

Arnie Kotler

EDITING SERVICES

CLIPPINGS

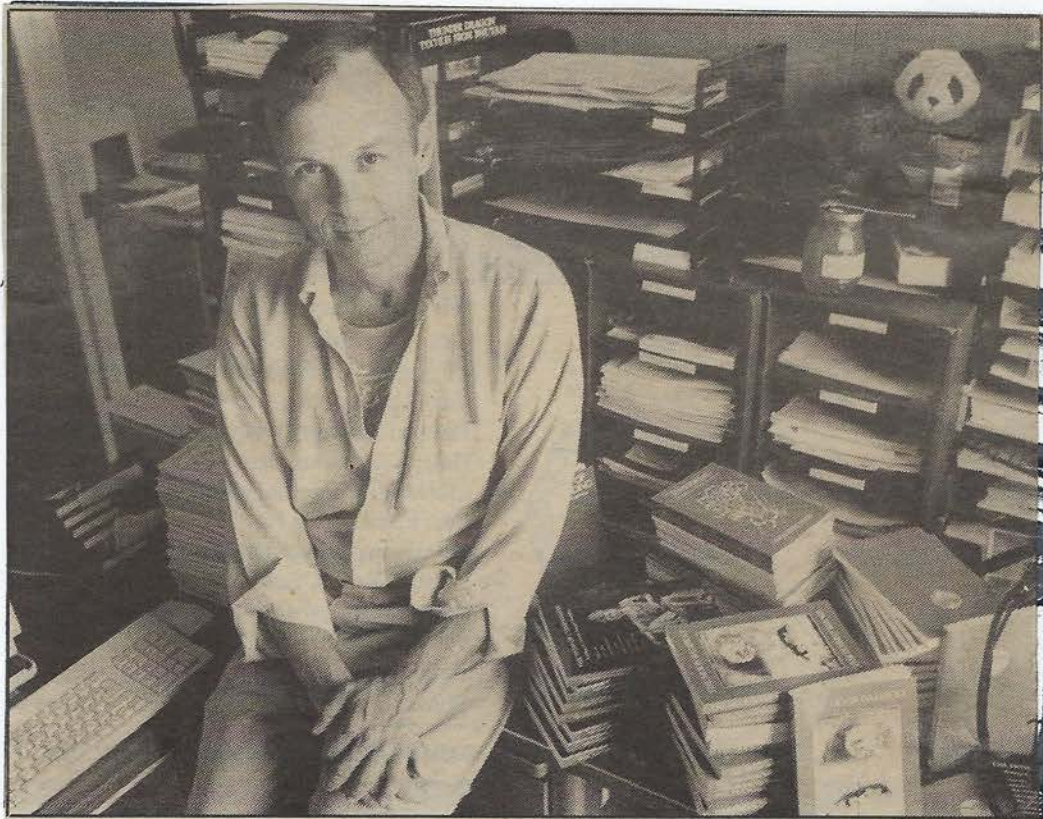


EXPRESS

■ The East Bay's Free Weekly

Books and Records EXPRESS 3

BETWEEN THE LINES



By Maggie Miller

Arnold Kotler

ZEN AND THE ART OF DESKTOP PUBLISHING

November 24, 1989

Being Peace may be the best introduction to Zen Buddhism since D.T. Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. Kotler designed and typeset the book on his computer.

By Sarah Cahill

Out of the handful of small presses in the country that specialize in writings about Buddhism, and out of the two or three in the Bay Area, Berkeley's Parallax Press probably had the most unlikely beginnings. Arnold Kotler was a Buddhist monk with no intentions of going into publishing, but a serendipitous conjunction of events in the last few years compelled him to not only start a press, but to publish what has become a best-selling introduction to Zen Buddhism. Kotler founded Parallax Press around that one book—*Being Peace* by the Vietnamese Zen teacher, poet, and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh—but the press's catalogue has grown in just a couple of years to include more than twenty books as well as audio and videotapes on "socially engaged Buddhism," the philosophy for which Nhat Hanh is principal spokesman. Just as the sudden sprouting of small local presses did in the '60s, Parallax Press's activity reflects a need in the community: with the prodigious number of Buddhist writers, poets, students, activists, and scholars in the Bay Area, what was needed was a press to provide an outlet, a forum for ideas, and Parallax Press has fulfilled that need.

Four years ago, Arnold Kotler was training at the San Francisco Zen Center when he was approached by the Berkeley-based Buddhist Peace Fellowship, which asked him to coordinate the California tour of Thich Nhat Hanh. Kotler would arrange Nhat Hanh's schedule and travel with him during six weeks of lectures and retreats throughout the state. He agreed to take time off from his job at the Zen Center to act as Nhat Hanh's guide.

