UU Sangha

Volume: VI, Number: 3 Journal of the Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship Summer 2002

Martin Luther King Jr., Buddhism, and the Concept of Impermanence

By Roy Money

> We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the way God's universe is made; this is the way it is structured.
> —Martin Luther King Jr. "Remaining Awake Through A Great Revolution"

I had the supreme good fortune to live in Atlanta in the mid 60s, to participate in the civil rights movement there, and to hear Dr. King preach. The resonance of King's message for me was due in part to the Christian teachings that had inspired my involvement in civil rights work. However my involvement in these areas outlived my commitment to a Christian faith. In the ensuing years Buddhism continually presented a resonance for me. More recently I have discovered in Martin Luther King's writings a concept that is fundamental in Buddhist teachings.

The concept of an interdependent reality—a network of mutuality—is one that appears repeatedly in King's writing and speeches in his last five years. It is featured in his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" of April 16, 1963:

> Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.

King's reference to the "interrelatedness of all communities and states" is no doubt a reflection of his growing awareness of a worldwide freedom struggle and the indivisibility of that struggle whether it was in different communities of the US or on different continents.

King discussed this concept of mutuality in the Ware lecture at the May 1966 Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly in Hollywood, Florida. He begins by talking about the need for a world perspective in order for the church to remain awake in the midst of revolutionary times. He mentions the widespread poverty and homelessness he observed on a trip to India and reflects that "our destiny is tied up with the destiny of India, and every other nation":

> All I'm saying is this: that all life is inter-related, and somehow we are all tied together. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the inter-related structure of all reality.

He became passionately concerned about having a world perspective and wrote that "the first thing that parents should instill within their children is a world perspective":

> Every parent should seek to get over to their children that the world in which we live is one world: it is certainly geographically one, and now we are challenged to make it spiritually one. So

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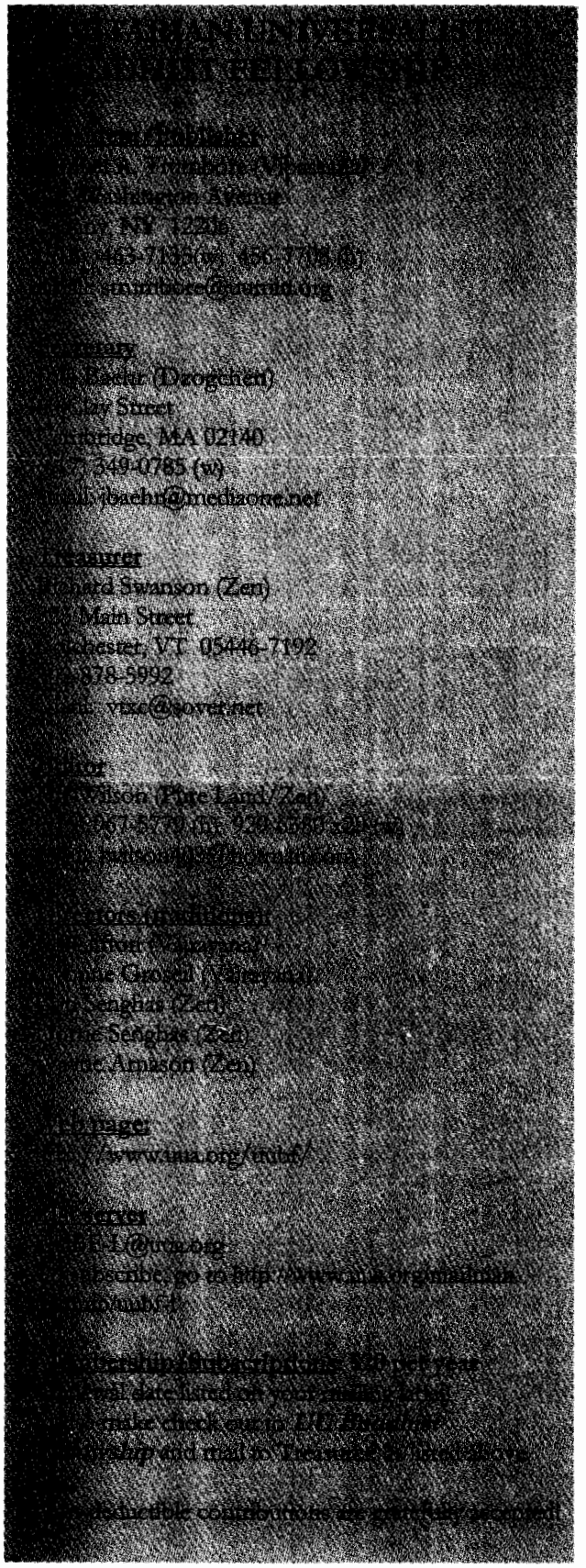
Editorial Insights

Hello and welcome to the Summer 2002 issue of *UU Sangha.* If this is your first time reading our journal, I hope that you find it interesting and "enlightening." If you are a long-time reader, I hope that we are continuing to bring you fresh and insightful material from the intersection of Unitarian-Universalism and Buddhism. Whatever your opinions of our journal or any of the articles we present, you are welcome to send us letters to the editor—remember, feedback helps us to serve you better.

