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Beyond Queen and King: Democratizing "Engaged Buddhism"

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Abstract

What counts as Buddhist social engagement? Why, in Buddhist Studies, do certain forms of engagement and certain Buddhists often not count? This article argues that the limits that scholars Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King placed around Buddhist engagement in the 1990s—limits that produced a rough consensus in Buddhist Studies—should be democratized to include all Buddhists and their social engagement. For years, criticism of these limits and research that circumvents them have appeared without seriously undermining them. However, 2022 may mark a turning point. In that year, two publications, by Paul Fuller and Alexander Hsu, offered comprehensive and convincing arguments for considering all Buddhists' socially oriented activities "engaged." This article examines the consensus

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on the nature of Buddhist engagement, its origins in activism, research that dissents from it, and critiques it has faced. The article assesses dissent and critiques and considers why, until recently, they have had little effect. It then discusses why Fuller's and Hsu's publications represent a turning point and proposes new areas of research beyond those even these two scholars suggest.

Introduction

Since the inception, in the 1990s, of Western scholarship on Buddhists' social engagement, one picture of it has been dominant. In a 2021 survey of engagement and engaged Buddhism studies, Ann Gleig calls this picture "the consensus."[2]

Gleig writes that academics generally accept the consensus, which was established by pioneering scholars of engagement Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Gleig). Its prominence is apparent: Thomas Yarnall (2003) describes the approach as Queen's and adopted by others (321-322); David McMahan (2008) relies on it (250-254); in a 2009 issue of *Religion East & West* on engaged Buddhism, Raoul Birnbaum and Bhikkhu Bodhi both treat it as describing all Buddhists' engagement (Birnbaum 27, Bodhi "Socially" 2-3); Jessica Main and Rongdao Lai refer to a model of engagement linked by features that "most scholarship of socially engaged Buddhism" accepts (9-10); Paul Fuller calls the consensus the "accepted and prevailing" idea of engagement (6); Alexander Hsu calls it "hegemonic" in

[2] The term "consensus" was used by Queen in 2000, when he stated there was "an emerging consensus" among scholars and activists concerning features of engaged Buddhism like non-violence, opposition to hierarchy, and collective, grassroots activity ("New" 7). He used it again in 2022 to refer to a similar understanding among "movement leaders and scholars" ("Review" 102).

academia (17-18); it is showcased in anthologies and textbooks[3]; and Jay Garfield's recent book on Buddhist ethics presents it as the foremost Buddhist approach to social issues (180-182, 198). Nevertheless, Buddhist Studies is not monolithic, and dissent exists.

This article summarizes the history and nature of the consensus; compiles and assesses dissent and critiques; and considers why, before 2022, these did not threaten its dominance, but now may. It explains why democratizing understandings of engagement is desirable and proposes additional research in areas understudied to date due to exclusion from the consensus.

Terms and Definitions

Two features are widely considered basic to Buddhist social engagement. First, it comprises activities, by people who self-identify as Buddhists, aimed at reducing others' this-life material or psychological sufferings[4] (versus leading them to transmundane liberation) in areas modernity allocates to

[3] Anthologies (other than those they themselves edit) in which Queen and/or King reiterate the consensus include: *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia* (2002), edited by Charles S. Prebish and Martin Baumann (Queen "Agnosticism"); *Buddhism in the Modern World* (2012), edited by David McMahan (King "Socially" 2012); *The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics* (2018), edited by Daniel Cozort and James Mark Shields (Queen "Ethics," King "Ethics"); and *Teaching Buddhism: New Insights on Understanding and Presenting the Traditions* (2017), edited by Todd Lewis and Gary DeAngelis (Queen "Teaching"). Textbooks that present the consensus as representative of Buddhist engagement include *Introducing Buddhism* (2010) and its e-book version *Buddhism–The eBook: An Online Introduction* (2010) by Charles Prebish and Damien Keown (217-233); *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience* (2013) by Donald Mitchell and Sarah Jacoby (403-406); and Scott Mitchell's *Buddhism in America* (2016) (211-230).

[4] To avoid repeating "material and psychological," henceforth I intend "material" to include "psychological." As well, I intend "others" to include all living beings, so that working for animal welfare, for example, falls within engagement.

the secular sphere, such as health, education, and the economy. It does so with political, social, or material means, not with means reliant on faith such as prayer. Second, it is believed by its agents to be a spiritual practice.

This article considers that these two features form a foundational definition of Buddhist engagement. It does not differentiate "engaged Buddhism" from similar terms like "Buddhist social engagement," referring to these all as "engagement terms." Overlaps in usage make distinguishing these terms impractical. Many other scholars now take the same approach (e.g., Gowans 231-232; Queen "Review" 100; Gleig; Fuller 6).

Scholars apply engagement terms to two distinct phenomena. Garfield notes this and writes that the terms refer to "a movement, or an approach to Buddhist ethical thought and practice": i.e., to Buddhists' activities or to an ethics-based narrative about engagement (181). Hsu calls the ethics-based narrative "academic engaged Buddhism," a particular "vision" (21-22). As discussed below, some scholars treat the ethics-based narrative as a description of all Buddhists' activities that properly count as engaged.[5] Others critique this approach.

The Consensus

Background

In Asia, Buddhist modernist writing has often promoted social engagement, including early works like Henry Steele Olcott's *A Buddhist Catechism*

[5] Gleig (2021) and Garfield (2022) illustrate this practice. Gleig applies engagement terms only to activities that she considers accord with the ethical stance expressed in this narrative. She suggests that applying engagement terms to other socially oriented activities may undermine the terms' utility, which implies that the terms' most important referent is the narrative rather than the activities (Gleig). Garfield, after noting that the terms can refer to both activities and an ethical stance, similarly applies them only to activities he believes embody the ethical stance (181).

(1881) and Anagārika Dharmapāla's *Gihi Vinaya* or *Code for the Laity* (1898) (Queen "Shapes" 20, Fuller 10). In the early and middle twentieth century, Japanese and Chinese reformers like Takeuchi Ryō'on and Taixu were engaged; Chinese writing on the topic influenced Vietnam's anti-war movement (Unno 68-81, Main and Lai 2). From the 1950s on, Asian leaders working to overcome colonization, war, occupation, discrimination, and poverty gave Buddhism a social role, including Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Thich Nhat Hanh, Walpola Rahula, Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Sulak Sivaraksa, Maha Ghosananda, and the Dalai Lama (Queen "Shapes" 14-27, Gleig). Their ideas and activities varied, not producing a unified doctrine or set of ways to address material suffering.

Before the 1970s, the image of Buddhism in the West was shaped by popularizers like D. T. Suzuki, Christmas Humphreys, and Alan Watts. Their focus on inner experience gave the impression that Asian Buddhists were disengaged (Bodhi "Socially" 16).[6] Westerners, perceiving that Buddhism needed a push from outside, grounded their ideas about engagement in Western discourses. Their writing on engagement began with "Buddhist Anarchism," an essay by poet Gary Snyder published in 1961 and republished several times thereafter.[7] Snyder, often referenced in early work on engagement, envisioned Buddhists drawing on Western

[6] More than the others mentioned, D. T. Suzuki treated social service as part of Buddhism and disputed the stereotype of the disengaged Asian Buddhist (e.g., Suzuki 14-15). However, inner experience remained his main message. Neither activists nor scholars trace Western ideas about Buddhist engagement to his comments on social service, and his disagreement with the stereotype of Asian disengagement did not impede others' assertions about a disengaged Asian past.

[7] The essay was published as "Buddhist Anarchism" in the *Journal for the Protection of All Beings* #1 (1961). It then appeared with slight revisions in a book by Snyder, *Earth House Hold* (1969), under the title "Buddhism and the Coming Revolution." It was republished in *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism* (1985, 1988) under the title "Buddhism and the Possibilities of a Planetary Culture," and again under the same title in *Engaged Buddhist Reader: Ten Years of Engaged Buddhist Publishing* (1996).

ideas to create "a new society"—free, international, and classless—through a "cultural and economic revolution" (Snyder). He later helped found, and shape, the first major Western engaged Buddhist organization, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (Queen "Agnosticism" 341).

After Snyder, the first Western work on engagement was *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism* (1988, originally 1985), edited by Fred Eppsteiner. It reprinted Snyder's essay and other Asian and Western scholarly and activist writings. *The Path of Compassion* helped shape the consensus, as did scholar-activist Kenneth Kraft's edited volume *Inner Peace, World Peace* (1992), along with a few other works (Queen "Teaching" 254, 257, Hsu 21 fn. 14, 22).[8]

Ideas in these works were inspired by countercultural views, Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, the Dalai Lama, and Nhat Hanh (Kraft xi-xvi, Senauke). Kraft, who was influential, drew on these sources, Snyder's essay, and work by Western Buddhists like Joanna Macy and Philip Kapleau. Ideas he presented include using the term "engaged Buddhism," that Buddhism is non-violent, that it demands "compassionate action," and that engagement means activism, not service; is a spiritual

[8] Early and influential works, in addition those mentioned, include: Diana Paul's *Women in Buddhism* (1985); Sangharakshita's *Ambedkar and Buddhism* (1986); *The Social Face of Buddhism: An Approach to Political and Social Activism* (1989) by Ken Jones; *Zen in America* (1989, 1994) by Helen Tworkov, which describes how early Western Buddhists established socially engaged organizations (52-53, 115-151); and *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology* (1990) edited by Allan Badiner. Badiner's introduction to *Dharma Gaia*, for example, sets out the modernist interpretation of interdependence as the web of life that became part of the consensus (xiv-xviii). Another pre-1995 work was *Buddhism and Ecology* (1992) edited by Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown. Donald Swearer identifies these two, as well as the later *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism* (2000) edited by Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft, as the "three standard English language anthologies" of Buddhist apologetics on ecological activism, a core area of Buddhist engagement (Swearer 125). Another popular work from the same era was *Engaged Buddhist Reader: Ten Years of Engaged Buddhist Publishing* (1996), edited by Arnold Kotler.

practice; is uniquely modern; is latent in Buddhist teachings and activated by Western discourses; forms a unified global movement; includes only certain Buddhists and activities; and is based doctrinally on "interdependence": "the web of life"[9] (xi-xvii).

