earthholder.training/earth-based-mindfulness-practices/>.
- Eltschinger, Vincent. “Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy.” In *World View and Theory in Indian Philosophy*, edited by Piotr Balcerowicz, 29–86. Warsaw Indological Studies series, volume 5. New Delhi: Manohar, 2012.
- . “On Some Buddhist Uses of the *kaliyuga*.” In *Cultures of Eschatology. Volume 1: Empires and Scriptural Authorities in Medieval Christian, Islamic and Buddhist Communities. Volume 2: Time, Death and Afterlife in Medieval Christian, Islamic and Buddhist Communities*, edited by Veronika Wieser, Vincent Eltschinger, and Johann Heiss, 123–62. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020.
- Extinction Rebellion Deutschland. “Sonntag, der 18.9” [Sunday, September 18]. *Extinction Rebellion*. Accessed September 20, 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20230201220651/https://extinctionrebellion.de/aktionen/herbst-rebellion/berichte/sonntag/>.
- . “Montag, der 19.9” [Monday, September 19]. *Extinction Rebellion*. Accessed September 20, 2022. <https://web.archive.org/>

- web/20230406021305/<https://extinctionrebellion.de/aktionen/herbst-rebellion/berichte/montag/>.
- Extinction Rebellion UK. “FAQs - Extinction Rebellion UK.” *Extinction Rebellion*. Accessed September 21, 2022. <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/faqs/#who-is-behind-extinction-rebellion>.
- Gelle, Zsoka. “Treasure Texts on the Age of Decline: Prophecies Concerning the Hidden Land of Yolmo, Their Reception and Impact.” In *Cultures of Eschatology. Volume 1: Empires and Scriptural Authorities in Medieval Christian, Islamic and Buddhist Communities. Volume 2: Time, Death and Afterlife in Medieval Christian, Islamic and Buddhist Communities*, edited by Veronika Wieser, Vincent Eltschinger, and Johann Heiss, 359–89. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020.
- Ghosh, Tuhin, Rituparna Hajra, and Anirban Mukhopadhyay. “Island Erosion and Afflicted Population: Crisis and Policies to Handle Climate Change.” In *International Perspectives on Climate Change: Latin America and Beyond*, edited by Walter Leal Filho, Fátima Alves, Sandra Caeiro, and Ulisses M. Azeiteiro, 217–25. Climate Change Management. Cham: Springer, Cham, 2014.
- Hentschel, Christine. “Self-Portraits at the Edge: Devices for Studying Apocalyptic Imaginations in the Anthropocene.” Lecture Series of the Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS), Heidelberg University, Summer Term 2022. June 21, 2022. Accessed September 20, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqNG2ODW2H0>.
- . “Stretches of Imagination at the End of Times: Affective Workouts Against Apocalypse.” *Artnodes* 29 (January 2022): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.7238/artnodes.v0i29.393041>.
- Hummel, Siegbert, and G. Vogliotti. ‘Notes on the Lamaist Apocalypse’. *The Tibet Journal* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1997), 33–44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43302325>.
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. Working Group II Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Edited by Hans-Otto Pörtner et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FullReport.pdf.
- . *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts*

- of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty. Edited by V. Masson-Delmotte et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Accessed September 21, 2022. <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>.
- La Vallée Poussin, Louis de. *Catalogue of the Tibetan Manuscripts from Tun-huang in the India Office Library*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Leal Filho, Walter, Fátima Alves, Sandra Caeiro, and Ulisses M. Azeiteiro, eds. *International Perspectives on Climate Change: Latin America and Beyond*. Climate Change Management. Cham: Springer, Cham, 2014.
- Lehner, Hans-Christian, ed. *The End(s) of Time(s): Apocalypticism, Messianism, and Utopianism through the Ages*. Prognostication in History Series, 6. Leiden: Brill, 2021.
- Lewis, Todd, and Gary DeAngelis, ed. *Teaching Buddhism: New Insights on Understanding and Presenting the Traditions*. AAR Teaching Religious Studies. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Loy, David, Roger Walsh, and John Dupuy. “From Bodhisattva to Ecosattva: Integrating Personal Practice and Global Activism.” Two-part interview. *Deep Transformation Podcast*. Produced by Vanessa Santos. May 26, 2022 and June 2, 2022. Accessed January 30, 2023. <https://integrallife.com/from-bodhisattva-to-ecosattva-integrating-personal-practice-and-global-activism/>
- Loy, David. “Ecodharma: A New Buddhist Path?” *Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies* 15 (2020): 52–73.
- Macy, Joanna, and Chris Johnstone. *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in with Unexpected Resilience and Creative Power*. Revised Edition. Novato: New World Library, 2022.
- Marlon, Jennifer R., Brittany Bloodhart, Matthew T. Ballew, Justin Rolfe-Redding, Connie Roser-Renouf, Anthony Leiserowitz, and Edward Maibach. “How Hope and Doubt Affect Climate Change Mobilization.” *Frontiers in Communication* 4 (May 21, 2019): np. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2019.00020>.
- Maurer, Petra H., Donatella Rossi, and Rolf Scheuermann, eds. *Glimpses of Tibetan Divination: Past and Present*. Prognostication in History, Volume 2. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Minayeff, Ivan Pavlovich, ed. “Çāntideva: ‘Bodhicaryāvatāra.’” *Zapiski*