As the two traveled together, Kotler became increasingly involved in Nhat Hanh's ideas and practice of engaged Buddhism, an order of Zen Buddhism that Nhat Hanh helped to develop primarily in response to the Vietnam war. At the beginning of the war, Nhat Hanh and a few other monks left their monastery to help the wounded and work for reconciliation. Nhat Hanh helped found Youth for Social Service, a group of young people who worked to rebuild villages and bombed communities. In 1966 he was invited by the Fellowship of Reconciliation to tour the United States to speak on behalf of the Vietnamese people. He met with Robert McNamara, Thomas Merton, Pope Paul VI, and Martin Luther King Jr., who nominated him for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. After the war Nhat Hanh became head of the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation during the Paris

Peace Talks. Because of his strong opposition to the war it was unsafe for him to return to Vietnam, so he immigrated to France, where he still lives in exile. Kotler remembers meeting him at the 1982 Reverence for Life Conference in New York, when an estimated million people marched through the city to the steps of the United Nations. Nhat Hanh now travels across the country once every few years, giving lectures, leading retreats, and meeting with members of Vietnamese communities.

Because Buddhism emphasizes the renunciation of worldly cares, it might seem incompatible with politics and social consciousness. But Nhat Hanh strongly believes that meditation is far from passive, that self-awareness is the first and most crucial step towards activism. "If we are not peaceful," he says, "then we cannot contribute to the peace movement. . . . Peace work means, first of all, being peace." Nhat Hanh describes his Tiep Hien Order as "engaged Buddhism, Buddhism in daily life, in society, and not just in a retreat center." The fourteen precepts of the order, which express social and political concerns such as "Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature" and "Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry," are central to Nhat Hanh's teachings. The stoicism and tranquil removal which some people perceive as being at the core of Buddhist thought are to him small stepping stones on the way toward world peace.

While they were traveling through California together, Nhat Hanh suggested to Kotler that they collaborate on starting a press. Oddly, the idea had been knocking around in the back of Kotler's mind for a few years, ever since he'd met with Nancy Wilson Ross, the novelist and author of several important books on Buddhism. "She said she had a feeling I was going to go into publishing," Kotler remembers, "and that planted a seed. I liked the idea. I had been at the Zen Center for fifteen years and was in the process of separating from it—retiring or graduating or something—when Nancy suggested the publishing idea." Shortly after that meeting he helped a friend of his get a book accepted by Routledge and Kegan Paul in London. "With that whole experience of trying to get that manuscript published," he says, "I felt so much happier doing that than almost anything I'd done before. I knew I should pursue it."

After Thich Nhat Hanh's California tour, during which nearly all of his talks were recorded, Kotler bought a Macintosh. "I had just seen an ad in the *Chronicle* for desktop

publishing and I thought, Gee, that looks interesting. Three friends taught me how to use it. It was the push I needed to get into publishing." He started transcribing the tapes of Nhat Hanh's talks, using parts of twenty lectures but mostly concentrating on one one-and-a-half-hour talk that Nhat Hanh gave at the Green Gulch Zen Center in Sausalito in November of 1985. He decided to call his new business Parallax Press ("parallax" means "an apparent change in the position or direction of an object, caused by a change in the viewer's position"). The result of the transcriptions is *Being Peace*, which may be the best introduction to Zen Buddhism since D.T. Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. Kotler designed and typeset the book on his computer. Filled with Mayumi Oda's illustrations, which with their broad, lively brushstrokes and relaxed simplicity perfectly suit the tone of the text, *Being Peace* has been widely praised as a handsome example of what can be achieved with desktop publishing.

In its first five months *Being Peace* sold more than 12,000 copies, mostly in the Bay Area. (Nhat Hanh is no stranger to people here, especially those involved in Buddhism: he has made four appearances in the area, once reading his poetry with Gary Snyder and Robert Creeley). Now in its fourth printing, there are 35,000 copies in print. Because the book is transcribed from informal talks, it has a clear loose style that attracts readers. "People find it accessible," explains Kotler. "My mother finds almost everything I'm doing inaccessible, but she read *Being Peace*, and the only thing she didn't like was the introduction—which I wrote. She's gotten many copies for her friends. It's the first book on Zen that's meant anything to her. Nhat Hanh doesn't use very much Buddhist language, and when he does it feels like a person talking directly to another person."