Queen and King discussed these ideas at a 1990 American Academy of Religion panel on Buddhist liberation movements (Queen "Preface" ix). As editors, they soon produced the publication usually considered the first Western scholarly work on engagement, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (1996). Queen's edited volume, *Engaged Buddhism in the West* (2000), followed, as did a volume edited by Queen, Charles Prebish, and Damien Keown, *Action Dharma: New Studies in Engaged Buddhism* (2003), and King's *Socially Engaged Buddhism* (2009). These books brought together analyses of many twentieth-century Asian and Western movements and conversations, contributing to scholarship and establishing the consensus.

Nature

The contents of the consensus can be summarized by selecting features from Gleig's survey also found in other notable sources, such as Queen (1996a), King (1996), Queen (2000), Main and Lai (2013), Garfield (2022) and Queen (2022). These sources show the consensus depicting Buddhist engagement as:

- An interconnected global movement of Buddhism-inspired nonviolent political and social activism aimed at societal change;
- Based on systemic analyses of "unjust structures and systems";

[9] Many scholars claim that interdependence, in its modernist form, is the central doctrine of engaged Buddhism (e.g., King "Conclusion" 406, Queen "Agnosticism" 341). This modernist understanding of interdependence hybridizes Romanticism and Buddhism, as Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu and David McMahan both discuss (Ṭhānissaro "Romanticism" 116-123, 262-264, McMahan 149-182). Queen acknowledges it is a modern reinterpretation of older teachings ("Review" 99).

- Including some social services;
- "An expression of Buddhist modernism";
- New, having little historical precedent;
- Not centering individual suffering and transmundane liberation but this-worldly "structural suffering and collective liberation"; making practices aimed at mundane life more important and soteriologically effective than practices aimed at the transmundane;
- "An authentic expression of [Buddhism's] core ideals";
- An Asian-Western hybrid shaped by modern Western discourses;
- Based, doctrinally, on: interdependence viewed as a cosmic web of positively valued interconnections among living beings and with the natural world; reinterpretations of karma that shift causes of suffering to society; positive interpretations of lay precepts; and the bodhisattva ideal;
- "Grassroots," not done by state actors, and critical of the nation-state;
- "Liberal and progressive," not "conservative and reactionary"; and
- Necessary to do to keep Buddhism relevant and address modern crises (Gleig).[10]

[10] Although the consensus was founded on the early work of Queen and King, scholars may draw on other sources as well, including their own opinions, creating slight variations. On service as engagement, the consensus seems to follow Queen's and King's 1996 analyses. Queen, beginning in 2000, included service in his picture of engagement (with some provisos) ("New" 24). Gleig appears to downplay service, given her descriptions of engagement as "social and political activism" and her greater focus on activism; nevertheless, she also includes some examples of service (Gleig). Most factors Gleig presents are found in early works by Queen and King, although Gleig updates her survey with more recent concepts and activities. Features of engagement Gleig identifies can be compared with those proposed by King (1996). These latter include: the goal of social and institutional change ("Conclusion" 402); the context of Buddhist modernism (403, 406-408); that engagement is new and lacks historical precedents (404); that it is Buddhist

The features Gleig describes are rooted in Queen (1996a), King (1996), and Queen (2000), which present a certain narrative about Buddhist engagement. Although Queen and King suggest they derive this narrative from Asian data, they interpret data through the vision of Snyder and other activists; this vision shapes the narrative and the ethical stance it embodies.[11]

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because it draws on early Buddhist teachings in a "return to the source" (404-405); that it has various doctrinal bases but the most important is interdependence—its modernist version—and reinterpretations of karma to reduce individual responsibility for suffering (406-407, 416); that Buddhist tradition, meaning post-classical, premodern Buddhism, is degenerate and needs correction or abandonment (408-409, 416); that, in engaged Buddhism, liberation is material and social and that happiness arises from this-worldly, material activities (409, 415, 417-418); that engagement is a spiritual practice (410); that King herself can make theological judgments about what is Buddhist (410); that explicitly political statements and activism count as engagement and can be Buddhist (411); that Buddhism is anti-capitalism and pro-socialism (411-412); that traditionalists do not engage and anyone who engages is a modernist (414); that engagement is progressive and the opposite of political conservatism, "reactionary responses to modernity," fundamentalism, ethnic or national feeling, and ethnocentrism (422-430, 435); and that it is by definition non-violent (434). King does not claim that engaged Buddhism is a single movement, and in 2009 she continued to present it as multivocal, unified only by shared values drawn from Buddhist teachings (*Socially* 2009 1-3). Queen's description in 1996 also does not suggest engaged Buddhism is one movement. However, in 2000, Queen put forward the idea that engagement was a "new Buddhism" or "fourth yāna"—a single movement with its own worldview and praxis ("New" 25-26). This may be the source of the notion Gleig and Garfield both reflect that engagement constitutes a single or interconnected global movement (Gleig, Garfield 181-182). Queen apparently dropped this idea by 2013 ("Socially" 523, 532-534). A 2022 article by him describes the consensus in ways very close to Gleig's survey but without suggesting engagement is a single or interconnected movement ("Review" 100, 102, 109).

[11] King claims the narrative is based only on observations of Buddhists' engagement (e.g., "Conclusion" 401, "Socially" 2009 1-7). However, many Asian examples available to Queen and King when the narrative was developed do not fit the narrative well, suggesting a process of filtering led to arriving at features compatible with the activist vision. On past disengagement, Queen and King may have followed Kraft and others, but they may also have absorbed ideas from academic predecessors like Max Weber, Louis

This narrative makes or implies three fundamental claims: first, that in the twentieth century, a global movement—a "new Buddhism" aimed at transforming society—arose in response to uniquely modern sufferings and Western (Christian and secular) discourses; second, that Buddhist engagement comprises only Buddhists and activities advancing this aim and that the activities in question are Buddhist, good, and necessary (Queen "New" 17-26, King "Socially" 2009 1); and third, that Western scholars may delimit engagement and Buddhism.

The first claim is a theory of origins, in that it seeks to explain how and why engaged Buddhism arose out of what was posited as disengaged Buddhism in the twentieth century. It also hypothesizes that instances of engagement form a single or interconnected movement. Both theory and hypothesis can be assessed against data. The second and third claims are not, fundamentally, theories.[12] They are normative or theological state-

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Dumont, Melford Spiro, and Winston King, who all presented traditional Asian Buddhism as disengaged (Brown 64-70). Some Asian Buddhist leaders also differentiated contemporary and older Buddhisms by stereotyping the past.

[12] Queen, speaking loosely, suggests his description of the nature of engaged Buddhism is a theory ("Review" 103). It is not precisely a theory: a theory should seek to explain how and why a phenomenon appears by reference to its causes, sources, or relationships. I would summarize Queen's approach as a kind of syllogism: (1) The goal of Buddhist engagement is to promote progressive social change as defined by Queen and other Western academics; (2) Activities Buddhists undertake that, in their eyes, promote progressive social change count as Buddhist engagement—other activities are either not Buddhist or not engaged; (3) The activities they count as Buddhist engagement (because they promote progressive social change) will predictably produce the outcomes they expect, both socially transformative and soteriological for those doing them, without significant negative outcomes. (4) Therefore, Buddhist engagement will have beneficial progressive social change and soteriological outcomes. Elements of this syllogism are what critics question: the assigned goal; the exclusions; the inconsistencies in exclusions that result from judgments about what fosters progressive social change in varying situations; the presumption that the desired social and soteriological results will materialize; and the level of power given to Western academics. Also important, though, is that the syllogism

ments based on opinion. They can be debated, but data alone cannot corroborate or falsify them.

Dissent and Critique

Scholars often discuss two questions that challenge the consensus: whether engagement is new; and whether ethno-nationalist activity should count as engaged.[13] However, these are not the only or even the most important challenges to the consensus. This section groups concerns and controversies into four areas: history and oneness; Buddhist credentials; exclusionary limits; and potential Orientalism.

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is not testable, like a theory, because its second statement excludes from consideration any data that might contradict the other statements. Hence, it expresses a narrative, not a theory. Queen seems to wonder, in 2022, if his delimitation of engagement is at risk from "mounting data" ("Review" 103). Yet no amount of data can falsify this syllogism in the way a theory can be falsified. Nevertheless, the syllogism's premises need not be accepted. If the first statement is changed to "the goal of Buddhist engagement is to alleviate immediate material suffering," a goal that differs from promoting progressive social change, the subsequent statements no longer follow. (A goal of alleviating material suffering may prompt activities, such as generosity toward the poor or helping the elderly, not generally classed as promoting progressive social change.)