Another year has passed us by with astonishing speed, and already another General Assembly has gone and we have new leaders. Reverend James Ford has now completed his term as President of the Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship, and Rev. Sam Trumbore, for many years *UU Sangha*'s editor, has stepped up to fill his shoes. *UU Sangha* extends its thanks to those who served as UUBF Boardmembers last year, and congrats and welcome to those who will be serving this year.

The next issue of *UU Sangha* is due to come out in October. The theme is going to explore how Buddhism is influencing rituals that UUs perform. As a UU, have you drawn on Buddhist materials for your marriage ceremony, naming ceremony, or at a funeral? Does your congregation include any Buddhist elements in its regular services, or use the Buddhist texts included in the Singing the Living Tradition hymnal? What suggestions might you have for combining Buddhist and UU rituals? Where might it be appropriate to add Buddhism to the mix, and where might it not be? If you have anything you'd like to share about how you've drawn upon Buddhism when conducting the important rituals that mark our religious lives, we'd like to hear from you. Submissions on this, or any topic relevant to Buddhism and UUism, are welcomed at jwilson403@hotmail.com. Advance queries are always appreciated; the deadline for the Fall issue will be September 30th.

—Jeff Wilson, Editor



Letters to the Editor

Thanks much for the "The Enchanting World of the Lotus Sutra" (Volume V, Number 2) . Truly a helpful approach in understanding.

For various reasons, I've thought that UUs were basically cynics who couldn't or wouldn't find anything meaningful in traditional religions. I'm so glad that the article helped to change this impression. I'm fairly new to Buddhism and have never read the Lotus Sutra. But using the article as a base of approaching it as an invitation to creativity and imagination (very human and inspiring in themselves), I'm more compelled to read it.

Thanks again.

Keith Roper
St. Louis, MO

Letters to the editor are welcome at jwilson403@hotmail.com or Jeff Wilson, 403 Knob Court, Chapel Hill, NC 27517. UU Sangha *reserves the right to edit letters for space and content considerations. For problems with your subscription or to receive* UU Sangha *write to Richard Swanson <vtxc@sover.net> or 823 Main Street Colchester, VT 05446-7192.*

Vairochana Buddha is the central figure of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, which discusses Indra's Net. Like the jeweled net, Vairochana symbolizes ultimate reality.

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> urge your child to rise above the narrow confines of his or her individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.

It is not just an issue of moral principle that is at stake but an ontological one—that there is an interrelated structure to reality. The import of this language is not only to establish the morality of a world perspective but to stimulate the awareness that we cannot really escape the effects of social problems—even if they do not directly encompass our individual life or our "national interests," that withdrawal into an insular individualistic, or nationalistic, identity is a denial of our fundamental interconnectedness and interdependence. Cultural conditioning may obscure the network of our mutuality but the consequences of this interconnection are ultimately inescapable.

One aspect of this ontological principle of interdependence was the new geographic integration wrought by 20th century science and technology, and by advances in communications that expressed itself in mid century concepts such as the "revolution of rising expectations" and the "global village." In this context the emergence of new nations from the legacy of colonialism was a freedom explosion taking place throughout the world.

But King's concept of interdependence was not just an artifact of technological and political change of the 20th century. There is an even more fundamental interdependence at work that has its origins in the structure of reality.

> Every nation has a vast treasury of ideas and labor to which both the living and the dead of all nations have contributed. Whether we realize it or not, each of us lives eternally "in the red." We are everlasting debtors to known and unknown men and women.

Not only are there two dimensions, ethical and ontological, to this principle of interdependence, but also there is an inevitable confounding of these two principles that can lead to an apparent contradiction. If we are inherently interdependent why don't we live cooperatively together? How is it that oppression becomes so ubiquitous and violates our postulated fundamental interrelatedness? How do we account for the evils of racism and economic injustice—short of the conventional fallback of a flawed human nature? For King, injustice is a result of individuals choosing contrary to the will of God. It is the

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will of God that individuals cooperate in the creation of a beloved community—accepting responsibility for each other as children of God. There is here the sense that humans are fundamentally social beings and can only realize their authentic identity through community with others, but ignorance and moral blindness inexorably leads to passive acquiescence, or active participation, in destructive social forces.

