

## Humanistic Buddhism: The 3.5th Yana?

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### Prelude:

In this paper I discuss the humanistic Buddhist movement in the Chinese speaking Buddhist world with special attention to the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist order in Taiwan and the Chinese Buddhist Association in mainland China. Although some work has been done on this topic,<sup>1</sup> these studies have the following shortcomings: First, they lack an in depth analysis of the theoretical basis and historical background of the rise of humanistic Buddhism. In particular, they ignore the impact of 20th century Chinese political revolutions and intellectual progressive thought on Buddhism. Second, in relation to the aforementioned negligence, the same studies tend to focus on the humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan and completely overlook the development of humanistic Buddhist theory and practice in mainland China since 1949. Third, such studies rely heavily on English literature mainly produced by Chinese Buddhist groups and have not made use of recent scholarship in Chinese language on humanistic Buddhism. My paper intends to address these three issues by highlighting political impact shaping the outlook of humanistic Buddhism, comparing the mainland Chinese version of humanistic Buddhism with the case of Taiwan, and making full use of recent scholarship in both Taiwan and mainland China. In conclusion, I compare Chinese humanistic Buddhism to Engaged Buddhism in South East Asian and the West and analyze some similarities and differences between the two.

### Introduction:

For reform minded 20th century Chinese Buddhists, Chinese Buddhism in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties was stagnant, to say the least. According to the reformers, the very existence of their religion was called into question. Problems inflicting Buddhism included disconnections with the contemporary world, increased superstitious elements in Buddhist rituals, little if any training for monks and nuns, and corruption of the Buddhist leadership. As such, the traditional form of Chinese Buddhism had lost following of the general populace and incurred hostility from the social elite and the government. For its own survival, Buddhism had to change.

Master Taixu (1890-1947) was one of the best known advocates of a Buddhism reformation in China. Taixu's idea was so revolutionary that he has been compared to the Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism, a facilitator of innovation in the history of Chinese Buddhism. Indeed, Taixu had laid the ground for new developments in the 20th century and 21<sup>st</sup> century Chinese Buddhism. A disciple of Taixu, Master Yin Shun (1906-2005) continued the effort of his teacher by making the conceptions and theories of humanistic Buddhism more comprehensive and systematic.

For Tai Xu and Yin Shun<sup>2</sup>, Chinese Buddhism of his time had turned into a religion for the dead since the aspiration to the other worlds was the only concern for the

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<sup>1</sup> For instance see Stuart Chandler. *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization*. University of Hawaii Press, 2004; and Don Alvin Pittman. *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*. University of Hawaii Press, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> There have been discussions of nuanced differences between the thought of Taixu and Yin Shun, but it is beyond the scope of this paper. See Chen Xinqiao. "Remarks on Humanistic Buddhism." *Fayin*, 1997(9/10).

practitioners. According to them, however, this should not be the Buddhism that the Buddha taught. In *Ekottaragama-Sutra*, for instance, it is stated that the Buddha did not and would not achieve his Buddhahood in another world because his mission must be carried out in the human world. In classic Buddhist tradition, the Buddha is not seen as a god or an angel. He was a human with an enlightened consciousness. The Buddha achieved a state of mind that was bright, clear, and joyful in a world full of darkness, evil and suffering. For Taixu and Yin Shun, the Buddha was and still is "the Buddha of the world". He is a rare teacher who gives insights to freedom and liberation in the real world, rather than promises of Heaven or indulgence in meditative solitude. The early Buddhist teachings in Agama - the basic theories of the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, five aggregates, karmic retribution, etc. - are all designed to relieve human sufferings here and now. Hence Yin Shun maintained that "true Buddhism cannot but be humanistic Buddhism."<sup>3</sup>