[13] Christopher Gowans addresses only these two challenges (232-230). Gleig cites the same two, and only them, at the end of her opening summary when, after a brief description of the history of engagement, she writes: "While there is a consensus in academic scholarship that engaged Buddhism is an expression of Buddhist modernism, recent debates have arisen around whether conservative, nationalist, and even ethnocentric modern forms of Buddhism can be considered as forms of engaged Buddhism" (Gleig). The comment appears intended to summarize two issues deemed crucial in the study of Buddhists' engagement. She also addresses both issues later in the survey in greater detail than other issues. Garfield devotes a large part of his chapter on engagement to the new/old question (182-196). Fuller treats the same two issues as the crucial ones (11-15, 141-170).

History and oneness

The theory that Buddhist engagement arose newly in the twentieth century under Western influence, and the hypothesis that it forms one global movement, gained profile in early writing by Queen and King (Queen "Shapes" 8-11, 17-20, "New" 22-26, King "Conclusion" 401, 404).[14] Both theory and hypothesis falter if engagement is longstanding or evolved out of Buddhist and local precedents.

One early work challenging newness is Robert Thurman (1988). In it, Thurman describes *Nagarjuna's Jewel Garland of Royal Counsels*. He accepts the idea that engagement means progressive activism. However, instead of presenting it as new and reliant on Western discourses, he finds it in Nāgārjuna's text, and thus declares that activism promoting universal health care, compassion for criminals, care for animals, and a regulated economy is "traditional" (120, 128-129, 138-139). Queen, in response, dismissed the teachings of Nāgārjuna and other longstanding sources as latent only, not affecting premodern conduct ("Shapes" 8-9, 14-19, 33, Yarnall 299-300, 305-310).

[14] The dispute about the history of engagement points to potential contradictions: Queen, King, and others contend that Buddhism demands political and social activism, but also that such activism is new and prompted by Western discourses. If activism is advised by longstanding teachings, why would it arise only in modernity or rely on Western input? And if it is new and reliant on Western input, what makes it Buddhist? One answer is that social engagement, with its concept of liberation in this life and this world, is a new reading of old texts, or a return to old texts because times have changed (Queen "Shapes" 8-10). Another answer is the idea of latency: canonical texts are said to support activism, but their teachings are only activated by contact with the West. This approach implies that Western discourses like democracy, equality, and socialism allow a new but still valid understanding of texts, that engagement is Buddhist because it draws on values or ideas found in these texts, and that if modern Buddhists reinterpret texts, they do not do so more than Buddhists have done in the past (e.g., King "Conclusion" 416; on latency, see Kraft "Engaged" xiii, Queen "Shapes" 33, and Temprano 268).

A more well-known challenge came in an article by Yarnall (2003, originally 2000). Like Thurman, Yarnall accepts, for the most part, that engagement means progressive activism, but underlines that it is mainly Westerners who construct it as new (286-280, 295, 302-303). The claim of newness, he asserts, overlooks continuities between past and present, and is based on ideology, narrow definitions, stereotypes, selectively chosen texts, and mischaracterizations of Mahāyāna altruism as ineffectual. Yarnall hints at an Orientalist agenda: asserting newness places "interpretive power" in Western scholars' hands and the status of "inventor of engaged Buddhism" in the hands of Buddhist modernists (305). The strength of Yarnall's article is its exploration of the theory of origin's roots in stereotypes and Orientalist projections. Its weakness is his view that researchers should test historical claims by identifying past "examples of 'engagement' as defined (more or less) by Queen," suggesting that past Buddhists, to be engaged, must help others mainly through activism rather than service (332). Nevertheless, Yarnall drew attention to stereotypes and called into question assertions that engagement was new. Others also questioning these assertions include Birnbaum and, to some extent, Garfield (Birnbaum 37-38, Garfield 182-195).

Definitions of engagement are relevant to historical claims. If social service and state social reformism count, individual and collective efforts alike are found in texts and history (Fuller 76-87, Garfield 182-195).[15] Queen, in 2002 and 2003, acknowledged challenges to his theory of origins and narrowed it considerably, arguing that although some kinds of engagement are longstanding, collective activism by non-governmental

[15] On texts, see Lele 246-247. On conduct, various sources describe the role of Buddhists in health, education, and other social services before modernity. An example is Ugo Dessì's *Ethics and Society in Contemporary Shin Buddhism* (2007), which discusses the premodern and modern engagement of Buddhists in Japan. Dessì shows that premodern engagement evolved into modern engagement; modernity made engagement more organized and comprehensive, but engagement was not new (182-190).

organizations targeting countercultural social change is new. This is probably true, but today's engagement appears to be mainly service, which few call "new" (Queen "Agnosticism" 325, "Altruism" 21-22, "Socially" 533). The broad theory of origins is essentially forfeit; Garfield expresses this when he calls engagement the "evolution [of Buddhist ethics] in the contemporary context" and asserts significant "continuities and homologies" from past to present (187). Nevertheless, as Queen indicates, certain types of engagement in certain communities are likely historically new.

Relinquishing the broad theory of origins affects the claim that engagement is one global movement, for that movement is what was posited to have arisen in the twentieth century. This claim appeared in Queen (2000) ("New" 25-26). Scholars who repeat it today include Gleig, who speaks of a "loosely connected" and "loosely related" movement, and Garfield, who references "tributary streams" that "coalesce" into one movement (Gleig, Garfield 181-182).[16]

They and others who refer to a single or interconnected movement do not offer evidence, and Hsu observes that they simply presume engagement's connections, unity, and coherence (21-22). Even the narrower category of Buddhist progressive activism has not been shown to form a unified or connected movement. Queen, in 2013, referred to instances of engagement as independent, globally dispersed, and united only by all drawing on Buddhist teachings ("Socially" 523, 532-534)—apparently a withdrawal of his single movement idea. That other scholars

[16] The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), located in Thailand, connects some engaged Buddhists. According to its website, its role is education, information-sharing, and networking. Its main activity is a biannual conference. INEB does not coordinate engagement or promote any one approach to it, and large numbers of engaged Buddhists are not associated with it. It cannot be considered to make engagement into a single movement.

retain it shows how Buddhists' activities are obscured by the activist vision and ethics-based narrative—Hsu's point.

Overall, evidence suggests that the consensus theory of origins merits complicating, and the claim of a single movement, abandoning. Nevertheless, doing so does not nullify other consensus assertions.[17]

Buddhist credentials

Amod Lele (2019) challenges the claim that that engagement is Buddhist, good, and necessary. Lele indicates that "a significant portion of premodern Indian Buddhist tradition" portrays the consensus's favored activity, political activism, as hindering spiritual progress, although it supports altruistic service (246-250, 275). The consensus narrative sets aside major texts when asserting that Buddhists "must" be activists, a claim he considers has Western origins (241-242, 247-248, 271-275). Thus, while Thurman contends, based on texts, that scholars err when they claim premodern Buddhism was disengaged, Lele contends, based on different texts, that they err when they claim Buddhism demands activism.[18] James Deitrick (260-265) and Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu ("Wisdom") agree.

Queen's response is appended to Lele's article. Queen agrees that Buddhist activism is new and Western-influenced but argues that these features do not entail illegitimacy. However, Lele's concern is not legitimacy, but effects. He contends that core Buddhist teachings indicate that

[17] Gleig, for example, upholds the consensus despite calling its historical stereotypes "Orientalist" (Gleig). Hsu also seems to find the consensus theory of origins, though likely invalid, not central (22 fn. 18). That supporters of the consensus are found on both sides of the historical debate also implies that other aspects of the consensus are separable from the historical question.

[18] Exploring reasons for differences in texts is beyond the scope of this article. The split is not necessarily between Mahāyāna and mainstream texts. Although Thurman refers to a Mahāyāna text and Ṭhānissaro to mainstream Pāli texts, Lele cites both.

political activism may not resolve others' suffering, and, for activists, may interfere with "the tranquility required for liberation" (239). Scholars of engagement, he asserts, do not offer intellectual arguments to defend their claims that activism ends suffering for its beneficiaries and is soteriological for its agents. Nor do they discuss what factors might encourage these outcomes.

James Mark Shields (2022) also enters this debate. He notes that tradition includes conduct as well as texts; values society and community as well as individual liberation; and has never been apolitical, meaning that activism is less a break with the past than Lele suggests (201). Like Queen, Shields does not address activism's capacity to reduce suffering or soteriological effectiveness. Fundamentally, Lele's work underlines that much modernist Buddhism differs from longstanding texts on the causes and cures of suffering. The work of Queen and Shields appears to reflect modernist assumptions, particularly that suffering can be alleviated with material means and liberation can be mundane (e.g., Queen "New" 2-11, Shields 203-204, 211, 214, McMahan 170-178*,* 192-199*,* Gleig).

In sum, Lele casts doubt on the consensus claim that activism is Buddhist, good, and necessary, and particularly that Buddhism demands it. Neither Queen nor Shields offers a text-based defense for this claim, apparently because it is Western, as Lele suggests, deriving from the activist vision and the hybridity of Buddhist modernism. His work also draws attention to results. The effects of activism and other types of engagement on both implementers and beneficiaries, and the factors bearing on outcomes, may sometimes be assumed away, but should form part of research.

Exclusionary limits

Queen and King implicitly categorized Buddhists and activities. The category they generally counted as engaged was progressive activism by modernist Buddhists[19] (Queen "New" 15-17, King *Socially* 2009 1-2). One excluded category was "conservative groups" with "reactionary responses to modernity," deemed not "forward-looking" or "reformist" (King "Conclusion" 435, *Socially* 2009 3). Another was social service, which Queen, in 1996, associated with premodernity; engagement went beyond it to work actively for peace and justice ("Shapes" 19-20). King, at that time, agreed ("Conclusion" 401-404). Queen later reinstated service, but still distinguished altruistic service (not engagement) from service aimed at changing society (engagement) ("Shapes" 19-20, "New" 17, 24, "Altruism" 22, "Ethics" 503-504).[20] King reinstated service in 2009 (*Socially* 2009 7).