In other words, the social relationality that undergirds our existence does not determine the outcome of how we live together; it only shapes the process of our living and the possibilities that we create. The effects of social forces and circumstances combine and condition each other in complex ways, and the complexity of the interactions are open to a variety of outcomes. The interests and actions of those groups who have greatest political power inexorably dominate the nature of the outcome.

For me the resonance of these ideas is due in part to my understanding of Buddhism and the central role occupied there by a similar concept. According to the Dalai Lama, all Buddhist philosophy rests on two basic principles: understanding the interdependent nature of reality, and applying that understanding to do our best to help others. Note that the ethical application is based on an understanding about the nature of reality. The Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh writes:

> As we meditate on the interdependent nature of all things, we can penetrate reality easily, and see the fears, anguish, hopes, and despair of all beings... The interdependent nature of all beings is not a philosophical game removed from spiritual and practical life. In bringing to light the interdependence of all phenomena, the meditator comes to see that the lives of all beings are one, and he or she is overcome with compassion for all. When you feel this love you know that your meditation is bearing fruit. Seeing and loving always go together. Seeing and loving are one.

What Thich Nhat Hanh calls interbeing is more traditionally known in Buddhism as dependent origination. One aspect of this concept is that things and events come into being as a result of the interaction of causes and conditions. Here is a statement illustrating this concept by the Buddhist scholar Venerable Lobsang Gyatso:

> If we go to a restaurant and have a delicious meal, superficially we might think that being able to do this just depends on our own means, having earned enough money to pay for it. However if we investigate exactly what being able to eat a meal in a restaurant depends on we will see that an enormous amount of effort has to be put in by countless number of beings before we can be served our choice of food. If we are eating rice, we can think of all the work of the farmers, ploughing, planting, weeding, irrigating, and finally harvesting their crops. Of course all the labor of themselves and their draught animals would be in vain if the elements did not cooperate and provide the right amount of sunshine and rain. Then the rice has to be cleaned and milled and prepared for the table. Then it is distributed and put on sale in the shops. Another network of people is required. Once the rice has reached the restaurant, the kitchen staff has to work hard on the final stage of the process of making it fit to eat. The kitchen and the dining room themselves are the fruitsof the labor of gangs of people and the cook's utensils, the fuel for cooking and the serving dishes have only come into being in dependence on the inventiveness, ingenuity and effort of another vast number of designers, administrators, sales people, accountants, factory workers, miners and then all their families and teachers and so forth.

The doctrine of dependent origination, or interdependent arising, is one of the most fundamental in all of Buddhism. The Buddha himself is credited with saying that whoever understands this concept understands his teachings. The part of this doctrine that is most similar to what King talked about is known as causal dependence—that no thing or event can be construed as coming into being or remaining in existence by itself. It explains how suffering arises from negative thoughts and actions and these in turn are influenced by many other causes and conditions. As the passage above from Gyatso indicates, nothing exists apart from a complex web of circumstances.

There are a myriad of events that are continually influencing what we think and what actions we take, and our actions become an influence on our future actions as well as the actions of those around us, which in turn have reverberations in our lives as well as in the lives of others we do not affect directly. It is not that everything that affects us individually affects everyone else in the same way, but that individual effects are continually accumulating, interacting, and propagating into influences on others for whom the same process applies. It is an elusive process

because there are many inputs and the dynamics are complex. Our actions are neither independent of our circumstances nor dependent on them—indeed they are continually interacting with them.

If our interdependence exceeds what we typically imagine then it conditions what is possible for each of us. Certainly it is clear that the redress of injustice requires the courageous initiative of individuals like Martin Luther King Jr., Eugene Debs, and Mahatma Ghandi, and countless other less known people. But there is another side to this social dialectic that is often overlooked—how the injury to some affects those not obviously injured. Injustice is a form of separation and contracted possibilities for everyone. Social divisions result in the fear of losing privileges for those that have more, as well as concern for survival and equity for those that have less. And the maintenance of these privileges and divisions consumes important resources that affect the possibilities of social community for each of us.

Just as the realization of our interdependence is an antidote to the tendency toward self-satisfaction, it is also an antidote to the harsh judgment of others and ourselves. If we understand that our success is due to many factors in addition to our own efforts then the same is true of our lack of success. Likewise, realizing our interdependence shows us that when harm is done the actions are influenced by the actions of many others. In this manner compassion is not a moral imperative so much as a natural response to understanding our interconnectedness.

One of the best-known teachings of Buddhism is about the illusory nature of the self, a perspective that is intimately bound up in the concept of interdependence. A Buddhist perspective shows that the word 'self' does not denote an independent object but a complex web of interrelated phenomena. There is certainly a source of historical continuity that "self" refers to, but its actual nature is relational and continually transforming. The boundary between self and other is problematic and a sharp separation between the two is founded on ignorance of the interdependence of reality.