Being Peace is especially appealing because it addresses an issue all too rarely dealt with in books on Eastern religion: how Americans can adapt to a religion outside their cultural experience. Thich Nhat Hanh tackles this question head-on: "I believe," he writes, "that the encounter between Buddhism and the West will bring about something very exciting, very important. . . . The teaching of Buddhism in this country is different from other countries. Buddhism, in order to be Buddhism, must be suitable, appropriate to the psychology and the culture of the society that it serves." He believes that the Tiep Hien Order, which deals directly with contemporary issues, is "a form of Buddhism that may be accepted here in the West." In his writings he is almost secular; as Kotler explains, he wants to "introduce

concepts rather than a new religion—concepts that might be implicit in Christianity, Hinduism, or any other religious belief."

Although Thich Nhat Hanh was already a legendary figure in the Buddhist community, Kotler understandably feels that the success of *Being Peace* and other Parallax publications has greatly increased Nhat Hanh's audience. When he spoke here two years ago at the First Congregational Church in Berkeley, a thousand people came to listen. When he returned to speak at the church last April, the crowd filled the pews and the balcony of the church, lining the aisles, standing against the walls, flooding onto the stage where they sat cross-legged at Nhat Hanh's feet. There were students, middle-aged couples, shaven-headed monks in saffron robes, hippies in colorful Asian clothes, children. Nhat Hanh's talk was as simple and straightforward as his book. Using many anecdotes, telling jokes, he spoke for two and a half hours in a gentle slow voice about being aware of the present moment, about war, about the depletion of natural resources, about the importance of family unity, about how "most of our thinking is useless," about Vietnam war veterans, about how "impermanence is the basic condition of our life."

Parallax Press now has a list of about two dozen books on socially engaged Buddhism. It began with Thich Nhat Hanh, but his books only comprise about half of what the press publishes. While its statement of purpose is unusually specific—to publish books and tapes on "mindful awareness and social responsibility"—it has shown what a tremendous diversity exists within that subject. Among recent titles are *The Return of Lady Brace* by Nancy Wilson Ross; a book of poems by Barbara Meier entitled *The Life You Ordered Has Arrived*; a book of essays about the relation of Buddhism to society and politics by writers like Gary Snyder, Joanna Macy, and the Dalai Lama called *The Path of Compassion*; and Mayumi Oda's colorful picture book, *Happy Vegies*. The catalogue also includes more than twenty videotapes and as many cassette tapes. Parallax Press, in other words, is growing fast, at a pace that would make most small press publishers more than a little nervous. Two years ago Kotler was operating out of his North Berkeley home. Now he has ample office space on Bonita Street, a small staff, and a second Macintosh. "I know it's dangerous to expand this quickly," he admits. But with a typically whimsical Zen attitude, he adds, "The press may be around in two years, and it may not. It could go either way; who knows?"

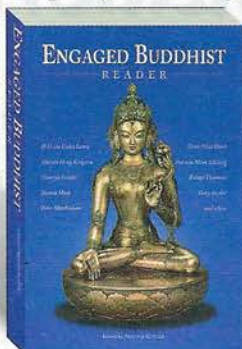


Engaged Buddhist Reader

edited by Arnold Kotler

Put simply, the *Engaged Buddhist Reader* excerpts the best works from the finest contemporary teachers on the topic of practical spirituality. In this anthology you'll find "Cultivating Altruism," the Dalai Lama's meditation on the ideals of Buddhism ("Compassion, love, and forgiveness ... are not luxuries. They are fundamental for our survival"). Jack Kornfield here talks about the gritty reality of contemplation ("In the face of the tremendous suffering of the world, there is a joy that comes not from denying the pain, but from sitting in meditation, even when it is difficult"). Surveying her fire-ravaged home, Maxine Hong Kingston reflects on the comfort of Buddhist teaching ("There is an actuality that surrounds and permeates ... things, and exists in their absence"). And Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us that "it is with our capacity of smiling, breathing, and being peace that we make peace." A comprehensive compilation, the *Engaged Buddhist Reader* shows us how to turn the insights of Buddhism into a living practice.

Softcover, 262 pages
(Parallax Press, \$18.00)
95-7507 Members'
Price \$14.95



**"Genuine wisdom is manifested
in compassionate action."
—Kenneth Kraft**



One Spirit Interview

Editorial Director Robert Welsch talks with Buddhist publisher Arnold Kotler

RW: We are so pleased to offer *Engaged Buddhist Reader* to our members. The book is something of a milestone: 10 years of publishing from Parallax Press. Can you tell us a little about the press you helped to found?