[19] "Progressive," used in engaged Buddhism contexts, has two meanings. Gleig connects it to "social," "liberal," and "activist" in contrast with "individual," "conservative," "ethnocentric," and "reactionary," likening "progressive" to left wing (Gleig). Garfield, on the other hand, connects it to modern ideas and conduct as opposed to premodern ones; he mentions, as "progressive," replacing sexism with gender equality and, more broadly, updating Buddhist ethics through hybridization with modern or modernist discourses (194, 197). He thus likens "progressive" to modernist concepts like human rights, equality, individual freedom, and democracy. Hsu uses the word in both these ways (18, 20 fn. 10, 22, 22 fn. 18, 24, 25). Understanding "progressive" thus requires determining what idea or act the individual using the term is contrasting it with: one generally considered old or traditional, such as gender inequality, or one generally considered modern or contemporary but right wing, such as ethno-nationalism.

[20] In a 2018 publication, Queen excludes social service on the grounds that it lacks "recognition that social conditions such as poverty, lawlessness, and war have become institutionalized and depersonalized, and . . . all practitioners [of Buddhism] . . . may be required to act in concert on behalf of the victims of social suffering. . . . This is what distinguishes Engaged Buddhism from its predecessors"—the predecessors being past rulers who provided hospitals, food banks, roads, animal shelters, and so on, efforts he classes as "altruism" instead of engagement. He adds that Buddhists' endeavors that relieve individuals' suffering, such as chaplaincy, only become engagement when they include "efforts to

Nevertheless, the consensus, presumably inspired by their earlier writings, still stresses activism and downplays service. Queen and King also excluded non-modernist Buddhists, treating them as conservative or disengaged (e.g., King "Conclusion" 403, 408-409, 413-414).[21] These categories of Buddhists and activities they perceived would not produce the outcomes they sought: "new social institutions and relationships" and "societal change" (King "Conclusion" 402, Queen "New" 17). The two scholars "set the normative parameters" for the consensus (Gleig).

By restricting Buddhist engagement, consensus limits generate tensions between their "normative parameters" and Buddhists' activities. Social service is one area of tension. A second area involves certain Buddhists and activities: non-modernist or traditionalist Buddhists and Buddhist doctrines; politically or socially conservative Buddhists; state actors; violence or militancy; national, cultural, or ethnic feeling; and cooperation with the state rather than critical distance from it. A third area comprises broad misalignments between the consensus and scholarship on

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reform the structures" in which they work ("Ethics" 503-504). Although this 2018 comment seems to clarify his views—service counts as engaged if it includes working for structural reform—in 2022 he includes "charitable acts" in his definition of engaged Buddhism, again muddying the boundaries he sets around engagement ("Review" 108).

[21] This article uses both "traditionalist" and "non-modernist." Although all traditionalists are non-modernists, not all non-modernists are necessarily traditionalists. "Traditionalist," here, refers to Buddhists who self-identify as traditionalist; reasons may vary. Bodhi calls "traditionalists" those who accept Buddhism's longstanding cosmology including rebirth (Bodhi "Manifesting" 166-167). Buddhists may also call themselves "traditionalists" because they practice a lineage they perceive has been handed down over generations. As Annabella Pitkin points out, in Tibetan Buddhism, the concept of tradition is closely allied to lineage (Pitkin "Like" 13-18, Pitkin "Renunciation" 3-6, 18, 194). "Non-modernists" are a less easily defined category of Buddhists who may be traditionalist, may mix modernism or secularism with traditionalism, or may otherwise not fit the category of modernism or postmodernism. One example is the Shinnyo-en community described as "contramodernist" by Casey Collins (2020) and Keng Yung Phua (2022).

contemporary Asia.[22] A fourth concerns the appropriateness of Western scholars setting limits and their bases for doing so.

Social service has an ambiguous place in scholarship associated with the consensus. Some service it typically frames as engaged, such as chaplaincy and the activities of the Tzu Chi Foundation (King *Socially* 2009 6, 34, 150, "Ethics" 498). On some service scholars impute social reform aims or characteristics, or portray the service as part of broader reform movements, perhaps to place it within consensus limits (e.g., King *Socially* 2009 149-158, Queen "Ethics" 503).

Yet even early in the study of engaged Buddhism, and in anthologies Queen edited, some scholars ignored hesitations about service and presented it as engagement. One example in a Queen-edited volume is Jacqueline Stone (2003). Stone examines three sects in Japan: Sōka Gakkai, Risshō Kosekai, and Nipponzan Myōhoji. One is politically active; the other two are service-oriented (63, 73). The activist group prioritizes changing social structures, yet its main influence is Mahatma Gandhi (77-80). The service-based approach of two groups is a divergence from consensus limits, as are the minimal input from Buddhism and incorporation of national feeling (84-87).

Another early work in which scholars place service within engagement is a 1998 book on engagement in American Pure Land Buddhism edited by Kenneth K. Tanaka and Eisho Nasu. The two editors define engagement to include service and other non-activist ways of addressing suffering (Tanaka and Nasu xii). Like Stone's work, the book illustrated early on that what some scholars call "engagement" includes service. In another divergence from the consensus, Stone, Tanaka, and Nasu also show that a

[22] Seldom mentioned, except by Hsu, is that Buddhists do not necessarily delimit engagement, or understand engagement terms, in the way the consensus does (Hsu 25). This is an area in need of ethnographic research.

common aim of engagement is reducing immediate suffering, not fostering social or institutional change, even if change remains a longer-term hope.

Queen acknowledged the importance of service in 2003 when he began counting some of it as engagement ("Altruism" 22). Nevertheless, recent Western scholarship, including Queen's, remains equivocal: Main and Lai specifically exclude service (3, 7-8); Gleig and Garfield both seemingly theorize engagement as activism even while citing service examples (Gleig, Garfield 181-182); and Queen, in 2018, disparages service for not reforming social structures, describing it as engagement only when reformist ("Ethics" 503-504). Overall, service retains a secondary place in the consensus despite its primary place in Buddhists' activities, revealing the influence on scholarship of the activist vision.

Another area of tension generated by consensus limits takes in cooperation with the state, state actors, political, social, or doctrinal traditionalism or conservatism, and national or ethnic orientations.[23] Buddhists' engagement in Asia has long included nation-building, national feeling, and relationships with states. Despite consensus limits, some movements consensus-supporting scholars portray as exemplars of engagement involve these factors. These include: the Vietnamese peace movement (King "Conclusion" 432-433, Reinke 30); Ambedkar, who was a nation-builder with faith in the Indian state, constitution, and legal structure (Debnath 104-110); Tzu Chi in Taiwan and Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka[24]

[23] Regarding the state, King's early summary of engaged Buddhism differs from what Gleig identifies as the consensus. King indicates that there are two ways engagement develops: "love" and "the prophetic voice" ("Conclusion" 430). Those whom she classes as prophetic, such as Sulak and Ambedkar, denounce states. Those whom she classes as directed by love, like the Dalai Lama and Nhat Hanh, do not (430-433).

[24] Sarvodaya promotes national feeling in the sense of seeking to foster nation-building and a broad Sri Lankan identity, although it is not ethno-nationalist—it has worked to

which have generally worked with the state (Madsen 189, King "Ethics" 498); and the Tibetan struggle, described in Cabezón (1996).

Cabezón, for example, shows that the Tibetan struggle includes ethnic and national feeling and is allied with religious hierarchies and political institutions (311-313). Its social philosophy, developed by the Dalai Lama, is based on canonical teachings not synthesized with Western discourses (311, 314). The philosophy is not modernist but derives from a traditional Tibetan view that engagement generates merit and purification to support practices oriented to the transmundane, while these latter promote engagement's moral goodness and efficacy (300-311). Although engagement may be one responsibility of today's Buddhists, it does not lead, on its own, to liberation for self or others, nor is liberation social or mundane; liberation remains individual and transmundane (313). The Tibetan example thus defies consensus limits in several ways. Like some other scholarship, Cabezón's shows that when Queen and King set limits, the activist vision sometimes superseded data.

Another challenge to exclusions regarding the state and nationalism comes from Main and Lai (2013). Seeking to make engagement terms analytic rather than ethics-based, they accept nationalist, ethno- and cultural-nationalist, and state social reform activities if these meet other consensus requirements such as presenting society as unjust, some suffering as having systemic causes and solutions, and engagement being a Buddhist

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counter Sinhala ethno-nationalism and has a focus on peace (Bond "Ariyaratne" 130). Sarvodaya's relations with Sri Lanka's national government have been mutually supportive for much of its history despite a period of conflict; its overall approach has not been one of critique of, or distance from, the state. Another complexity of the organization as an engaged Buddhism exemplar is that has always been heavily influenced by Gandhi, and its relationship to Buddhism shrunk further in the 1990s, casting in doubt, after that point, whether it should continue to be called "Buddhist" (Bond "Ariyaratne" 138-139, Bond "Good" 85, Rajkobal 111-120). These complexities are not captured when it is cited, as it still is, as a model of engaged Buddhism (e.g., King "Introduction" 5, Bond "Good").

practice (3-7). They agree with other consensus exclusions—premodern activity, social service, and activities by non-modernist Buddhists—on the grounds that these are insufficiently activist (3-8).[25] Gleig notes how controversial supporters of the consensus find their proposals. Designating early twentieth-century state-involved East Asian figures "engaged," as Main and Lai do, she contends, will "undermine core ethical characteristics" of engaged Buddhism "because they were nationalistic and not pacifist."[26] And calling today's ethno-nationalist Buddhists "engaged" is even more problematic (Gleig).[27] Gleig's approach preserves the co-extensiveness in scholarship—jeopardized by Main and Lai—of the ethics-based narrative of engaged Buddhism and Buddhists' engaged activities.