As we come to understand this interdependence we understand that both our happiness and our suffering are related to the well being of others. The maintenance of race and class privilege and the associated disparities in resources and opportunities are a fundamental denial of human interdependence. We can devise ways of feeling separate and independent from the rest of the world, but it is at the expense of making our lives smaller and our hearts more fearful. If we close ourselves off to the suffering of others we are creating additional divisions in our awareness and in our lives. Albert Einstein spoke of this phenomenon as a separation delusion that serves as a kind of prison for us. Selfishness and hatred become unnecessary suffering for ourselves, as well as for others.

While Buddhism is most often associated with a path of liberation from the existential suffering of desire and aversion that cuts across race and class, these emotional afflictions are incorporated into the social systems we create and their associated structures of power and privilege. The accumulation of power and privilege inevitably results for some in the desire to maintain or increase their advantage and the fear of failing, and results for others in the fear of continued disadvantage and the desire for what has been denied to them. While it is a truism that individual attitudes of desire and fear poison our lives it is also true that oppressive social relations poison the social community as surely as the pollutants that we dump into our air and waters poison the natural environment.

If the possibilities for me and for you are mutually interdependent then enlightenment involves engagement with the suffering of others. In Mayahana Buddhism there arose the concept of a commitment to enlightenment for the sake of all beings—an ideal known as the bodhisattva path.

The similarity of the bodhisattva ideal with the life of Jesus was undoubtedly clear to King. Thich Nhat Hanh recalls telling King that many Vietnamese regarded him as a bodhisattva. So it is not surprising that when these two men first met in May 1966, they became friends. They had much in common because both were charismatic leaders of nonviolent social change. In Vietnam Thich Nhat Hanh had founded the School for Social Service to help rebuild villages and resettle people fleeing the war zones. In February 1966 Nhat Hanh founded the Tiep Hien (Order of Interbeing) to help bring Buddhism more directly into the arena of social concerns. When they met in May Thich Nhat Hanh reports that King told him of the parallel he felt between the civil rights movement and Buddhism. Thich Nhat Hanh does not give details about King's comment but it is clear they shared critical ethical and ontological beliefs in spite of their fundamental religious differences.

In May 1966 Thich Nhat Hanh came to North America with the Buddhist Peace Delegation to advance the cause of peace in Vietnam. The Fellowship of Reconciliation sponsored his visit to the USA, and as Dr. King had worked extensively with the FOR on civil rights and was already taking controversial positions against the Vietnam War it was natural that the two of them should meet. During 1966 King struggled mightily with the issue of the

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war because at that time it was still supported by most Americans and most other civil rights organizations. In January 1967 he resolved to make the war one of his major concerns, "before it destroyed his movement and his country." And in that same year Dr. King nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize. In his nomination speech Dr. King wrote

> I do not personally know of anyone more worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize than this gentle Buddhist monk from Vietnam. I know Thich Nhat Hanh and am privileged to call him my friend. He is a holy man, for he is humble and devout. He is a scholar of immense intellectual capacity. His ideas for peace, if applied, would build a monument to ecumenism, to world brotherhood, to humanity.

King had spoken out against war previously because this was but a logical extension of his advocacy of non-violence, but it is instructive to consider King's opposition to the Vietnam War in relation to his understanding of interdependence. The conduct of the war could not be separated from many other spheres of American life, and King saw war, racism and poverty as interrelated manifestations of the same evil system. The denial of Vietnamese self-determination was seen by many as an expression of international racism, and since it was disproportionately fought by young Americans with little money and influence it was also seen as an expression of economic injustice as well as domestic racism. The war created devastation and poverty in Vietnam and drew off resources from efforts to mitigate poverty in the US. Also it was tremendously demoralizing for many in the US to who saw the contradiction between the espoused purposes of the war and the record of achievement for black Americans. The problems of the Vietnam war were inseparable from the problems of racism and economic injustice: they were "inextricably bound together."

It is indicative of the resonance with Buddhism that King reportedly identified in 1966 that he chose the metaphor of awakening as theme and title for one of his last and most often delivered sermons. Awakening is the meaning of the word "Buddha," and the cultivation of mindfulness is central to the practice of Buddhism. In this critical address King talks about times of great social change and how many people fail to respond to the new situations with new outlooks and attitudes because change is fraught with uncertainty and often seems threatening. In 1966 an old order was passing away and a new one was coming into being, in the civil rights struggles at home and in the demise of colonialism abroad.

Thirty-six years later the crises are different but the temptations to evade the challenges of complex problems and widespread human suffering remain. It is not only an issue of the fear of losing privileges but the lack of awareness of how our fates are bound together. To the extent that we see our lives as separate from and discontinuous with others we are likely to see our privileges as justified. But there is another perspective—of membership in an interdependent human community where the strength of each part affects the vitality of the whole, and hence the possibilities for each of its members, where change is continuing and inescapable.