According to the two scholars, even the apparent other-worldly Buddhist concept of reincarnation tilts unmistakably towards the human world. Buddhism teaches that all sentient beings fall under six categories: gods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, asuras, and residents in hell. Although common practitioners may aspire to be reborn in paradisiacal realms where gods live, and dread about the prospect of hell, it is the human world that Buddhism privileges. The human life is unique and advantageous among sentient beings because unlike the gods who are distracted by heavenly bliss and tend to forget to seek liberation, unlike animals who are ignorant, and unlike hungry ghosts and creatures in hell whose extreme pains prevent them from thinking anything else, humans are in the best position to pursue enlightenment. Conscious of their own inadequacies, equipped with intelligence and will power, and most importantly, living in the same realm with the great teacher the Buddha himself, humans are the best candidates to be guided by the Dharma.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, when we examine the Five Precepts of Buddhism: no killing, no stealing, no adultery, no lying, no drinking, they are human ethical codes. Mahayana Buddhism, the Greater Vehicle, promises that all sentient beings can become Buddhas, but to become a Buddha, one must first be a good person. What is more, unlike secular ethical systems, Buddhism's ethical concerns do not stop at asking a man to be a good man. The distinct feature of Mahayana teachings is its altruism and compassion known as the Bodhisattva way, a unity of self-liberation and liberation for all. The ultimate goal of Mahayana Buddhism is removal of pain and suffering of all living beings. Finally, secular and other religious ethics are without exception based on a concept of "self". While the Mahayana Bodhisattva compassion stems from the realization that self is illusory. Yin Shun said: The Buddhist morality looks like Christian agape, but in reality, it is very different. This is because the Buddhist compassion is based on a clear-eyed insight into human life and cosmic reality, devoid of blind dogmas of the final judgment and sentimental attachments to an immortal soul. Buddhist ethics is this worldly oriented through and through and in this surpasses other ethical thought.<sup>5</sup>

Both Taixu's and Yin Shun's political ideas are radical by the standards of their day. Both personally experienced the 1911 revolution that overthrew the last Chinese feudal dynasty and led to the founding of the Republic of China. They welcomed the revolution enthusiastically and their Buddhism was heavily influenced by it. Interestingly, political monks played important roles in both 19th century Japanese revolution that made

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<sup>3</sup> *Collected Works of Taixu*. Beijing, shehui kexue chubanshe, 1995. 227. *Collected Works of Yin Shun*. Beijing, shehui kexue chubanshe, 1995. 92.

<sup>4</sup> Taixu, 299; Yin Shun, 137.

<sup>5</sup> Yin Shun, 199.

the Meiji Restoration possible and early 20th century Chinese revolution. In his youth Taixu became acquainted with "revolutionary monks" who directly involved in uprisings against the old dynasty. These radical monks exposed him to the trends of reformist thought that were popular at the time. Through them he came to read Chinese revolutionaries such as Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and translations of Tolstoy, Bakun, and Marx. In a later time, Tai Xu would call for a revolution within the Buddhist community modeled on the political one, borrowing the latter's ideology of freedom and equality.<sup>6</sup> Yin Shun fully heartedly agreed with his teacher on social equity and justice, and he went a step further. Yin Shun described with great interest and sympathy the Buddhist mythological kingdom of Uttarakuru in his popular book *Introduction to Buddhism*, in which he intentionally altered the classic sutras to give the Buddhist myth a socialist tint, including the depiction of fair economical distributions, public services for all citizens and free encounters between boys and girls.<sup>7</sup> Such thought has stayed alive in Chinese Buddhist temples and lay communities, despite political upheavals discussed below.

### **The Case of Taiwan, Focusing on Fo Guang Shan**

When it comes to putting the humanistic Buddhist principles into practice, Taiwan's Buddhist communities have made great progress. In general, the rapid and free growth of Taiwanese Buddhism began during Taiwan's economic take-off in 1970's and was accelerated after July 14, 1987 when the Taiwan authorities lifted the martial law that had been enforced since 1949. But the seeds of such developments were planted in earlier years. When the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) lost power in mainland China and retreated to Taiwan, many Buddhists in the humanistic Buddhism cohort (mainly Master Taixu's disciples and followers, including Yin Shun) ended up in this island too. However, this was a difficult time for the immigrant Buddhists because Taiwan had been under Japanese occupation from 1895 to 1945, and been in long-time isolation from mainland China. The more conservative local Buddhists had trouble appreciating and accepting the mainland's humanistic Buddhist innovations. Moreover, the progressive outlook of humanistic Buddhism was deeply suspicious in the eyes of the Nationalist authorities who just lost China to the Communists. On May 20, 1949, the Nationalist government announced martial law in Taiwan prohibiting the existence of unauthorized political parties, religious groups, and civil organizations. In June 1949, secret police arrested a number of mainland monks including Master Hsing Yun on the ground that they might have been communist spies. They were released shortly after at the intervention of the wife of General Sun Li-jen, a devout lay Buddhist. Yet such detentions were no small matter because there was a similar case in which the arrested monk was convicted and executed.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Master Yin Shun was also censored by the propagandic branch of the Taiwanese authorities for his left leaning political views. Adding to harsh political control, Buddhism in Taiwan was also financially restrained by the backward economy.