One scholar who accepts Main and Lai's approach is Jens Reinke (2021). Reinke studies the transnational organization Fo Guang Shan (FGS), which promotes "Chinese-ness" (11). He describes a situation the

[25] Main and Lai's claim to making limits on engagement analytic is complicated by their mainly moral contention that the only way to reduce suffering is through activism seeking systematic reform, not service that is "altruistic or other-benefitting" (23-24). They posit that social activities are either politically activist or "paternalistic" hand-outs, one reason they exclude service from engagement (24-25, 25 fn. 85). However, health care, education, and so on are not necessarily paternalistic. They can be "social work for the poor and oppressed," which Main and Lai call "engaged" when done by Shin priest Takeuchi Ryō'on (24-25).

[26] Main and Lai are not the first to call Taixu and other East Asian reformers "engaged," nor the first to note Taixu's influence on Vietnamese engaged Buddhists like Nhat Hanh (e.g., Unno 68-81, DeVido 436-439, Birnbaum 27).

[27] In North America, Buddhists who are not academics seem uninterested in this dispute. Buddhist popular media, for example, commonly decry Buddhists' ethno-nationalism and extremism, East and West, but do not express interest in whether these are labeled "engaged Buddhism." *Lion's Roar*, one such source, has posted several articles that denounce ethno-nationalism and extremism (e.g., July 20, 2018; November 13, 2018; January 27, 2019; July 30, 2019; and June 24, 2022). These articles do not discuss labels. Rather, they focus on the role of Buddhism—portrayed as a religion of peace—in problematic activities.

consensus accommodates poorly: beneficial services offered by groups that encourage ethnic or national feeling (10, 11, 29-30, 81-97). An earlier scholar who shares another concern of Main and Lai is Tara Doyle (2003). Doyle profiles activists who do not always meet consensus expectations for non-violence—militant Ambedkarite Buddhists (249-280). She suggests expanding limits on engagement to allow for violence if its agents are inspired by Buddhism (255-256). Notably, scholars call Ambedkarites "engaged Buddhists," seldom mentioning their militancy and never excluding them from engaged Buddhism for it (e.g., King "Ethics" 496-497). That the consensus accepts some nationally oriented and even violent activities but not others reveals inconsistencies in applying consensus limits and tensions in their relationship to Asian contexts.

A related issue is that some academics treat engaged Buddhists as necessarily cosmopolitan in contrast to nationalistic. They imply correlations (not always present) between national feeling, ethnic feeling, problematic forms of nationalism or ethnocentrism, political and social conservatism, religious traditionalism, cooperation with the state, and violence, and appear to assume that these all make beneficial or genuinely Buddhist engagement impossible. This approach, again derived from the activist vision, is not always shared by scholars or Buddhists outside dominant groups and nations; it is tied to positionality and power.[28] As Main and Lai write, "there are cultural-nationalistic forms of social engagement flourishing in . . . Asian countries" (2). The consensus attempts to bar these attitudes and activities from Buddhist engagement, overlooking that the

[28] Those who, like myself, come from small countries dominated by large ones or from minority ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups may be more open to viewing national, cultural, or ethnic feeling as neutral or even potentially positive than those who come from majority groups in powerful countries who need not defend their culture. Ethnocentrism and nationalism that include assertions of superiority lead to trouble, especially when linked to political or military power, but these differ from types of national, ethnic, or cultural feeling that do not include this assertion and play a role in protecting small, minority, or subaltern groups.

proscribed attitudes can intertwine with beneficial activities and be supported by Buddhists and Buddhist teachings. Barring them also asks Buddhists and scholars around the world to adopt Anglo-American perspectives. And when they do not? Hsu argues that the insistence that authentic Buddhism excludes attitudes accepted in Asia as one reason some Asians bypass, reject, or find condescending the consensus understanding of engagement (20, 20 fn. 8, 21).

The issue also underlines the gap between the consensus and contemporary scholarship on Asia. To the extent that Queen and King drew on Asia when translating the activist vision into their ethics-based narrative and limits on engagement, they relied on twentieth-century figures and movements. Scholarship by consensus supporters often still presents the same ones.[29] Yet twenty-first century scholarship frequently shows that Asian Buddhists engage outside consensus limits and blur boundaries between activism, service, charity, sharing Dharma, and fortifying

[29] In King's 2021 anthology *Buddhist Visions of the Good Life for All*, for example, almost all the chapters, by a variety of scholars, discuss twentieth-century movements also profiled in anthologies published many years earlier. Little attention is paid to twenty-first century figures or movements. The examples King cites in her 2018 and 2012 articles, and Queen cites in his 2013 contribution to *Blackwell Companions to Philosophy*, 2017 contribution to *Teaching Buddhism*, and 2022 review of Fuller's book, similarly reference these same twentieth-century movements. Hsu, noting widespread repetition of references to the same movements and figures, mentions the stress scholars of engagement lay on "Buddhist heroes of the Cold War Era" (22). Gleig, to her credit, discusses some twenty-first century individuals and activities, such as prominent women leaders, activities related to race, gender, and sexuality, and Buddhist Global Relief (BGR), in addition to the usual twentieth-century group (Gleig). Garfield repeats common twentieth-century examples, but also briefly mentions two newer examples: Extinction Rebellion and BGR (181-182). The former is an interesting example; it is not a Buddhist group, although there are Buddhists involved in it (Abrahams). Fuller also discusses BGR (16-17, 173). None of these scholars mentions why they cite BGR but no other transnational engaged organizations like FGS, Karuna Trust, Karuna-Shechen, Lotus Outreach International, Gaden Relief Projects, Benevolent Organisation for Development Health & Insight, or FPMT.

national, ethnic, or cultural groups, making consensus limits on engagement and usage of terms a poor fit. Defined according to the consensus, engagement terms may imply that some of the same subjects' social activities are "engagement" while others are not, or deem activities "not engagement" that subjects or scholars consider "engagement."

These challenges are seen across publications. Ugo Dessì (2007), for example, shows Shin Buddhists in Japan engaging in social service. Sometimes nationalist, occidentalist, or ethnic attitudes are mixed in; little doctrinal hybridity with new or Western discourses occurs (140, 142, 203-205). Dessì's terminological choices include "social welfare," "activism," "social commitment," "active engagement within society," and "religious social work"; terms he does not define (182-190). He uses "engaged Buddhism" mainly to refer to non-Japanese movements; when applying it to Japan, he uses quotes to underline uncertainty about applicability, yet defined according to the consensus, it would sometimes apply (9, 121, 204).

Yoshiko Ashiwa (2009) and Adam Yuet Chua (2009) discuss service as well as environmental, social, and political activism in twentieth-century China, some of which the consensus would deem engagement, while avoiding engagement terms and using (undefined) alternatives like "socially beneficial activities," "activism," "practical activities," and "social reform" (Ashiwa 57, Chua 211–214). Hakamata Toshihide Shun'ei and Jonathan Watts (2013) discuss suicide prevention in Japan. Watts, as translator, selects the terms "engaged Buddhism," "engagement," and "activism," even though the apolitical community-building he describes is social service (77, 79, 80, 92-94).

John Nelson (2013), in a study of contemporary Japanese Buddhists, rejects engagement terms on the grounds that they imply political activism not always present, stereotype older Buddhisms as disengaged and engagement as purely modern, exclude Buddhist-inspired activities that are not "liberal or progressive," and reify certain features rather than

accommodating activities suited to varying situations. He believes the terms obscure rather than elucidate Buddhists' activities, and prefers "Buddhist-inspired activism," yet this label may confuse when applied to service (83-86).

Justin Ritzinger (2017), discussing engagement as part of Taixu's work and vision, also avoids engagement terms, preferring "social service," "charity," and "work in the world" (108-110, 187-191, 140-142, 230, 250). Nalika Gajaweera (2020) describes the social service of Sinhala lay women in Sri Lanka motivated by Buddhism and nationalism, calling it "civic engagement" and "public activism" rather than "engagement" because the women are not "liberal" (189, 190, 195-197).

Sujung Kim (2021) portrays a mix of service and activism (with occasional national feeling) in the modernist Jungto Society in Korea. Kim calls this mix "engaged Buddhism," "socially engaged Buddhism," "Buddhist activism," "social activism," "social welfare," and "action-oriented compassion," not attempting to distinguish what the consensus would call "engagement" from other activities (138-140, 143-149).

Reinke (2021) describes FGS, which occasionally engages in politics but mainly addresses education, health, culture, the environment, poverty, racial issues, and needs of marginalized groups. He does not distinguish activism from service or charity, or progressive from other types of activism, and calls FGS "socially-engaged" and its activities "Buddhist social engagement." (6, 8, 34, 81-97, 116).[30] Keng Yung Phua (2022) describes service by a Shinnyo-en group in Singapore as "socially engaged Buddhism" (12-16). Hsu offers other examples (19-20).

