

Editor's Introduction, Issue 1.2

Climate Change and the Dharma-Ending Age: The Ecological Crisis Through the Lens of Buddhist Eschatology

In his 1941 book on the rise of authoritarianism, *Escape from Freedom*—a work sadly as relevant today as at the time of its writing—Eric Fromm remarks that humans conventionally think in non-dialectical terms, and we are thus “prone to doubt whether two contradictory trends can result simultaneously from one cause.”¹

The climate crisis confronts us with just such a dialectical challenge. On the one hand, we now face the consequences of ecosystem collapse on a near-daily basis: floods, wildfires, species extinction, climate migration, all unfolding on an unfamiliar and unprecedented scale. Yet human engagement with the problem of imminent catastrophic change is not new. For millennia, Buddhists have grappled with the prospect of the end of the world as we know it, most notably as it relates to the notion of the “Dharma-ending age” (Ch. *mofa* 末法).

In this issue, we ask how this millennia-long history of Buddhist eschatological thought might inform and illuminate our understanding of the ecological crisis. From ancient China to contemporary Vietnam, and from Sikkim to the steps of the US Supreme Court, this issue highlights a range of Buddhist responses to our current moment of collective change that are, as we shall see, both deeply familiar and radically new.

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Yin-Cheng Journal of Contemporary Buddhism

¹ Fromm, Eric. *Escape from Freedom*. New York: Holt, Rinehard and Winston, 1941, p. 104.