Despite these unfavorable factors, Taiwan's humanistic Buddhists were unfailingly making effort to preserve their cause. Among them, Master Yin Shun published profusely on Buddhist history and philosophy, inspiring Buddhist practitioners and non-Buddhist scholars alike. A temple scholar and no activist, Yin Shun has been criticized by some as a giant in word and a dwarf in action, nevertheless, there is no doubt that he provided a solid intellectual foundation for humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan. In his

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<sup>6</sup> Taixu, 277.

<sup>7</sup> Yin Shun. *An Introduction to Buddhism*. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Jiang Canteng. *Taiwanese Humanistic Buddhism*. Taipei: Nantian shuju, 1999.

own words, Yin Shun was sowing on ice because the political environment at this time made people unresponsive to his messages. But the seeds he planted would grow and come to fruition eventually. Scholars and practitioners from both Taiwan and the Mainland praise Master Yin Shun's contributions. Dr. Guo Peng comments that Yin Shun should be honored in the hall of fame in Buddhism, together with all the prior Indian and Chinese masters. A leading Taiwanese publisher, Mr. Gao Benzhaohao, compares the impact of Yin Shun's work to Chinese Buddhism with the Enlightenment era thinkers' impact on Europe.<sup>9</sup>

When Master Yin Shun was committed to the construction of humanistic Buddhist theory, the then 23-year-old Master Hsing Yun started the practice of humanistic Buddhism in 1951 in southern Taiwan. Hsing Yun's undertakings began with natural disaster relief, orphanage, Dharma lessons in prisons, and spiritual guidance and economic help in remote villages. For such social commitments, Master Hsing Yun has made his Fo Guang Shan order both rich and poor. While donations from laity, the main source of income for Fo Guang Shan have been constantly growing, the order's balance sheet has almost always been in the red due to generous spending in social work. Interestingly, such financial arrangements also reduce the possibility of corruption because no money is kept in the Fo Guang Shan's bank account. All these activities, commonsensical in hindsight, were unprecedented and quite controversial in the religious conservative and politically repressive Taiwan. But Master Hsing Yun was able to withhold political pressures and continued his work.

From Taiwan's rapid economic growth in the 1970's, both the general society and Buddhist groups benefited. At this time, Hsing Yun expanded the scope of social services to build hospitals clinics, publishing house, and Buddhist universities.<sup>10</sup> With the end of martial law in late 1980's, Buddhism in Taiwan went into a period of thriving.

Ironically, the internationalization of Taiwan Buddhism happened at the time when Taiwan was expelled from the United Nations in 1971 and the Taiwanese government fell in a state of diplomatic isolation. Losing the UN seat to the mainland Chinese government, Taiwan as a result also lost recognition from the majority of the international society. Because of the pulling out of foreign citizens and international organizations including Christian missionaries from Taiwan, Fo Guang Shan was not only able to claim the religious market left behind by Protestant and Catholic groups, but also managed to reach out to an international audience after securing the home base. With the expansion of Buddhist orders and their communication with the world outside Taiwan comes the expansion of ranges of spiritual practice and activities. Modern technology is widely used, Internet and satellite TV are becoming the favorite way to get their messages out to the worldwide audience. Fo Guang Shan has organized numerous international Buddhist conferences and made exchanges with international Buddhist higher education institutions. Such frequent exchanges cannot but bring to Fo Guang Shan new spiritual perspectives. It was also during this time that Fo Guang Shan began to build centers in North America and Europe and began to take interests in global issues such as environmental and ecological protection as well as social justice in the international arena.

Traditionally, Buddhist charitable works have been based on a couple of reasons. Giving has been encouraged on the Buddhist canonical authorities and various Buddhist philosophical grounds. For instance, the Buddhist teaching about codependent origination ensures us that all human beings are interrelated, and everyone's wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of the entire humanity and vice versa. Also, all sentient beings have been our

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<sup>9</sup> Miao Fangming. "A Study of Taiwan's Humanistic Buddhism." *Zongjiaoxueyanjiu*, 2009(3).