In the aftermath of the September 11 calamity these issues appear highlighted dramatically, as never before. No nation, however powerful, should ever again consider itself invulnerable. No nation exists outside the global system where physical and economic violence take a daily toll of innocent human victims. We should certainly take measures to seek justice and increase our safety in this nation but military action and additional security measures will not ensure our protection. If we want a safe world we must reclaim King's vision of a beloved community. And to do that we must address the sources of hatred and greed in the world. We are bound together in ways we have only begun to understand. But it is important to make more efforts to do so. Now is the time to respond to this mind numbing new reality with new outlooks and attitudes.

Martin Luther King's message has been restated by the Dalai Lama in his call for the development of "universal responsibility —an understanding of the universal dimension of our every act and of the equal right of all others to happiness and not to suffer,... an understanding of the fundamental oneness of the human family." We are called to understand that even small acts can have reverberations in the social architecture that we inhabit, and just as we are individually connected to that larger structure, so countless others are implicated in our individual lives. Martin Luther King's message about awakening to our "inescapable network of mutuality" has never been more relevant and urgent.

Roy is a biostatistician who lives in New Haven, Ct. He is a member of the Unitarian Society of New Haven and practices vipassana.

Bowing

By Patrick Bruckart

My first exposure to Eastern spirituality (Zen) was through the martial arts. A recent conversation on the tradition of bowing led me to a personal reflection on my reverence for this tradition and my martial arts teacher who first introduced it to me.

I started training in the martial arts when I was seventeen years old. I was quite cocky then and a fan of Bruce Lee. In one of his movies, Bruce said to a student: "Never take your eyes off your opponent, even when you bow." Well, when I tried this is at my karate school, my teacher jumped all over me. He said that bowing was a show of respect and that looking my opponent in the eyes was a sign of distrust. I resented this at the time. I have since come to view the practice of bowing as sacred.

My teacher was a father figure to me. He helped get me off drugs, helped me lose weight, and to get my life together. He was also human and had a flaw, for which he received much criticism—he would get angry with his students and sometimes rough with them. I did not mind, because I wanted to fight full contact, but perhaps some other folks were intimidated.

I remember if I used to catch my teacher with a good shot while sparring, or get him into a clinch, which he used to hate, he would use a sweep technique to knock me off my feet. Then he would chase me across the floor trying to stomp on my head—this may sound brutal, but I will come back to this.

Several years later four guys mugged me—one had an axe handle. He hit me with a glancing shot to the back of the head and then tried to hit me in the knee several times. Fortunately, I had learned from my teacher, to jump slightly into the air at precisely the right time when someone tries to knock you off your feet, and I was able to stand my ground and eventually run away.

The moral of the story: If it weren't for my martial arts teacher's "defect" of losing his temper with me in the training hall, I might not have been so lucky. To me this is a lesson about the inherent worth and dignity of every person and about karma.

Unfortunately, my esteemed teacher, Alan Miller, took his own life some years ago. I was away in the military at the time and had stopped training with him. However, I had always kept it in the back of mind that I would return to his school in the future to complete my training.

This is another lesson I have learned through bitter experience: It is a grave error to assume that someone you love will "always be there." Life is impermanent. I wish I had been there to get Alan into one of those clinches that he despised so much and prevent this tragedy.

Patrick Bruckart is a member of the UU Community Church of Glen Allen, Virginia and a practicing Tibetan Buddhist.

Why the Hyphen?

By Terry Sims

I have heard many Unitarian Universalists use hyphenated labels to describe themselves and their spiritual understandings, e.g., UU-humanists; UU-Christians; UU-Jews; UU-Buddhists and perhaps others. What interests me about those descriptions is that they combine what I have understood as independent and purportedly complete religious systems. I also believe those religious systems, historically, have understood themselves to be complete, separate from other systems of religious thought and/or practice, and not needing supplementation from such other systems. Why is it not enough for some UUs to be either UU or Buddhist?

I do not doubt that many UUs have a great and serious interest in Buddhism. I, too find many commonalities between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism, including reliance on personal experience rather than creed as the ultimate authority; avoidance of the issue of theism; compatibility with reason; and focus on the here-and-now, everyday universe we know. But interest and shared characteristics do not fully explain why one would feel it necessary to identify as both a Unitarian Universalist and a Buddhist. That implies to me that UU-Buddhists, if they are thoughtful about identifying themselves as such, deem each religious system to be insufficient in some way, and believe each must supply something not found in the other. If either religion is complete in itself or encompasses the other, the UU-Buddhist label is redundant.

