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In October 1995, the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* conducted an online conference on Buddhism and Human Rights. The project was ambitious in both its electronic format and its subject matter. Human rights is widely addressed in the West by both ethicists and policy makers, but has received only modest attention from students of Buddhist ethics, as demonstrated by Damien Keown's "Bibliography on Buddhism and Human Rights" (*Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, April 19, 1995). To be sure, Buddhist spokespersons of international stature such as the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh have spoken out on issues of war and peace, violence and non-violence, but the terminology of human rights surfaces more as an overtone in Buddhist ethics discussions. Although the Buddhist feminist critique touches on human rights, it tends to be gender-focused.

In the last decade the language of human rights has become more prominent in the discourse of Buddhist ethics. It was an important theme in the Dalai Lama's 1989 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech; Sulak Sivaraksa and other Buddhist social activists have made human rights a major issue in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, India and China; and in 1988, forty years after the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, L. P. N. Perera published *Human Rights and Religions in Sri Lanka: A Commentary on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*' 1995 conference, however, was the first attempt to address the issue of Buddhism and human rights from various perspectives and in different historical and contemporary contexts. In this sense the conference was both ground-breaking and significant.

The volume under review is substantial in size and broad in scope. It brings under one cover all of the papers prepared for the October online conference. The essays range from metaethical questions regarding the compatibility or incompatibility of Western human rights language with Buddhist ethics to reflections on specific situations such as Tibet and Thailand. Although the essays do not present a consistent Buddhist perspective on human rights, it is not surprising that while there is disagreement over if and how the Western concept of human rights can be expressed in an authentically Buddhist form, there is a broad agreement that Buddhist teachings can and should contribute to contemporary human rights movements. Despite their differences, each of the authors brings to his or her study an obvious empathy for Buddhism and its actual or potential contribution to an ethic of human rights.

In addition to the conference papers, the volume includes Damien Keown's "Bibliography on Human Rights," the Dalai Lama's 1993 statement on "Human Rights and Universal Responsibility" delivered at the United Nation's NGO conference on human rights, and the Declaration of

Interdependence that followed the Closing Statement of the online conference. Comparing this Declaration with the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights opens a window onto the debate over whether human rights as construed in the modern West are compatible with Buddhist ethics.

From this reviewer's perspective, the essays that best frame the broad issues raised by the dialogue between Western human rights discourse and the language of Buddhist ethics are those by Damien V. Keown ("Are There Human Rights in Buddhism?"), Craig K. Ihara ("Why There Are No Rights in Buddhism: A Reply to Damien Keown"), and Jay L. Garfield, ("Human Rights and Compassion"). Subsequently, I shall discuss these three essays in greater detail. The papers by Paul Junger ("Why the Buddha Has No Rights") and Santipala Stephen Evans ("Buddhist Resignation and Human Rights") argue for the radical distinctiveness of Buddhist ethics over against a modern Western understanding of human rights. Junger, who speaks from the normative position that the concept of human rights is historically contingent while the teachings of the Buddha are not, finds that certain values embodied in the Enlightenment-based human rights rhetoric are better served by the notion of 'right' in the Noble Eightfold Path. Junger argues that ultimately, however, the goal of the Path, cessation of suffering, entails overcoming clinging, even clinging to rights. Evans is of the opinion that the major components of the Buddhist worldview, such as attitudes toward suffering, karma and rebirth, and dependent co-arising, ground a Buddhist ethic of contingent mutual responsibility that is more inclusive and less oppositional than the language of human rights. Kenneth Inada's essay, "A Buddhist Response to the Nature of Human Rights," appeared in *Asian Perspectives on Human Rights* edited by Claude E. Welch, Jr. and Virginia A. Leary (1980), and was not one of the online conference papers. In agreement with Evans, Inada holds that unlike Western human rights theories from Hobbes and Bentham to Rawls that are grounded in an ontology of "hard" relationships — that is, an externalized and atomistic view of human relationships — the Buddhist worldview is one of holistic, inclusive mutuality. Such a worldview, he contends, promotes "soft relationships" governed by such intangible human traits as patience, humility, tolerance, humaneness, love, and compassion.