<sup>10</sup> For a complete list of Fo Guang Shan's social work, see Yong Yun, *Fo Guang Shan Annals*, Gaoxiong Xian : Fo Guang Shan Wen Jiao Ji Jin Hui Chu Ban, 2007.

fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers in eons of endless reincarnation. Hence helping strangers is in fact helping our family. Moreover, karmic laws dictate that what goes around comes around. Dana is always a reward by itself: it repays givers with good reputation and respect from others on the one hand, and empowers the giver to cultivate her generosity and discover her inner wisdom on the other. Finally, for Mahayana Buddhism, giving is to show the unpolluted Buddha nature that is equally shared by all of us because everyone can give regardless of her social status and finances - dana does not have to be monetary, it can be in the form of good will, kindness, and care.

These time-honored justifications for social commitments are noble and beautiful, however, are they sufficient in today's world? Buddhist practitioners and scholars such as Dr. Jiang Canteng have urged Fo Guang Shan and other Buddhist orders to go beyond the traditional scope and to think about the socio-economical sufferings of the masses under an exploitative and unsustainable capitalism. We will return to this discussion in the last part of my paper.

### **The Case of Mainland China: Focusing on Chinese Buddhist Association**

One of the issues in the study of humanistic Buddhism that has received little scholarly attention is humanistic Buddhism in mainland China. In this section of my paper, I shall discuss it with special attention to the Chinese Buddhist Association and its longtime leader Zhao Puchu.

According to its own mission statement, the goal of the Chinese Buddhist Association is for Buddhism in China to adapt to "socialism with Chinese characteristics." The latter is the official label the Chinese government put on themselves that describe a political system that combines a Maoist ideology and a partially free market economy. But this was not the case when the Association was first founded in 1953. When they seized power in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) decided to tolerate religions including Buddhism because of their belief that religion could not be forcefully eliminated by political means. Hence the Chinese Buddhist Association was founded to accommodate the needs of Buddhist practitioners. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the tolerant policy was reversed by the extreme wing of the Party. Buddhist temples were closed, sometimes physically torn down, and monks and nuns were forced to defrock. Things have changed for the better since 1980's when the Cultural Revolution officially ended. In fact, Chinese government is actively promoting Buddhism for the purpose of boosting China's "soft power," and Buddhism is seen by the government as a cultural resource and part of the positive China image. Ironically, a large part of the government support is to provide generous amount of money for Buddhists to rebuild temples that were dismantled in the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, there remain governmental restrictions on the Buddhist proselytization and activities. For instance, destroyed Buddhist temples can be rebuilt on their original locations but no new ones are allowed to build. Monks and nuns are not permitted to promote Buddhism in public outside existing Buddhist establishments, etc. Because such restrictions are universally imposed on all religious institutions in this country, criticisms about curtailed religious freedom have been a topic in and outside China. One of the criticisms has been directed at the Chinese Buddhist Association for its alleged accomplice role. According to the critics, the Chinese Buddhist Association has not represented the best interests of Buddhists in China but rather has capitulated to the restrictive rules by the government.

Partly to answer such critiques, the Chinese Buddhist Association and its scholars have attempted to provide a justification of its cooperation with the government by emphasizing the meeting points between socialism and the humanistic Buddhist ideas. Zhao Puchu, the late chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association, had been a vocal

advocate of humanistic Buddhism, as student of Master Taixu, and a good friend of Master Hsing Yun. According to Zhao, traditional forms of Buddhism were elitist in orientation; they were obsessed with abstruse metaphysical speculations and wishful thinking about the afterlife, and thus served only the class interests of the rich and powerful who had no sense of the real life of the majority of people. It is the mission of the Buddhists in the new socialist China to reclaim Buddhism and make it serve the working class. For this purpose, Zhao was not afraid of making changes in traditional beliefs and practice. He pointed out that when Buddhism was first introduced to China, it adapted to Chinese culture, absorbing the country's religious and cultural nutrition. This has been one of the greatest successes in Buddhist history. We inherit what prior generations have done, and what we are doing will be heritage for the future generations. Buddhism emerged from an Indian society that mandated the caste system, while today equality and fraternity are the consensus of the majority of people and foundational values of the current Chinese political system. To keep Buddhism viable and relevant in contemporary China, Zhao reappropriated the Buddhist concept of pure land. Instead of understanding the pure land in a transcendent sense, Zhao interpreted it as a relentless human pursuit of liberation from suffering. Hence it can be made compatible with China's socialist polity. Furthermore, the Chinese Chan motto "a day without work, a day without food" was used by Zhao to justify all people's right and obligation to work. Zhao pointed out that in Indian Buddhism, monks' and nuns' non-productive life style was considered to be spiritual desirable. But in China, monks and nuns living exclusively on laity's alms would be considered lazy and corrupt, and it is a Chinese Chan tradition that all religious people have to engage in agricultural work. According to Zhao, this characteristic of Chinese Buddhist makes it naturally amicable to socialist ideals. For him, historical Buddhist communities regulated by the Chinese version of precepts were nothing short of semi-socialist utopias. In conclusion, Zhao exalted today's Chinese Buddhists find the common denominator between socialism and Buddhism and work with the current government for the same goal: building a happy and equitable pure land on earth.<sup>11</sup>