The examples show that scholarship on Asia now puts considerable pressure on the wish of some scholars to keep Buddhist activities

[30] On FGS and politics, examples of activities can be found in Niebuhr (2000) and Laliberté (2014).

considered engaged co-extensive with the consensus's ethics-based narrative. In Asia, the two phenomena are being separated. The consensus seems to present an obstacle for some scholars there; they must decide how to handle its restrictions. Some, like Nelson, oppose it and avoid engagement terms. Others, like Gajaweera and Dessì, accommodate it and try to use terms and concepts as it specifies. Still others, like Watts, Kim, Phua, and Reinke, dissent from it by using engagement terms in their own ways. Hsu indicates that the usage of engagement terms by scholars of Asia is waning because discomfort with the consensus makes the terms, viewed positively in North America, less well viewed there (19, 20). Currently, all terms, "engagement" and alternatives, are being used in varying ways, with scholars calling similar activities by different names or different activities by similar names—not an ideal situation and one that disunites engaged Buddhism studies. The solution Hsu suggests is to remove restrictions and use engagement terms for multiple kinds of engagement and Buddhists (23-26).

A final area of tension concerns both the appropriateness of Western scholars delimiting engagement and their basis for doing so, an ethics-based narrative rooted in an activist vision. Main and Lai critique certain exclusions resulting from this approach, although they do not question Western scholars' authority; they also delimit engagement. Christopher Gowans (2015) questions the ethics-based delimitation's usefulness, noting that it makes scholars advocates for favored forms of engagement when impartial descriptions would be more illuminating (232-233). Hsu comments that the Western "political" approach produces a poor fit with Asia (22). He also challenges it as Orientalist, as discussed below. He and others criticize academics for implying that the activities fitting their vision are the best or only properly Buddhist ones (Yarnall 327, Hsu 21).

Fuller (2022) also sees no reason why only activities suiting Westerners count as engaged. He prefers Nhat Hanh's idea of engagement—

"Buddhism . . . involved in life"—and bases his understanding of engagement on Buddhist teachings that demand suffering be addressed. This leads him to accept service as engagement as well as ethno-nationalism, even though Nhat Hanh may not have accepted the latter (1-7, 17, 141-154, 171). By citing Nhat Hanh, he chooses an Asian over a Western vision. As the criterion for engagement, he selects a goal from inside rather than outside Buddhism: alleviating suffering. This aligns him with common Buddhist motivations for engaging. In his eyes, engagement comprises all activities Buddhists undertake as a spiritual practice, in interaction with society, to reduce others' material suffering while perceiving some of its causes and remedies as social (6-7).[31] Importantly, he presents the study of engagement as the study of Buddhists' activities, avoiding the consensus practice of collapsing two phenomena into one by counting Buddhists' activities as engaged only if they fit the ethics-based narrative (1-2, 6). Prioritizing activities, he drops the narrative.

In sum, consensus limits draw multiple challenges. Each point to the same issue: the limits, drawn from a Western activist vision, exclude much of what Buddhists do to help others.

Queen addresses some of these points in a response to Fuller. Referencing twentieth-century Asian leaders, he hints that that the consensus's limits on engagement are not solely Western ("Review" 102, 105): "movement leaders and scholars" all agree to exclude nationalism, intolerance, state actors, and violent movements from engagement because they are not moral (102, 103, 105, 106 fn 3). However, non-violence is the main standard those he cites support, not necessarily other limits (102).

[31] Scholars who share his broad rejection of consensus limits include Birnbaum, who treats as "delusion" the idea that engagement must take a fixed form and asserts that it should refer to all Buddhists' compassionately motivated acts (36-37), and Nelson, Victor Temprano, and Hsu, who all contend that, to stop obscuring some activities, all Buddhism-inspired socially oriented activities should count as engaged (Nelson 83-86, Temprano 273-274, Hsu 17-26).

The leaders' own movements, after all, sometimes include the other proscribed features. Further, scholarship suggests that these figures do not represent all Asian Buddhists. Finally, given contemporary scholarship, it is unconvincing to imply that consensus limits were generated or are all widely supported in Asia, versus being applied to Asia by non-Asians. Queen also references—and denies—one implication of Fuller's book: that the study of engagement faces "mounting data [that] may undermine a dominant theory and lead to new understanding and the acceptance of a new paradigm" (103). Yet "mounting data" aptly describes the accumulation of scholarship that now dissents from, critiques, or circumvents the consensus's limits.

Potential Orientalism

Yarnall made the first well-known allegation of Orientalism against the consensus, charging that its theory of origins constituted "a subtle form of neocolonial, neo-Orientalist bias" (289). The allegation targets several claims or implied claims: that Buddhist history was disengaged; that modernity's sufferings are unique and require innovation from Buddhists; that Asian Buddhists were passive, individualistic, other-worldly, and static until they met the active, social, this-worldly, and innovative West; that Western input activated social teachings only latent in Buddhism; that Buddhist modernists invented engagement; and that Western scholars are objective experts qualified to speak "authoritatively for the tradition," explain it to the West and Asia, and intermediate between them.

Yarnall contends that, to show engagement as new, scholars seized interpretive power, superimposed external interpretive grids on Asia, and appropriated and reinvented Buddhism—a neo-Orientalist enterprise (305-310, 315-319, 323-327, 335-337). Doyle, independently of Yarnall, similarly called "Orientalist" the assertion, not that engagement is new, but that Western influence prompted it, contending that the assertion

understates Buddhists' agency in reforming their traditions using their own resources (255-256).

Queen replied that Western scholars of engagement respect Buddhism, are culturally sensitive, and do not "feel superior to their subjects." He also underlined Asian agency, writing that "charges of orientalism and neo-colonialism break down precisely because the 'others' . . . are not passive subjects of the white, male, western gaze, but actors who *look back . . . talk back* and *act back* by appropriating and adapting" Western ideas as they choose. King responded similarly. On Western discourses, Queen cited data to show Western and Asian ideas mingling in modernist engaged Buddhism (Queen "Altruism" 23-25, italics original, King "Socially" 2012 210).

However, the question is whether all engagement relies on Western ideas. If engagement consists of Marxism-inflected political activism led by Western-educated elites, they may be central. If it involves communities little influenced by the West, Buddhist and local resources may suffice. Universally applying the idea that Western discourses are involved may be more problematic than the idea itself; caution applying it is also necessary because it may reinforce a false binary in which "the West" is active and "the East" passive.

A later article calls a different aspect of the consensus "Orientalist"—its statements on what is "Buddhist." Victor Temprano (2013) discusses theological claims, such as King's claim that Sri Lankans' nationalist engagement is the antithesis of Dharma, David Loy's claim that some Japanese engagement contradicts the Buddha's teachings, and, especially, declarations that political activism and modernist interpretations of teachings are legitimately Buddhist (267-268). He posits that academics, as apparent "disseminators of objective truth," have a different form of prestige, influence, and authority than emic leaders, and use these attributes to define "objectively" what is Buddhist, best Buddhism, or not

Buddhism, reduce Buddhists' opportunity to represent and define their own traditions, and persuade Buddhists to be activists by teaching that activism is Buddhism (266-274). These acts, he claims, separate Buddhists from their own traditions, make academics "protectors, promoters, and definers" of Buddhism, and fit Edward Said's description of Orientalism as Westerners seizing authority over, dominating, and restructuring the East (266).

Another charge of Orientalism appears in Hsu (2022). Hsu agrees with Yarnall on the theory of origins and Temprano on statements delimiting Buddhism (17, 19, 22 fn. 18, 23). However, Hsu targets something else: the limits the consensus places around Buddhist engagement. He emphasizes that scholars' work reflects their politics which reflect their social location, and notes that proponents of the consensus are "highly educated, liberal, predominantly white Anglo-American Baby Boomers" with "privileged positions within broader fields of power" (17, 21-23).[32] The consensus embodies, as if they were universal and neutral, their positionality-driven priorities, such as "a cosmopolitan global order, liberal democracy, human rights, [and] western or white feminism." It also overlooks forms of Buddhism and engagement Western scholars do not prioritize, especially older ones. Contributing to this outcome is that the Asian views these scholars cite tend to be those of Westernized elites.[33] The

[32] Yarnall does not much discuss positionality, although he notes that scholars declaring engagement "traditional" are more often Asian and those declaring it "new" more often Western (289, 295). Temprano discusses mainly their position as academics (268-273).

[33] Hsu points to an issue seldom mentioned: that many of the Asian leaders whom scholars celebrate are highly educated, Westernized, and come from or represent elites. Hsu contends that work on engaged Buddhism presents them as more representative of Asian Buddhists than they are (20 fn. 9). Others who mention issues of class or elitism include Dessì, who comments on the role of Western-educated Asian leaders (9), and Doyle, who discusses elite Buddhists' lack of support for Ambedkarite Buddhists (252, 255, 275). Queen, in 1996, acknowledged the privileged background and high levels of education of

consensus thus embodies power differentials between English and other languages, Western scholars and non-Western subjects, and elite and ordinary Asians (18-19, 22).

How do these power differentials manifest? Hsu gives credit to scholars like Queen and King for showcasing non-Western movements, but he posits that their background still makes them "less interested in inter-Asian and South-South exchange," "underattentive, by today's standards, to dynamics of Orientalist appropriation, romanticism, and erasure," and prone to obscuring diversity by universalizing, describing Asians in ways they may not recognize, ignoring how Buddhists themselves define engagement, and imposing their vision of Buddhism and engagement on Asia (18, 22). He perceives that many Asian Buddhists find offensive, and reject, either the consensus narrative of what engagement constitutes, or elements of it, such as that modernist, activist Buddhism is the best Buddhism and tradition is negative and should be abandoned (21-22).