AK: In 1985, at a retreat in Providence, Rhode Island, Thich Nhat Hanh met with a few of us and said, "Why don't we start a press together?" Although I knew very little about publishing, I was thrilled to do it because I did know



that the lectures Thây was giving that year would work as a book. They were published as *Being Peace* in 1987, and the book has since sold about 250,000 copies.

RW: What do such sales say to you about Buddhism in the West during the past decade?

AK: That Buddhism—the practice of *mindful living*—has come of age in the West. In the beginning, we just


continued on following page

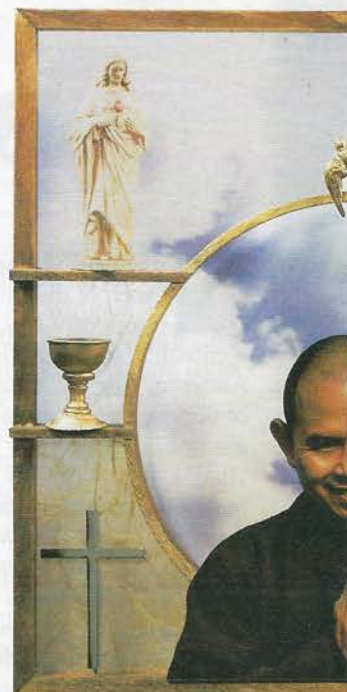
The Present Moment

A Retreat on the Practice of Mindfulness
by Thich Nhat Hanh with Sister Chan Khong



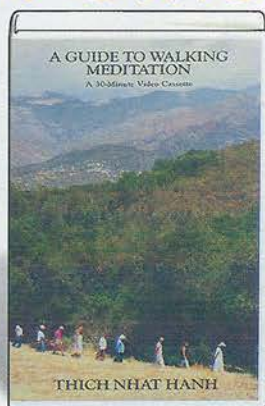
In this 7½-hour audio retreat, you experience firsthand the traditional Buddhist practices designed to “touch the energy of mindfulness” you carry within. Here, Hanh offers a treasury of detailed meditations to help you walk, breathe, and communicate more deeply and consciously. And through the songs of Sister Chân Không, you gain an ancient technique that transmits tenderness and healing to your body.

 (Sounds True, \$59.95) 15-4257 6 CT \$44.95
Earns two Savings Points




A Guide to Walking Meditation

by Thich Nhat Hanh



With his characteristic warmth and humor, Thich Nhat Hanh demonstrates how to vary your meditation practice with the joyful rhythms of mindful walking. Join him and his students as they walk for 30 minutes through a beautiful meadow and down a path toward greater insight. According to Hanh, “Walking meditation is really to enjoy the walking—walking not in order to arrive, just for walking.”

 (Parallax Press, \$30.00) 56-5522 VHS \$20.00 Earns two Savings Points.

continued from previous page

imitated Asian Buddhism. I began practicing in 1969 at the San Francisco Zen Center and Tassajara, and my role models were Asian Buddhists. Now, almost 30 years later, people are expressing the basic teachings of the Buddha—to wake up—in the Western vernacular: in their daily lives, in their families, in their feminism, environmental work, and so forth. And because the practice of mindful living is so easy—just mindful breathing, mindful walking, doing everything you do, aware of what’s going on in the present moment—there is no problem at all for a devoted, practicing Christian, Jew, or Muslim to benefit from these teachings.

RW: Tell us a little bit about the concept of Engaged Buddhism.

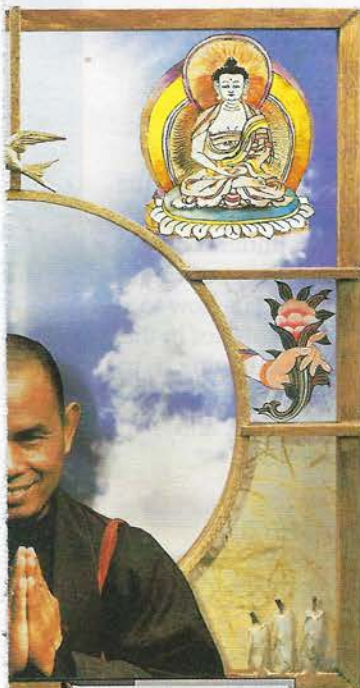
AK: Thich Nhat Hanh coined the term in the 1950s. It means that you can’t just create an impermeable wall around a meditation hall. The benefits of meditation practice have to be integrated into the rest of life, into whatever you are doing: washing dishes, changing diapers, or working for social change. That’s why in addition to publishing books through Parallax Press, we—that is, The Community of Mindful Living—also offer retreats and other opportunities for practice.