- Vostochnago Otdeleniya Imperatorskago Russkago Arkheologicheskago Obshchestva [Transactions of the Oriental Section of the Royal Russian Archeological Society] 4 (1889) 153–228.
- Nattier, Jan. *Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline*. Nanzan Studies in Asian Religions 1. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991.
- One Earth Sangha. “EcoSattva Vows.” *One Earth Sangha*. Accessed September 9, 2022. <https://oneearthsangha.org/programs/ecosattva-training/vows/>
- Schellenberger, Michael. “Why Climate Alarmism Hurts Us All.” *Forbes*. December 4, 2019. Accessed January 25, 2023. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelshellenberger/2019/12/04/why-climate-alarmism-hurts-us-all>
- Scheuermann, Rolf. “When Sūtra Meets Tantra – sGam po pa’s Four Dharma Doctrine as an Example for his Synthesis of the bKa’ gdams- and Mahāmudrā-Systems.” PhD dissertation, University of Vienna, 2015. Accessed September 23, 2022. <https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/download/o:1319879>.
- . “‘One Will Quickly Die!’” Predictions of Death in Three Tibetan Buddhist Divination Manuals’. In “Longevity and Immortality. Europe – Islam – Asia,” edited by Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, Michael Lackner, and Fabrizio Pregadio, special issue, *Micrologus: Nature, Sciences and Medieval Societies* XXVI (2018): 113–32.
- . “Tibetan Buddhist Dystopian Narratives and their Pedagogical Dimensions.” In *The End(s) of Time(s): Apocalypticism, Messianism, and Utopianism through the Ages*, edited by Hans-Christian Lehner, 91–114. Prognostication in History Series, 6. Leiden: Brill, 2021.
- Scheuermann, Rolf, Casey Kemp, and Tom Tillemans, trans. “The Sūtra on Dependent Arising (Pratītyasamutpādasūtra, Toh 520).” *84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha*. Accessed September 15, 2022. <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh520.html>.
- Schuman, Simone, Jon-Vegard Dokken, Dewald van Niekerk, and Ruth A. Loubser. “Religious Beliefs and Climate Change Adaptation: A Study of Three Rural South African Communities.” *Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 10, no. 1 (2018): 509. <https://doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v10i1.509>.
- Sponsel, Leslie E., and Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel. “Buddhist Environmentalism.” In *Teaching Buddhism: New Insights on Understanding and Presenting the Traditions*, edited by Todd Lewis and Gary DeAngelis,

- 318–43. AAR Teaching Religious Studies. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Stanley, John, David Loy, and Gyurme Dorje, eds. *A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009.
- Steinkellner, Ernst, and Cynthia Peck-Kubaczek. “Bodhicaryāvatāra: Entering the Course Towards Awakening, Translation and Commentary.” In *Buddha Mind – Christ Mind. A Christian Commentary on the Bodhicaryāvatāra*, by Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Ernst Steinkellner, and Cynthia Peck-Kubaczek, 111–515. Christian Commentaries on Non-Christian Sacred Texts 9. Leuven: Peeters 2019.
- Trinley, Orgyen Kagyu Monlam. “The Gyalwang Karmapa’s Special Address to the Kagyu Monlam.” 2009. Accessed September 25, 2023. https://web.archive.org/web/20160402013538if_/http://kagyumonlam.org/english/Lectures/20090111_HHK_Special_Address_Kagyu_Monlam.html.
- Wessinger, Catherine, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Wieser, Veronika, Vincent Eltschinger, and Johann Heiss, eds. *Cultures of Eschatology. Volume 1: Empires and Scriptural Authorities in Medieval Christian, Islamic and Buddhist Communities. Volume 2: Time, Death and Afterlife in Medieval Christian, Islamic and Buddhist Communities*. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110597745>.
- Wojcik, Daniel. “Avertive Apocalypticism.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, edited by Catherine Wessinger, 67–88. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Xu, Ying, Wanxin Li, and Shangxin Chi. “Altruism, Environmental Concerns, and Pro-environmental Behaviors of Urban Residents: A Case Study in a Typical Chinese City.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.643759>.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *Living in the End Times*. London: Verso, 2011.