The remaining essays are more specific in nature. Three are country-focused and two are topical. Soraj Hongladarom provides an insightful comparative analysis of Thailand's renowned lay Buddhist social activist, Sulak Sivaraksa, and that country's most respected contemporary scholar-monk, Phra Dhammapidok, in "Buddhism and Human Rights in the Thoughts of Sulak Sivaraksa and Phra Dhammapidok (Prayudha Prayutto)."

John Powers' largely historical analysis looks at the Chinese disregard for Tibetans' human rights from the perspective of contrasting cultural values in "Human Rights and Cultural Values: The Political Values of the Dalai Lama and the People's Republic of China." Of the topical essays, Charles R. Strain constructs a dialogue between engaged Buddhism, especially that of Thich Nhat Hanh and Sulak Sivaraksa, and Catholic social teachings in contrast to the Western debate on human rights defined by Western liberal individualism, communitarians, and cultural relativists in "Socially Engaged Buddhism's Contribution to the Transformation of Catholic Social Teachings on Human Rights." David Bubna-Litic critiques business practices that violate human rights from the Mahāyāna perspective of interdependence (interbeing) in "Buddhist Ethics and Business Strategy Making."

Keown's paper, with its brief but useful introduction to discussions of human rights in Western ethics, provides a good entry point to the volume, especially for readers unfamiliar with human rights discussions in Western ethics. (Junger presents a lengthy but somewhat less useful discussion of continental civil law and Anglo-American common law.) In contrast to Inada, who sees human rights as an extension of human nature, Keown argues that teleologically human rights and dignity are in accord with an account of human goodness which sees basic rights and freedoms as related to human flourishing and self-realization. Furthermore, he observes that although there is no specific Sanskrit or Pali term for the Western notion of "rights," the concept of rights is implicit in classical Buddhism in the normative understanding of what is due among and between individuals. Keown suggests that the Buddhist view of reciprocal obligations provides a different but related perspective on the questions of justice. He contends that an ethic of reciprocal duties can be seen as an embryonic form of rights or as a precondition for rights in the modern Western sense. Like Keown, Ihara argues that Buddhist ethics is a Dharmic system of role responsibilities rather than an ethic of rights. In contrast with Keown, however, Ihara contends that to introduce the Western concept of rights into Buddhism would significantly transform the nature of Buddhist ethics, and in particular that it would threaten Buddhism's cooperative, duty-based paradigm. Ihara agrees with Joel Feinberg ("The Nature and Value of Rights"), that there are numerous classes of duties that do not correlate specifically with the rights of persons; rights entail duties but duties do not always entail rights. Ihara argues that the major flaw in Keown's position is his attempt to reconcile duty and rights; every duty does not involve a corresponding right. Nevertheless, despite the disjunction between Buddhist duties and Western rights, Ihara believes Buddhists should engage in contemporary human rights discussions.

Jay Garfield argues that the essence of Buddhist moral theory is compassion, but that Buddhist compassion is not necessarily incompatible with human rights. Compassion, in Garfield's view, brings three important considerations to discussions of the nature of human rights: that human relations are determined by more than rational, external, and private domain considerations; that human relationships include rights and duties but also a broader range of choices; and that compassion entails a dynamic, moral development view of human nature. While compassion grounds Buddhist ethics (especially Mahāyāna ethics), human rights builds a framework for extending the reach of natural compassion and for serving the goods that compassion affords to all persons in society. To the rhetoric of compassion, on the other hand, the language of rights adds an important dimension of moral and political criticism. Garfield's theoretical stance represents what this reviewer takes to be the most constructive contribution Buddhism has to make to international human rights debates because it allows the possibility of incorporating distinctive ethical frameworks — for example, Buddhist compassion and Western liberal democracy — into a quest for an enriched and broadened understanding of human rights.

It is illuminating to assess the variation in approach and subject matter represented by the essays in this volume from the perspective of the dilemma noted in *Prospects for a Common Morality*, edited by Gene Outka and John P. Reeder, Jr. (Princeton University Press, 1993). The editors observed that “recent moral and political thought seems Janus-faced. We find on the one side a remarkable kind of cross-cultural moral agreement about human rights.... We find on the other side an apparent loss of confidence in any such consensus” (p. 3). In this reviewer's opinion, the variation represented by the essays in *Buddhism and Human Rights* mirror this dilemma. While they do not present a consensus, the essays offer a valuable insight into the range of views that Buddhists and Buddhist scholars bring to the ongoing conversation.