RW: If our members want to find out about retreats in their area, where should they write or call?

AK: They can contact The Community of Mindful Living at P.O. Box 7355, Berkeley, CA, 94707. All the information is also on our website: <http://www.parallax.org>.

To order, call 1-800-955-5988

Thich Nhat Hanh



The Miracle of Mindfulness • Being Peace

Two Volumes from Thich Nhat Hanh

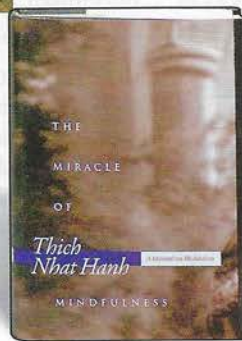
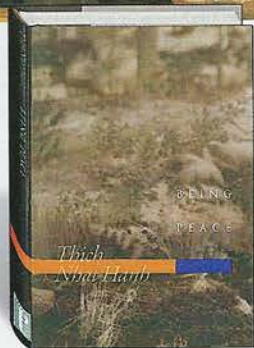
Wherever we are, at any time, we have the capacity to enjoy the sunshine, the presence of our loved ones, even our breathing. ...It would be a pity if we were only aware of our suffering." These beautiful words encapsulate the simple wisdom of renowned Zen master, poet, and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh, who is currently living in exile in Plum Village, a small monastic community in France. His many books have inspired thousands around the world, and we at One Spirit are proud to offer this set of his most treasured works.

Perfect for beginners, *The Miracle of Mindfulness* is a lucid guide to Buddhist meditation that shares gentle stories from everyday life and presents short, clearly written exercises

for cultivating mindfulness no matter what we are doing. And *Being Peace*, a classic of contemporary religious literature, shows how our state of body and mind can transform the world into a peaceful place, no matter how modern life intrudes. Traffic jams, a ringing telephone—all can become opportunities for the practice of mindfulness.

“Thich Nhat Hanh’s ideas ... if applied, would build a monument to ecumenism, to world brotherhood, to humanity.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.



Hardcovers, 148/153 pages (Parallax Press, \$16.00 each)
Miracle of Mindfulness: 96-0581 Members' Price \$12.95
Being Peace: 36-0584 Members' Price \$12.95

**FREE
BOOK**

Order both *The Miracle of Mindfulness* and *Being Peace* and get *Touching Peace* for **FREE!**

16-0670 Members' Price \$25.90 Earns two Savings Points

Touching Peace

Practicing the Art of Mindful Living
by Thich Nhat Hanh, edited by Arnold Kotler

Continuing the teachings he began in *Being Peace*, Thich Nhat Hanh here shows how our mindful awareness of what is joyful and refreshing in and around us can serve as the basis for ethical living—in a world without violence, drug abuse, environmental exploitation, or social alienation. And he shares his vision for rebuilding society through the strengthening of family and community and our realization that we

can touch nirvana—the ultimate dimension of reality—in each and every act of our lives.

Softcover, 128 pages
(Parallax Press, \$10.00)
55-7480 Members'
Price \$8.95

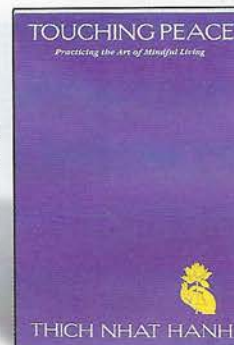


ILLUSTRATION FOR ONE SPIRIT BY RUSSELL THURSTON

Buy 1, save 50%! See page 4.



World as Lover, World as Self

by Joanna Macy

The concept of *paticca samuppada*, or dependent co-arising, is at the heart of Buddhism, so fundamental that it is often referred to as the Law. Here, Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy provides insights on how we can apply this ancient principle of the "interdependence of all phenomena" to our lives today, teaching us to consider the world as an extension of ourselves and showing how we can reverse the destructive attitudes that have brought us to the brink of extinction.

Softcover, 251 pages
(Parallax Press, \$15.00)
46-0577 Members' Price \$12.95

The Path of Compassion

Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism

edited by Fred Eppsteiner

Although Western society is embracing Buddhist thought, the contributors to this anthology argue that our understanding of "the Way" is incomplete if it is not applied in daily life, to our relationships, our work, and our response to crises—both near at hand and around the globe. This collection of essays reflects a significant shift toward a Buddhism that is not limited to meditation halls.