It has to be point out that Zhao's position was not merely motivated by political expediency but stemmed from his personal experiences and beliefs. Zhao became a socialist in his early years. In as early as the 1930's, a young Zhao was a true admirer of Master Taixu and was closely involved in the humanistic Buddhism circles. Facing the Japanese military aggression during the WWII and the resulting sufferings of Chinese people, Zhao believed that repelling the invaders and saving the state were Buddhist deeds. He helped organizing medical support groups to offer treatment to wounded Chinese soldiers as well as civilian refugees and help organize and send young people directly to the frontline. A longtime friend of the CCP, Zhao was entrusted with leading the Chinese Buddhist Association since its inauguration. During hard times of the Cultural Revolution, Zhao did not lose heart and he believed the sheer size of Chinese Buddhist population would be a deterring factor that prevented Buddhism from being wiped out.<sup>12</sup>

After the Cultural Revolution, Zhao single handedly implemented humanistic Buddhism as the guidelines of the Chinese Buddhist Association. Like other humanistic Buddhists, Zhao uses the Bodhisattva ideal as a way to justify their social concerns. That is, he emphasizes the importance of collective liberation rather than personal practice. The value and dignity of each individual Buddhist life, no matter how insignificant it may look in the secular sense, lies in the way she contributes to build a world without military

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<sup>11</sup> Zhao Puchu. *Questions and Answers on Buddhism*. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1993. 22pp.

<sup>12</sup> Zhu Hong. "Zhao Puchu's Buddhist Life." *Xueshujie*, 2003(98/1).

aggressions, political persecution, economic injustice, and environmental damages. We should not abandon our duties for the presence and look for an unforeseeable afterlife. Quoting Yin Shun, Zhao maintains that “seeking enlightenment without the intention to serve the society is tragedy for Buddhists.”<sup>13</sup> Because of Zhao’s strong advocacy, humanistic Buddhism has gone mainstream, even become orthodoxy on the mainland Buddhist scene. Much like Hsing Yun, besides affirming and elaborating the principles of humanistic Buddhism, Zhao was a leader and person of action. Although much smaller on scale, Zhao’s endeavors during his tenure with the Chinese Buddhist Association were very similar to that of Fo Guang Shan and focused on charitable and scholarly, cultural activities rather than more “religious” practices. Under the leadership of the Chinese Buddhist Association, charitable works have been done for the underprivileged groups such as physically challenged people and children from impoverished families. One of representative social work that the Chinese Buddhist Association takes pride in and likes to showcase to the public is the orphanage “Hongde Jiayuan” in Hebei province that has lasted for more than two decades.<sup>14</sup> One thing deserves mentioning is that without the almost total freedom Taiwanese Buddhism enjoys after the end of the martial law, mainland Buddhists have to skillfully navigate through legal obstacles when pursuing their goals in the mainland. The future of the mainland Buddhist social work is still to be observed.

### **Conclusion: Whence Humanistic Buddhism?**

At this point, a brief comparison of Chinese humanistic Buddhism and the Western Engaged Buddhism seems in order given their similarities. It is interesting to note different attitudes of members of two groups regarding this issue. It appears that Western Engaged Buddhists are willing to extend comradery to humanistic Buddhist groups, an example is the inclusion of a Fo Guang Shan monk on the advisory committee of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. On the other hand, the humanistic Buddhists I have talked to are to some degree reluctant to make the two names interchangeable. However, such hesitation appears to stem from a sectarian pride that does not allow their own group to lose its uniqueness, both in practice and in name. In any event, I believe the parallels between humanistic Buddhism and Engaged Buddhism are very suggestive and unmistakable.