As I thought about why UU-Buddhists might claim both traditions, it seemed possible that some would use the hyphenated label without much thought. They might just be attracted to elements of Unitarian Universalism and to elements of Buddhism, and so claim both names. They might not mean to claim the identification as an important statement of their theology or practice,

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complete or otherwise. The name might merely express two affinities. It also occurred to me that some UU-Buddhists might use the hyphenated identification only as a statement of personal history, claiming an earlier affiliation with, or training in, the UU tradition, which was later modified or replaced by Buddhism.

But at least some UU-Buddhists identify themselves as such out of a desire to syncretize Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism, either on a personal or a wider basis. That possibility suggests larger issues for Unitarian Universalism: Is our prized UU diversity just an easy eclecticism, or is there something more at work in the UU movement? Are we working toward a new syncretic understanding of religion, or are we just unsure of the one we claim now? Is Unitarian Universalism a potent compound, or merely a weak mixture of disparate elements? Is it only a catchall for the disaffected of other religions and belief systems, who nevertheless yearn for something a religion or belief/practice system provides? What does each group have to offer the others, and can such qualities be usefully and authentically borrowed from one and incorporated by others? These were the questions I wanted to begin to investigate through the lens of UU-Buddhists in the Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship. To that end, I began reading publications by Buddhist-identified UUs and corresponding with people involved in both Buddhism and UUism.

In the Unitarian Universalist Association Commission on Appraisal survey, two percent of Unitarian Universalist respondents claimed Buddhism as their primary theological perspective. However, the percentage of UU's for whom Buddhism is *a* rather than *the* major strand in their theological thinking may be much higher, suggesting that Buddhism may be reshaping western religious thought in general and Unitarian Universalism in particular.

My research indicated that while many Unitarian Universalists are becoming Buddhists, Western Buddhists are also becoming Unitarian Universalists. There were two overwhelming reasons given for the attraction to Unitarian Universalism: a supportive community, and common beliefs/theology, especially the interconnection of all life, the universality of religions, and the paradox or ambiguity of life.

Individuals who were UU's first were frequently attracted by Buddhism's superior spiritual "technologies" (interesting that Westerners would use that term) or practice of meditation. Other attractions included Buddhism's "pragmatic view of life"; "deep body of wisdom teachings, art, and culture that cannot be found in UUism"; and the nature of Buddhism as "non-theistic, flexible, and far less opposed to science than many other religions."

If one were to generalize on the basis of the limited research I carried out, it would be fair to say that both UU's and Buddhists are attracted to the other by common worldviews or beliefs. Beyond similar views and beliefs, Buddhists are mainly attracted to Unitarian Universalist churches because of the community the latter provide, whereas UU's are attracted by Buddhism's spiritual practices.

The nearly universal and primary reason given for the importance of identifying as a Buddhist was Buddhism's spiritual practice and discipline. For those people for whom identification as a UU was also important, three themes were evident: the UU orientation toward social justice; its sense of community; and practical adaptation of Buddhist thought and practice to Western culture.

In my limited understanding of the history of Buddhism, Westerners were not the first to introduce social justice and broader community concerns into Buddhism. However, it seems a fair assessment that Western practitioners have emphasized and encouraged the continuing development of those concerns within Buddhism. In that sense, social justice and broader community may be seen in part as Western adaptations to Buddhist practice here.

I cannot answer the broader questions that inspired much of my interest in the research. However, my research did confirm my intuitive assumption that thoughtful UU-Buddhists would not feel a need to identify with both of those traditions if they found either one complete in itself. The UUs who practice Buddhism, both those who have written about Buddhism and the survey respondents, were clear in identifying elements lacking in each tradition that they felt the other tradition supplied. Speaking broadly, these American Buddhists missed a community that their UU congregations could provide, while they found in Buddhism a spiritual practice that was missing from Unitarian Universalism.

My research also confirmed another basic intuitive assumption with which I started the project: that UU-Buddhists were not just looking for another religion to replace the one they practiced first, or to practice the two separately and simultaneously, but instead wanted to syncretize Buddhism and Unitarian Universalism into a more satisfactory "whole" or "complete" religion, at least for themselves personally. As I anticipated at the beginning, that desire to syncretize two religions, neither one of which is seen as entirely satisfactory or complete on its own, raises many of the broader questions and concerns

about Unitarian Universalism for me.

UU-Buddhists have a genuine desire to learn from Buddhism and expand Unitarian Universalism with Buddhist practices and insights. At the same time, UU-Buddhists are generally sensitive to the Western neo-colonial tendency to appropriate foreign religions, as well as to the need to protect the integrity of Dharma transmission. How do we avoid easy eclecticism? How will we be sure we have not thrown away the wheat with the chaff, "harvesting" spiritual practices without all of the tradition that informed them?