Softcover, 213 pages
(Parallax Press, \$16.00)
16-0574 Members' Price \$12.95

Dimensions of the Buddhist Experience: A 10th-year celebration of Parallax Press

Worlds in Harmony

Dialogues on Compassionate Action • by the Dalai Lama

During three days in October 1989, the Dalai Lama engaged seven panelists, among them Daniel Goleman and Jean Shinoda Bolen, on some of the critical issues of our time—inner-city violence, the Vietnam War and its aftermath, the teacher-student relationship, the role of women, and more. These wide-ranging and spirited exchanges bridge personal and global concerns and teach us ways of being, thinking, and acting in the world with equanimity and understanding. *Worlds in Harmony* "can educate beginners and experts alike about the enduring applications of Buddhist teachings," says *Tricycle*.

Softcover, 139 pages
(Parallax Press, \$12.50)
56-0578 Members' Price \$9.95

Mindfulness and Meaningful Work

Explorations in Right Livelihood
edited by Claude Whitmyer

How can we find work that is satisfying, life-affirming, and nonexploitive? This superb collection of writings by some of the leading doers and thinkers of our time deepens our understanding of the Buddhist concept of "right livelihood," showing us how to overcome ethical obstacles in the workplace and encouraging us to live in a way that increases our inner peace, self-worth, and sense of purpose.

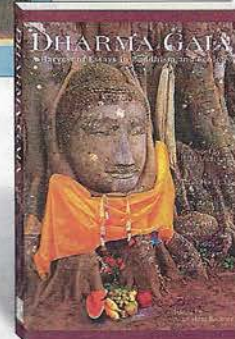
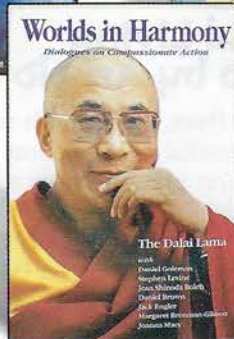
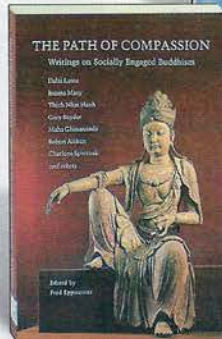
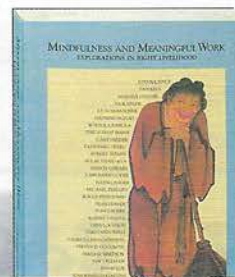
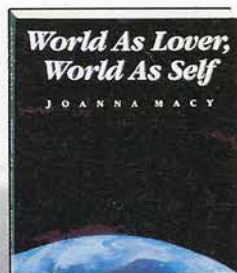
Softcover, 289 pages
(Parallax Press, \$16.00)
36-0576 Members' Price \$12.95

Dharma Gaia

A Harvest of Essays in
Buddhism and Ecology
edited by Allan Hunt Badiner

In response to our current ecocrisis, some Buddhist thinkers feel that we need "a new ecological ethic," especially as an alternative to the exploitative view of nature that has dominated Western thinking for centuries. In *Dharma Gaia*, 36 naturalists, poets, scholars, and eco-philosophers explore this ground where Buddhism and ecology meet, providing "rich fare for those of us who hunger to know place"—Ram Dass.

Softcover, 265 pages
(Parallax Press, \$15.00)
26-0575 Members' Price \$12.95



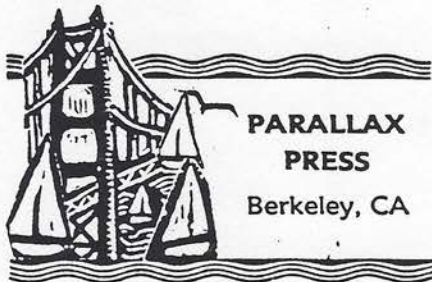
AMERICAN BOOKSELLER

July 1989



BEST OF THE WEST

The West has long been noted for its independent publishers, and a host of newer houses are continuing the grand tradition. Herewith, a look at six rising stars and 10 all-stars.



PARALLAX
PRESS
Berkeley, CA

IN THE LATE '60s, WHILE Arnold Kotler, now publisher of Parallax Press, was still a student at UC Berkeley, Vietnamese Zen master and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh was invited to this country to describe his experiences helping victims of the Vietnam War and to relate their desire for peace. He met with politicians and theologians, including Thomas Merton and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who nominated him for a Nobel Peace Prize, and his outspokenness forced his exile to France, where he continued his work through the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation.