Hsu describes these issues more comprehensively than earlier scholars, but the potential Orientalism of some consensus limits has been raised before. Doyle, for example, asserts that insistence on non-violence is part of an Anglo-American framing of Buddhism and engagement unsuited to Asia (255-256). Others also emphasize the Orientalism in attributing unfailing pacifism to Buddhism or comment that requirements for engagement to be non-violent arise out of non-Buddhist ideologies or moral stances (Jenkins 14, Main and Lai 22-24, Fuller 2, 6).[34]

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many leaders of Asian engaged Buddhist movements, although he did not take this to mean that they represented elites; some, like Ambedkar, do not ("Shapes" 7-8).

[34] Scholars who claim Buddhism is non-violent do not rely only on Western ideas. Many Asian leaders, such as Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama, make the same claim. However, they are emic leaders making theological claims or teaching conduct. Academic scholars have shown that Buddhism, in texts and practice, is not always non-violent. These

Hence, assorted allegations of Orientalism have been made, including Yarnall's concerning the theory of origins, Temprano's concerning the appropriateness of Western academics delimiting Buddhism, and Hsu's concerning the appropriateness of them delimiting engagement as well as the source and nature of the limits. Can the allegations be assessed? The potential inaccuracy and reliance on stereotypes of the broad theory of origins have been acknowledged. Narrower versions of it, however, based on individual communities' history, have more potential for accuracy and less for Orientalism.

On Temprano's and Hsu's allegations of inappropriateness, debate is possible. Academics are not barred from theology or normativity. And, as Queen and King underline, Asian Buddhists can adopt or reject their ideas. Nevertheless, Asian agency flourishes amid powerful Western discourses, including those embedded in scholarship. In this context, imposing Western standards is a serious matter. Outside Asia too, it is questionable for academics to tell Buddhists that only certain kinds of activities constitute genuinely Buddhist engagement. Most powerful of the allegations of Orientalism are Hsu's, because they strike at a core consensus claim: that Buddhist engagement takes in some but not all Buddhists and socially oriented activities, and that Western academics may decide which. Hsu's proposal to end this uncomfortable situation is for scholars to adopt a plural, inclusive approach to Buddhism and engagement.

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contexts matter. On emic claims to pacifism, Stephen Jenkins writes: "Cultural feedback loops developed in which Western desires for scientific, pacifist or even environmentalist religiosity were readily satisfied by often Western-educated colonized elites, for whom they represented cultural superiority over those who previously dominated and exploited them. The deployments of such ideas were brilliant acts of cultural self-defense and adaptation to modernity, which have served their purpose well, but they are also highly distorting . . . " (15).

Like concerns with the consensus's exclusionary limits, concerns with its possible Orientalism have accumulated, making changes to conceptions and presentations of engagement timely.

What's Really Wrong with the Consensus?

Why are challenges to the consensus so varied? They vary because many critics wish to address only one consensus claim without destabilizing the others. For example, Thurman and Yarnall undermine the consensus theory of origins, but uphold limits on what constitutes engagement. Doyle, and Main and Lai, critique some limits while accepting others. Deitrick, Ṭhānissaro, and Lele agree that engagement mainly means political activism, only disputing that Buddhism recommends this. Gleig, on Orientalism, may be representative of many scholars: she accepts allegations against the theory of origins, but does not explore those made against other consensus claims. Relinquishing only the theory of origins responds (in part) to critiques while retaining Western scholars' authority along with the ethics-based narrative and the advocacy it embodies.

Do multiple criticized aspects of the consensus have a single root? The consensus emerged from the vision of Snyder and other activists, which Queen and King turned into an ethics-based narrative. That the narrative embodies this activist vision and is also used to describe and delimit Buddhists' activities entangles the ideal and the actual. It collapses two phenomena—a narrative and activities—into one, forcing the actual to fit the ideal. Manifestations of this longstanding entanglement are what attracts criticism. They include: granting authority and control over what constitutes Buddhism and Buddhist social engagement to Western academics; promoting a Western activist vision as Buddhist and advocating for it; overlaying data with a narrative in ways that obscure data; excluding from consideration some engaged Buddhists as either not properly Buddhist or not

properly engaged; applying a Western and modernist vision of Buddhism and engagement to non-Western and non-modernist Buddhists; telling Buddhists, based mainly on presumption, that activism alleviates suffering and is soteriological; creating complexities for those researching engagement; and encouraging, in scholarship, the division of socially oriented activities into inconsistently applied and labeled categories.

Fuller's and Hsu's 2022 publications address this root issue. They also propose a way forward: in scholarship, stop imposing a narrative and its exclusionary limits and start including all Buddhists' engagement.

Beyond the Consensus

Fuller and Hsu both suggest removing consensus limits on Buddhist engagement. Fuller writes of bringing in "modern Buddhists, ethnic Buddhists, white Buddhists, Asian Buddhists, gay Buddhists, queer Buddhists, trans-Buddhists, straight Buddhists, genocidal Buddhists, racist Buddhists and Buddhists fighting racism, eco-Buddhists, new-age Buddhists, punk Buddhists, Buddhist politicians, Buddhists fighting addictions, Buddhist monks and Buddhist nuns—in fact, anyone professing Buddhist identities" (6). Hsu points to an array of Buddhists engaged in multiple ways. Nevertheless, there are engaged Buddhists neither mentions.

Traditionalists are one unacknowledged group.[35] Fuller, like many scholars, treats tradition as existing only in premodernity (11-15). He also

[35] Many scholars cite Yarnall (2003) and his division of engaged Buddhists into "traditionists" and "modernists." It is important to note that the "traditionists" he describes are almost all Buddhist modernists, just like his "modernists" (fn. 4, 337). Yarnall does not discuss traditionalists. What makes some modernists "traditionists" in Yarnall's eyes is their view that engagement occurred in premodernity. "Traditionists" Yarnall identifies include modernists like Nhat Hanh, Sulak, Rahula, Joanna Macy, Stephen Batchelor, and

hints that traditionalists cannot engage because "essential" to engagement is abandoning Buddhism's old cosmology and adopting modernist views of karma and interdependence—an assumption that presumably excludes traditionalists (57-62, 68, 171-172).[36] And he appears to assume that the only engaged Buddhists the consensus overlooks are those who clash with Western norms, neglecting traditionalists running schools, hospices, and so on (6). Hsu also does not discuss traditionalists' engagement, although he may imply they engage when he indicates they reject consensus limits on ways to do so (21-22).[37]

Scholars tend not to see today's traditionalist Buddhists. Veiling their activities are assumptions that tradition lies only in the past; only modernists engage (and anyone who engages is a modernist); tradition-

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Bernie Glassman. He also includes Thurman and the Dalai Lama, who crisscross the boundary between traditionalism and modernism, but they are an exception (289). Gleig and Fuller both blur this issue by depicting "traditionist" as meaning "traditionalist" (Gleig, Fuller 11-12). But Yarnall's article discusses a disagreement mainly among Buddhist modernists.

[36] Fuller writes, "Traditions of social service in Buddhism . . . are often based on . . . the idea of averting misfortune in the present life or in expediating an auspicious future rebirth . . . engaged Buddhism removes the karmic motivations of social engagement and offers a Buddhist solution to . . . problems without the idea of . . . a better rebirth"—a comment suggesting that his mental picture of the engaged excludes traditionalists, present as well as past. So does his conclusion that the core doctrine of engagement is the hybrid modernist understanding of interdependence—in early Buddhism, he asserts, the core doctrine was impermanence, in Mahāyāna it was emptiness, in engaged Buddhism today, it is interdependence—an approach that makes social engagement unique to Buddhist modernists who accept this hybrid modernist doctrine (62-66, 171-172). This kind of staging dates to early work by Queen (e.g., "New" 11-25). Insistence that the hybrid interdependence doctrine is core to engagement is widespread; Queen mentions it in 2002, for example ("Agnosticism" 341). Yet this view might be challenging to substantiate with ethnographic data. Gowans, by contrast, mentions other teachings that might lead traditionalists to be engaged (233).

[37] Scholars who have written about engagement by traditionalists or non-modernists include Cabezón (1996), Goldberg (2013), Fitzpatrick (2014), and Phua (2022).

alists lack doctrines to support engagement; belief in karma makes traditionalists either too fatalistic to engage or interested only in faith-based interventions;[38] traditionalists' practices focus on self, not community; and traditionalists are political conservatives or ethno-nationalists.[39]

[38] Jonathan Watts, for example, writes that traditional Buddhism features "a rigid karmic determinism that produces an attitude of fatalism toward injustice; that is, those who experience suffering deserve it based on bad actions in a previous lifetime; and . . . a accompanied ritualization of karmic action that views the overcoming of personal suffering not as a confrontation with social injustice but as making traditional offerings to the monastic order in order to gain karmic merit for future rebirth in more favorable circumstances. This lack of engagement with social injustice has created a moral myopia within traditional Buddhist societies towards the fundamental forms of structural and cultural violence underpinning the more visible acts of violence and oppression. The common understanding of karma often serves to perpetuate structural and cultural violence, such as sexism, classism, and political oppression" (4). This generalization presents a modernist stereotype of both premodern Buddhists and, by implication, today's traditionalist Buddhists, and fails to account for their frequent social engagement.