Though a loosely connected Buddhist movement without a central geographical location or institutionalized headquarters, Engaged Buddhists share some core beliefs. These include the conviction that in contemporary world delusion has become institutionalized because of colonialist, imperialist, and capitalist aggressions against the Third World and the environment. The traditional concept of *trivisa* is tenable only if we understand it to be massive, collective, and highly organized social actions of certain countries and trans-national corporations. That is, human suffering must be seen in light of gigantic, carefully arranged imperial dominance, genocide, systematic political violence, institutionalized economic exploitation, unjust allocation of social privileges, and criminal abuse and waste of natural resources that have been happening in our world. Under such conditions, it is impossible to seek individual spiritual salvation that is divorced from political life. Because individuals cannot live outside society, and the enlightenment of a single person, even if it is achievable, does not help the elimination of collective suffering. Societal, collective delusion cannot and should be addressed by a simplistic answer of personal purification of mind and heart. In societies that deprive basic political freedoms and economic sustenance, spiritual freedom is out of reach. Such

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<sup>13</sup> Zhao, 193.

<sup>14</sup> Caituan faren foguangsha wenjiao jijinhui. *Chan and Humanistic Buddhism*. Kaohsiung, 2007, 51pp.

reality calls today's Buddhists to a resistance movement that is bonded by liberal democratic values and resorts to all fighting means available in the civic society.<sup>15</sup>

A related insight of Engaged Buddhism is the disenchantment of traditional Buddhist cosmology in post European Enlightenment times. Such mythological structures historically helped Buddhists understand their place in the world and make sense of their lives. Today, however, the otherworldly Buddhist concepts such as six realms have lost credibility and are not able to produce a positive life affirming attitude. When a concept of karma understood as rewards and punishments in the afterlife sound untenable, a new theory that gives hope for a just social and economic order in this life is in demand. Thus the quest for a just and equitable world is a religious quest and helps the achievement of collective liberation.<sup>16</sup>

Humanistic Buddhism is in clear agreement with Engaged Buddhism regarding their this-worldly concerns. From early on, the social ills of the capitalist society had been the targets of Master Hsing Yun's repeated criticism. He also used canonical stories about the Buddha's tending to sick and blind monks to emphasize that Buddhism should always side with people in need.<sup>17</sup> Master Hsing Yun expresses solidarity with the poor based on the indiscriminate saving power of the Dharma. Some of the younger monks at Fo Guang Shan have gone further than their teacher in aggressively addressing contemporary social and environmental issues. Ven. Chuan Zhao for one has been a brave voice in protesting against corporate irresponsibility and government inaction regarding environmental issues in Taiwan.<sup>18</sup> The rise of large Buddhist groups in Taiwan has fundamentally changed the outlook of traditional Buddhist monastic life. It has made it possible for large Buddhist orders to effectively intervene the political and social dynamics within a given society. The same large Buddhist orders have self-consciously taken after the established models of other religions, such as the Catholic social involvement. The Buddhist social engagement in mainland China is more delicate. In theory, humanistic Buddhism is embraced by the most Buddhists and prominent monks such as Zheng Guo, Ming Zhen, and Jing Hui are all strong advocates. However, it is difficult for Chinese Buddhist to "outdo" the ruling Chinese Communist Party in a bid for social justice since the latter's position, at least in theory, always goes further than what the Buddhists propose. Moreover, as discussed above, some governmental restrictions on religious activities are still in place that hinder the social engagement of mainland Buddhists. As a result, they are unable to do as much as their Taiwanese counterparts. Some scholars have named the Engaged Buddhism a distinct new form of Buddhism and the fourth yana.<sup>19</sup> While humanistic Buddhism is in wide agreement with the concepts and practices of Engaged Buddhism, it is part of the Chinese Buddhist tradition in that it has been response to 20th century Chinese social and political changes. A forward looking Buddhism and yet closed tied to its traditional home, it might be appropriate to call humanistic Buddhism the 3.5th yana.

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<sup>15</sup> There are many discussions on this topic. See for instance, Sallie King, "Buddhist Social Activism," in Christopher Queen, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*. State University of New York Press, 1996. 407pp. Also see Kenneth Kraft, "New Voices in Engaged Buddhism Studies," in Christopher Queen, *Engaged Buddhism in the West*. Wisdom Publications, 2000, 490pp.

<sup>16</sup> King, "Transformative Non-Violence," Kraft, "Prospects of a Socially Engaged Buddhism," in Queen 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Yin Shun, 77.

<sup>18</sup> Dong Ping. "Recent Studies on Humanistic Buddhism." <http://hk.plm.org.cn/gnews/2009420/2009420121552.html>, accessed on 10/11/2011.

<sup>19</sup> Winston L. King "Engaged Buddhism, Past, Present, Future." *Eastern Buddhist*, (27) 2, 1994.