It wasn't until June 1982, at an anti-nuke march in New York City, that Kotler and Nhat Hanh crossed paths. At that point Kotler was dividing his time between the San Francisco Zen Center and the Tassajara Zen Center in Carmel Valley, and had managed the Whole Earth bookstore in San Francisco. The two corresponded, and in 1985 traveled to Buddhist centers across the country together, where Nhat Hanh delivered a series of talks to peace workers and meditation students. "His lectures were

so extraordinary," Kotler recalls. "It was very easy to see how they could work into a book." Two years later he published 5,000 copies of Nhat Hanh's *Being Peace*, which was described by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as "a glass of water in the desert for those interested in both Buddhism and the world." The book sold out in three months.

Kotler produced *Being Peace* on a Macintosh 512 that he'd purchased with a credit card; several more credit cards and donations from friends saw Parallax through its first year. Though a San Francisco book designer worked pro bono to help him get started, Kotler remained the sole employee. "I assumed somehow there'd be several of us and we'd be excited to do it together," he explains. "Then the people who were excited somehow went back to graduate school, or had to get a job...."

The auspicious success of *Being Peace*—now in its fourth printing and on audiocassette—ensured that Kotler could pursue such related projects as Catherine Ingram's *In the Footsteps of Gandhi: Interviews on Spirituality and Social Action*, featuring interviews with Desmond Tutu and Cesar Chavez, among others, and *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*, which includes chapters by the Dalai Lama, Gary Snyder, and Robert Aitken. Last year, Kotler finally moved

Parallax out of his apartment into a small office, and hired an office manager and a part-time book packer. Bookpeople and other wholesalers handle most of Parallax's distribution, and Kotler estimates that the company is within a year or so of being repped.

Even with Parallax's production schedule timed around Kotler's extended travels with Nhat Hanh, the company will publish six new titles this year, and 12 in 1990, all related to the notion of "mindful awareness and social responsibility—making peace right in the moment we are alive." (While Kotler sells books at Nhat Hanh's lectures, Parallax Press and Nhat Hanh's appearances, which are sponsored by the nonprofit Buddhist Peace Fellowship, are fiscally separate entities.) A children's book line emphasizing "interbeing—the necessity of people, animals, and plants living harmoniously on our green earth," was established by Mayumi Oda's *Happy Veggies*, a vibrant watercolor journey through a garden.

Soon, Kotler says, he might be able to afford a freelance publicist. He'd also like to buy a Mac II, and "get it together well enough" to have galleys four months in advance. "We've had no publicity to speak of, except calendar listings and small mailings," Kotler notes. "But I get the sense that people are reading the books." □



Fall Media Section

Publishing

Good Food for a Spirited Appetite

By Anne Cushman

Whether you want to improve your karma, learn to belly dance, meet your soulmate, or contact the spirit of your deceased grandmother, chances are there's a book to help you do it. Books about personal and social transformation are proliferating, ranging from scholarly commentaries on Sanskrit texts to the trance-channeled autobiographies of spiritual entities.

To help you sift through this plethora of print, each year *Yoga Journal* profiles publishers that we believe produce well-written, well-researched, and thought-provoking books in the fields of holistic health, spiritual growth, and social change. Featured this year are Parallax Press and Paragon House.

Parallax Press

Zen Buddhist monk Arnold Kotler launched Parallax in 1986 at the suggestion of his teacher, Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh. The avowed purpose was to publish books on "socially engaged Buddhism" and related topics. Desktop published from a five-person office in Berkeley, California, Parallax books explore the relationship between spirituality and social activism.

"A lot of people do social work or peace work but don't work on themselves, so they burn out, get angry, and get tired. And a lot of people do meditation and just work on themselves without turning their attention to the problems of the world," explains Kotler, who left the San Francisco Zen Center after 15 years of practice to start Parallax. "But at some point many people, including myself, have the experience that—it's not that our meditation practice is now completed, but it's time to get up off the cushion and practice meditation in some arena. That's what engaged Buddhism is about."

Although most Parallax books are about Buddhism, Kotler deliberately avoided Buddhist terms when selecting his company's name. "I wanted people to understand

that Buddhism is not just Asian," he says. "The Buddhism we're introducing is usable by everyone."

So Kotler chose the name Parallax, which the dictionary defines as "an apparent change in the direction of an object caused by a change in the observational position that provides a new line of sight"—the perfect name, he felt, for a publishing company dedicated to changing the direction of society by changing the minds and hearts of the people who live in it.