[39] Scholars sometimes conceptually link "nationalist" "conservative," "reactionary," and "traditional," implying that all non-modernist Buddhists are politically or socially conservative, ethno-nationalist, and not "liberal and progressive." Most scholars are now sensitive to stereotypical binaries: Western/modern/secular/progressive/social/engaged versus Asian/traditional/hierarchical/conservative/individualistic/disengaged. Richard Payne gives an overview of the issue in *Secularizing Buddhism: New Perspectives on a Dynamic Tradition* (2021) and discusses it as well in his chapter in the same book ("Editor" 1-9, "Conscious" 286-288, 297, 301-302). He draws in part on Natalie Quli (2009). Quli emphasizes the association made between religious traditionalism and social/political conservatism, and underlines how "traditional" and "conservative" are often aligned with "Asian" (5, 14, 18, 28). The assumption that traditionalist Buddhists do not engage socially derives in part from these binaries, as does the assumption that traditionalists are politically and socially conservative, which also may come from the breadth of the term "conservative." It can be appropriate to call Buddhist traditionalists "conservative" with respect to doctrine, as McMahan does (187, 247, 249). Yet doing so can lead to presuming they are also politically and socially conservative, which does not follow. Payne discusses how traditionalists are stereotyped as being the opposite of politically progressive or liberal ("Conscious" 286-288, 297, 301-302). One Buddhist who is both a traditionalist and politically progressive is Bodhi ("Call"). Overall, it is appropriate to be skeptical

Additionally, despite doubts about Queen's theory of origins, the belief that all engagement is Western-influenced seems to endure, so Buddhists who avoid doctrinal hybridization may be assumed to not engage. These assumptions persist because relatively few studies are done on Buddhists' and especially traditionalists' actual engagement (Temprano 274, Hsu 23-26); some studies mischaracterize engaged traditionalists as modernists (King "Conclusion" 403, 413-414, Queen "Ethics" 506-507, Fuller 17); and little research on today's traditionalists, engaged or not, is done because scholars of contemporary Buddhism gravitate toward modernists.

Portrayals of Buddhist Global Relief (BGR) are illustrative. According to its website, BGR, launched by Bodhi, works to alleviate hunger and poverty and to improve opportunities for girls and women. Queen calls it the "epitome" of Buddhist engagement. He contrasts Bodhi's views on engagement with those of another American monk, Ṭhānissaro, presenting a binary in which Bodhi is a modernist who promotes engagement and Ṭhānissaro a traditionalist who condemns it—implying that only modernists engage ("Ethics" 506-507).

However, Bodhi is no modernist. Bodhi defines "traditionalism" as "acceptance of the classical Buddhist framework of rebirth and karma, understood as a moral force with consequences extending beyond the present life" ("Manifesting" 167-168, 181). His essays show he accepts this cosmology, making him a traditionalist by his own standards (Bodhi "Facing" 23, 31-32, 64-66). On engagement, Queen quotes him writing that he seeks to ensure his work is supported by "Buddhist doctrine, ethical ideals, archetypes, legends, and historical precedents" ("Ethics" 507): another indication of traditionalism. Finally, he calls himself a "traditionalist" who

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of binaries that present concern for the mundane as purely contemporary or modernist, and concern for the transmundane as purely premodern or traditionalist.

does not replace Buddhism's "transcendent orientation" with "social and political reform" (Bodhi "Call").

On Ṭhānissaro, Queen calls him "traditional" and cites him terming political activism a Western extrapolation of Buddhism. Queen then contends that he aligns traditional Buddhism with disengagement ("Ethics" 506).[40] Yet Ṭhānissaro's words here and elsewhere imply a rejection only of politics. He promotes social service and environmental work, finding support for these in canonical teachings (*Selves* 41, 56, 59, 69-72, *Romanticism* 290). Both monks can thus be called "traditionalists," and both are engaged.

Fuller and Garfield also, when discussing BGR, do not acknowledge traditionalism (Fuller 16-17, 173, Garfield 182). Others whose work inadvertently obscures the existence of engaged traditionalists include Main and Lai, along with Kory Goldberg, when they discuss social projects associated with the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) without mentioning FPMT's self-declared traditionalism (Main and Lai 30, Goldberg).[41] In a recent article, Queen also obscures traditionalists' engagement, stating that in Asia and the West, traditionalists do not typically "serve their communities" through charitable or reformist activity ("Review" 108). These are all missed opportunities to undo an inaccurate stereotype and to explore ways in which traditionalists' engagement may differ from modernists' engagement.

Beyond traditionalists, those engaging outside consensus limits include Buddhists who have conservative, ethnic, or national orientations

[40] Queen is referencing the 1997 edition of a textbook to which Ṭhānissaro contributed: Robinson et al (301-302).

[41] Years earlier, King did the same when discussing Cabezón's presentation of engagement by traditionalist Tibetans (King "Conclusion" 413-414).

or work amicably with the state.[42] Academics may lump these groups together (e.g., King "Conclusion" 435). However, diverse Buddhists fit this category, many undertaking inarguably beneficial activities. Not counting them as engaged may reflect scholars' positionality, reliance on the activist vision, or lack of awareness of how widely accepted, globally, are these orientations. Buddhists should not have to fit a given political mold to be classed as engaged, and the numerous Buddhists in these categories should not be left unstudied or grouped with unrelated and controversial movements.

As for violent or divisive groups, the definition early in this article, and Fuller's as well, require Buddhist social engagement to address others' material suffering—presumably in ways that produce net social benefit in the short term. This definition limits the fit of purely political or military, versus social, activities. No definition entirely precludes debate about fit, and here that may center on what activities reduce material suffering. Nevertheless, many political and military activities are bound to be excluded. It is worth recalling, as well, that violent groups are a small minority of those the consensus excludes. Their importance in debates about Buddhist engagement has been overstated. Letting go of the consensus narrative in order to include the far greater number of Buddhists doing charitable and social service work, including non-modernist Buddhists, conservative Buddhists, and so on, is more important than holding on to it in order to exclude violent Buddhists.

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[42] Some examples appear in the body of this article. They include FGS, which has an ethnic orientation alongside many social projects (Reinke 6, 8, 11, 34, 81-97, 116) and Japanese social projects described by Dessì which have nationalist elements (140, 142, 203-205). Main and Lai affirm that there are many examples of cultural-nationalistic social engagement in Asia (2). More examples of which I am not aware surely exist, including in in scholarly work in languages other than English. However, I believe engagement by these kinds of Buddhists is understudied. If so, there may be much activity not yet documented, one reason I suggest more study of such Buddhists.

Scholarship also reveals a need to research how assorted local, Buddhist, and non-Buddhist ideas and teachings motivate, shape, or validate various Buddhists' engagement. In a diverse world, there is likely more variation in such resources than universalist assumptions capture.

Finally, scholars do not always examine results, leading to little documentation of the benefits of various engaged activities or their impact on those doing them. If engagement is meant to reduce material suffering and be soteriological for the engaged, its effects matter. Assessing outcomes, and the factors that influence success, makes research more complete, assists Buddhists, and, for those so inclined, provides empirical bases for advocacy.

Conclusion

Is it time to relinquish the consensus? The consensus made a significant contribution by encouraging scholarship on engagement. It did its job, and those who crafted it deserve credit.

Nevertheless, the scholarship it encouraged has gone beyond it. And it is no longer a consensus; many scholars do not support it.[43] Its broad theory of origins and claim of a single global movement have been seriously undermined. Certain of its assertions have been questioned: that Buddhism demands activist forms of engagement; that these reliably alleviate suffering; and that they are soteriological. Further, its exclusionary limits and restrictions on terms are widely criticized, and much scholarship shows that, particularly in Asia, multiple kinds of Buddhists,

[43] Scholars who either critique the consensus or whose scholarship departs from it in meaningful ways include many cited in this article, such as Fuller, Hsu, Gowans, Nelson, Dessì, Birnbaum, Reinke, Watts, Kim, and Phua.

engagement efforts, and research now flourish without heeding them. Finally, concerns that it may be Orientalist are not insignificant.

Fuller and Hsu expose its root flaw: it accepts as engaged only Buddhists and activities that fit within an ethics-based narrative derived from an activist vision and shaped by its proponents' positionality. Other Buddhists and social endeavors it excludes, obscures, or denigrates. Fuller and Hsu, anchoring their work in Asian and Buddhist perspectives, convincingly argue that it should be set aside, and all Buddhists and their socially oriented activities be brought into scholarship on engagement.

The way to build on their work is to make the study of engagement plural, democratic, and inclusive. Steps to do so include:

1. Setting aside the ethics-based narrative and it replacing its exclusionary limits with a definition of engagement that requires only that socially oriented activities be done by self-identifying Buddhists, be understood as a Buddhist practice, and use material means to reduce others' material suffering;

2. Labeling separately social, political, and military engagement in order to focus the study of socially engaged Buddhism on activities aimed at relieving material suffering;

3. Increasing scholarship on contemporary social engagement, particularly that of understudied Buddhists such as traditionalists, Buddhists with ethnic, national, state-supportive, or conservative orientations, Buddhists whose main goal is to alleviate immediate suffering, and Buddhists doing social service;

4. Identifying the differing ideas and teachings that support various Buddhists' engagement;

5. Researching engagement's results for beneficiaries, effects on those engaged, and success factors;

6. Using engagement terms for all Buddhists' socially oriented activities to promote a unified field of study; and

7. Adding overlooked Buddhists and forms of engagement to textbooks and anthologies.

Taking these steps will help open scholarship on engagement to the myriad influences, motivations, and socially aimed activities of all Buddhists.

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