I recognize that it is American Buddhists, already in a Westernized Buddhist tradition, that this study showed are turning to Unitarian Universalism as much as UUs are turning to Westernized Buddhism. But both Western culture and Unitarian Universalism might have something genuine to offer Buddhism that is not inherent in the Eastern traditions. Western, rationalist, post-structuralist syncretist that I am, it seems unlikely to me that any one tradition in one part of the world at any one time can contain everything worth knowing, absolute and forever unchanging, for all other cultures and times. The danger lies not in looking elsewhere, anymore than it lies in looking only where one is. Instead, the danger lies in not being able to see clearly wherever one looks, and settling for what is easy, while rejecting what is difficult and demanding.

I am convinced that the UU-Buddhists' attempt to learn, adapt and synthesize is genuine. These UU-Buddhists have "turned East" and come to know Buddhism as insiders, as well as maintained their Unitarian Universalism. For me, the efforts of UU-Buddhists represent at least a worthwhile step in the right direction—right for depth, for growth, for dialogue, and right for the mutual appreciation and benefit of both Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism.

Terry Sims' essay is the outgrowth of a class research project he conducted as part of his ministry training at Pacific School of Religion. He would like to thank the many respondents to his survey, and especially Reverend James Ford.

UU Buddhist Practice Groups

To be listed, a group must have both a Buddhist and a UU connection. If you'd like to have yours included here please contact the editor, Jeff Wilson (see page 2 for email and postal address).

United States

Alabama

Huntsville UU Meditation Group
UU Church of Huntsville
2222 East Governor's Drive, Huntsville, AL 35801
Virginia Burroughs: 256-776-9329

Arizona

Desert Lotus Zen Group
Valley Unitarian Universalist Church
1700 W. Warner Road, Chandler, AZ 85224
http://www.vuu.org/zen/
Laurie Herring: herring@primenet.com

California

Acorn Family Sangha
PO Box 190, Soulsbyville, CA 95372
http://www.acornfamilysangha.org/
Ken Renwick: ken@acornfamilysangha.org

Davis UU Buddhist Meditation and Study Group
Unitarian Church of Davis
27074 Patwin Road, Davis, CA 95626
Dick Warg: 530-662-1669, rjwarg@ucdavis.edu

Monterey Peninsula Mindfulness Practice Group
UU Church of the Monterey Peninsula
490 Aguajito Road, Carmel, CA 93923
Nancy Melton: 831-647-9155
blossoming.nancy@mindspring.com

Orange Coast Sangha
Orange Coast Unitarian Universalist Church
1259 Victoria Street, Costa Mesa, CA 92627
Rayna Hamre: 949-646-4652, arinna2@mailcity.com

San Mateo UU Meditation Group
Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo
300 E. Santa Inez, San Mateo, CA 94401
Lance Miller: 650-340-9698, lanmill@earthlink.com
http://homestead.com/meditationgroup/uubf.html

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UU Meditation Circle
First UU Church of San Diego
4190 Front Street, San Diego, CA 92103
Erene Rallis: 619-295-5622

Colorado

UU Pueblo Church Buddhist Group
Unitarian Universalist Church of Pueblo
110 Calla Avenue, Pueblo, CO 81005
David Cockrell: 719-546-3409

Connecticut

UU Buddhist Wellspring
The Universalist Church of West Hartford
433 Fern Street, West Hartford, CT 06107
Bert Mayo: 860-346-6240

Florida

The Buddhist Fellowship of the UU Church of Fort Lauderdale Florida
UU Church of Fort Lauderdale
3970 NW 21st Avenue, Oakland Park, FL 33309
http://www.uucfl.org/buddhist/index.htm
Mary Teslow: maryteslow@aol.com or
Joe DeAngelis: 954-973-1337

Maryland

Mindfulness Practice Group
UU Church of Annapolis
333 Dubois Road, Annapolis, MD 21401
Rev. Fred Muir: 410-266-8044,
minister@toadmail.toad.net

Massachusetts

Henry Thoreau Zen Sangha/Zen Community of Boston
First Unitarian Society
1326 Washington Street, West Newton, MA 02465
Http://www.zcboston.net
Rev. James Ford Sensei: 617-527-3203, janandjames@attbicom

Martha's Vineyard Vipassana Meditation
Unitarian-Universalist Church
238 Main Street, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568
Jo Rice: 508-693-2827, jscotrice@capecod.net

Worcester Zen Group
First Unitarian Church of Worcester
90 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01608
Melissa Blacker: 508-757-5302
http://www.worcesterzen.org

Mississippi

UU Jackson Sangha
Unitarian Universalist Church of Jackson, MS
4866 North State Street, Jackson, MS 39206
Church Office: 601-982-5919
Rob Andrews: rob@jam.rr.com
http://www.uujackson.org/sangha

