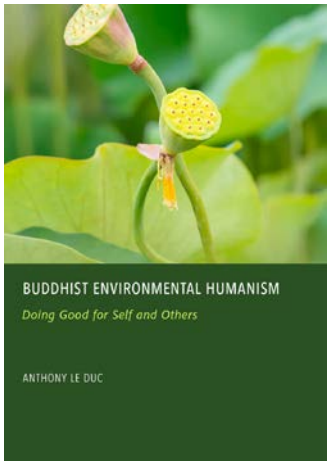
BOOK REVIEW



Anthony Le Duc.
Buddhist Environmental Humanism: Doing Good for Self and Others.
UK, Ethics Press, 2025., 259 pp.
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While globally there is an increasingly awareness our environmental crisis, the great challenge is how to address it in a comprehensive and inclusive manner. To meet this challenge requires a multidisciplinary approach which also involves the contributions of religious thought. Anthony Le Duc's *Buddhist Environmental Humanism: Doing Good for Self and Others*, is an excellent example of how religion, particularly early Buddhism, offers a concrete framework for responding to the ecological crisis. The author is a Catholic priest who has studied and worked extensively in cross-cultural and interreligious contexts. The book exemplifies interdisciplinary and cross-cultural insight and expertise. It is a must-read for anyone interested in religious approaches to environmentalism.

The main argument of the book is that the ecological crisis is, at its core, a "human spiritual crisis." The solution to this external problem requires addressing the internal problem, "the transformation of the human spirit from its inner core" (p. 85). Buddhism offers both a humanistic

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analysis and a concrete path for overcoming this crisis. Across twelve chapters, Le Duc systematically discusses the problem and proposes a framework for transforming the relationship between humans and the environment so that both may flourish. He calls this framework "Buddhist environmental humanism," which has two dimensions: relational and developmental.

According to the Buddhist view, the root cause of human suffering lies in the three poisons within each person: greed, hatred, and delusion. Le Duc argues that these three poisons cause not only human suffering but also the suffering of the natural world. In Chapter 4, uses this framework to analyze the environmental impact, drawing on examples from across the globe.

After diagnosing the problem, he proposes a solution for transforming the damaged relationship between humans and nature. Buddhist environmental humanism is characterized by three relationship paradigms: (1) solidarity in suffering, (2) responsibility in interdependence, and (3) mutual service on the journey toward liberation. These are explained in depth in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. The first relationship highlights that all unenlightened beings—humans and other sentient beings alike—share the experience of suffering because they all belong to a continuum of existence within the six realms of rebirth. Recognizing this shared condition can foster solidarity and care for nature.

The second relationship is grounded in the Buddhist teaching of Dependent Origination, which teaches that all things arise through causal relationships. Applied to ecological concerns, this implies that human actions inevitably affect the environment, calling for responsibility and accountability.

The third relationship draws on the teachings of non-self (anatta) and liberation from the cycle of rebirth (samsara) as the ultimate goal. These teachings provide the basis for overcoming ego-centeredness and promoting relationship-building and mutual service. Collectively, these three relationships form the relational dimension of Buddhist environmental humanism, characterizing a healthy and harmonious

relationship between humans and nature.

In Chapters 8 to 11, Le Duc turns to the developmental dimension of the framework. He argues that realigning human–environment relationships require praxis and concrete practices. Buddhism provides such practices through the Noble Eightfold Path, a structured approach to self-cultivation aimed at liberation from suffering. Le Duc suggests that achieving the Buddhist goal of liberation naturally entails achieving environmental humanism. A transformed Buddhist practitioner embodies virtues that nourish and sustain harmony with nature, including universal kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), gentleness (maddava), moderation (mattannuta), contentment (santutthi), gratitude (katannuta), and generosity (dana). These virtues support the three relational paradigms discussed earlier. Le Duc concludes that Buddhist environmental humanism can contribute to the "advancement of an ecological civilization" (p. 216), and he offers practical recommendations for promoting such a civilization.

The book demonstrates not only comprehensive knowledge of the subject but also a deep and nuanced understanding of Buddhism. Readers gain a systematic grasp of major debates and intellectual developments on the topic, from past to present and from West to East. Le Duc skillfully situates his argument within complex philosophical discussions, showing both the uniqueness of his approach and its connection to broader traditions of thought. He also clearly and accessibly explains sophisticated Buddhist doctrines, making them comprehensible even to those without prior knowledge of Buddhism. The book is thoughtfully structured and written in clear, accessible academic English suitable for both academic and non-academic audiences. It will be highly beneficial for scholars, practitioners, religious communities, and anyone concerned with environmental issues.

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