New Hampshire

Second Congregational Society Buddhist Study Group
Second Congregational Society UU Church
274 Pleasant Street, Concord, NH 03301
http://www.buddhistgroup.homestead.com
Gene Taylor: 877-682-4535, buddhism@ureach.com

New York

Buddhist Explorers Group
The Community Church of New York (UU)
40 East 35 Street, New York, NY 10016
Gary Jacinto: 212-267-2694

Open Spirit Sangha
Community Unitarian Church of White Plains
468 Rosedale Avenue, White Plains, NY 10605
Bice Wilson: 914-946-1660, bicew@aol.com

North Carolina

Community of Mindful Living-UUFR
UU Fellowship of Raleigh
3313 Wade Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27607
Joyce Gad: 919-233-3910, gadabout2@yahoo.com

Eno River Buddhist Community
Eno River UU Fellowship
4907 Garrett Road, Durham, NC 27707
Steve Seiberling: 919-968-4445, sseiber@email.unc.edu

Greensboro Meditation Group
Unitarian-Universalist Church of Greensboro
5603 Hilltop Road, Jamestown, NC 27282
Bill Patterson: 336-218-0810, wfp@triad.rr.com

Ohio

First Church Sangha
First Unitarian Church
536 Linton Street, Cincinnati, OH 45219
David Mohler: 812-537-4741, dmohler@seidata.com

Meditation Group
UU Church of Kent
228 Gougler Avenue, Kent, OH 44240
Liz Erickson: 330-673-2152

Pennsylvania

Central Pennsylvania Buddhist Fellowship
c/o Dan Cozort, Dept of Religion
P.O. Box 1773, Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA 17013
Dan Cozort: 717-245-1385

Mindfulness Meditation Group
Unitarian Church of Harrisburg
1280 Clover Lane, Harrisburg, PA 17113
George Hellmann: 717-236-6749,
jghellmann@mindspring.com

Zazen & a Mindful Meal
UU Church of Lancaster
538 W. Chestnut Street, Lancaster, PA 17603
Phil & Paula Gable: 717-295-3041, pgable@redrose.net

Tennessee

Holston Valley Sangha
Holston Valley UU Church
136 Bob Jobe Road, Gray, TN 37615
Marina Munjal: 423-239-4561, figgrindan@aol.com

Texas

Northwoods Sangha
Northwoods UU Church
1370 North Millbend Drive, The Woodlands, TX 77380
http://www.optimlator.com/hzc/northwoods.htm
Dwight Hatfield: 281-298-8419, hatfid@slash.net

Vermont

Black River Sangha
Unitarian-Universalist Meetinghouse
21 Fairground Road, Springfield, VT 05156
Richard Ryoha Dunworth M.R.O.: 802-228-2476,
dunworth@ludl.tds.net

Zen Meditation Group
C/o The Rev. Robert Senghas
54 Rivermount Terrace, Burlington, VT 05401
Rev. Robert Senghas: 802-658-6466, rsenghas@worldnet.att.net

Virginia

The Buddhist Fellowship
UU Church of Arlington
4444 Arlington Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22204
Michael I. Roehm: 202-332-7236, mroehm@earthlink.net

The UCN Buddhist Connection
Unitarian Church of Norfolk (UU)
739 Yarmouth Street, Norfolk, VA 23510
Eileen Francis: 757-497-4047, eafrancis@home.com

UU Reston Church Buddhist Group
Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston
1625 Wiehle Avenue, Reston, VA 20190
Mel Harkrader-Pine (703) 707-9332, melhpine@aol.com

Vipassana Meditation Group
Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church
1909 Windmill Lane, Alexandria, VA 22307
Forrest Tobey: 703-660-0028

Washington

Evergreen Meditation Group
Evergreen UU Fellowship
1607 4th Street, Marysville, WA 98270
Barbara Crowley: 360-691-6300, infodel@mindspring.com

Michael Servetus UU Buddhist Fellowship
Michael Servetus UU Fellowship
4505 E 18th Street, Vancouver, WA 98661
Marvin Benson: 360-695-1858, bensonjmlaw@juno.com

Wisconsin

Buddhist Unitarian Universalist Group
First Unitarian Church
1342 N. Aster Street, Milwaukee WI 53202
Andy Agacki: 414-771-2490, agacki@execpc.com

Madison Insight Meditation Group
First Unitarian Society
900 University Bay Drive, Madison, WI 53202
http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/2140

Canada

British Columbia

Karuna Meditation Society
North Shore Unitarian Church of Vancouver
2050 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C., V7S 1H3
Michelle Mills: 604-874-4093

Ontario

Buddhist Practice Group
First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto
175 St. Clair Avenue West
Toronto, Ontario M4V 1P7
Timothy Law: 416-485-8976 or
Melanie Noviss: 416-769-3046

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c/o First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany
405 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12206-2604

Return Service Requested

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Summer 2002

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