The Parallax catalog features many works by Thich Nhat Hanh, including the popular *Being Peace*, a simply written introduction to meditation in action that has sold over 50,000 copies since its publication three years ago. Other offerings by Nhat Hanh include *The Moon Bamboo*, a collection of stories about contemporary Vietnam; *The Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing*, a new translation and interpretation of one of the main meditation texts of early Buddhism; *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajñāparamita Heart Sutra*; and *The Sun My Heart*, an exploration of Buddhist psychology and insight meditation. Nhat Hanh relates ancient Buddhist texts and practices to the joys and struggles of contemporary life in an accessible, anecdotal style that appeals to both newcomers to Buddhism and experienced students.

Published in honor of Earth Day 1990, *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology* features a foreword by the Dalai Lama and writings by spiritual activists such as poet Gary Snyder, Zen teacher Robert Aitken, and Buddhist historian Rick Fields. Terry Pilchik's *Jai Bhim! Dispatches from a Peaceful Revolution* chronicles the social work and meditation practice of a group of former Indian untouchables who renounced the caste system and adopted Buddhism. In *In the Footsteps of Gandhi: Interviews on Spirituality and Social Action*, Catherine Ingram interviews Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Cesar Chavez, Coretta Scott King, the Dalai Lama, and eight other advocates of nonviolent social transformation.

Soon to be released are Joe Gorin's *Choose Love: A Jewish Buddhist Human Rights Worker in Central America*, an account of the author's experiences in Guatemala and Nicaragua; *The Hungry Tigress*, a collection

of Jataka tales (stories of the Buddha's past lives) by storyteller Rafe Martin; *Old Path, White Clouds*, Thich Nhat Hanh's biography of the Buddha; and *World as Lover, World as Self*, a collection of essays by Buddhist scholar and deep ecologist Joanna Macy.

Parallax distributes audiocassettes as well, including several tapes of Nhat Hanh's talks and *In My Two Hands*, folksinger Betsy Rose's collection of hymns, chants, and "country-Eastern" ballads expressing Buddhist principles through Western folk music. Parallax also offers Nhat Hanh's video *A Guide to Walking Meditation* and a documentary on his work produced for Australian TV.

The company currently publishes about 12 books a year, with Kotler doing most of the editing and design himself. To Kotler, publishing books on engaged Buddhism is a form of right livelihood that can help transform the world.

"I was talking with some friends recently about the period when we started trying to change the direction of our lives. We remembered that during that period, each of us had a book in our hands," he recalls. "For each of us, a book was one of the lights that helped us see that the model of reality we'd been living in was not completely accurate."

"When I heard that, I thought, I must be in the right business."

Indie Presses to Rush Out Cindy Sheehan Titles

by Bridget Kinsella, Publishers Weekly (PW Daily), 9/23/2005

On the eve before Cindy Sheehan is to lead an anti-war march in Washington that is expected to draw over 100,000 protestors, Seven Stories and the brand new Maui-based Koa Books plan near-instant publications from some of her comments from her "Bring Them Home Now Tour."

Just in time for Saturday's march, Seven Stories will have 10,000 copies of *Dear President Bush*, a pamphlet interview of Sheehan with Open Media series co-founder Greg Ruggiero. Sheehan's *Not One More Mother's Child* will be the launch title for Koa Books, which is planning a 25,000 first printing for its November 11 (Veteran's Day) pub date.

Surely the woman whose supporters call the "Rosa Parks of the anti-war movement" could have gotten the attention of many big publishing company executives, so why did she decide to go with a pamphleteer and a start-up? The reasons include: the desire to get her message out as true to Sheehan as possible; to get it out as fast as possible, and to do it with people known and trusted by Sheehan's advisors. Jodie Evans, the co-founder of CodePink has been with Sheehan practically since she set up Camp Casey outside Bush's Crawford ranch. Evans says she has known both Ruggiero from Seven Stories and Arnie Kotler, the founder of Koa for years, and she put them together with Sheehan. Kotler is formerly editor-in-chief of the Berkeley-based Parallax, which has a history of publishing social activists.

"Arnie has an unerring instinct for agents of change and he has been able to deliver their messages," says Evans. Kotler had planned to launch Koa Books next year with a focus on personal transformation, progressive politics and native cultures, but moved up his plans when given the chance to publish Sheehan. He has signed on with Publishers Group West for distribution, and Inkwell Management is handling foreign rights for the book of essays, letters and speeches that illuminate Sheehan's anti-war stance.

Ruggiero had even less time to produce his pamphlet. He met Sheehan at LaGuardia airport on September 12 and interviewed her during the car ride to a press conference. Much like its bestselling *9/11* by Noam, *Dear President Bush* is in interview format. The rush to press meant that the first 10,000 copies are to saddle stitched and distributed by AK Press. "This is the abbreviated version of a longer book to come later," says Ruggiero. "The idea is to get something out fast and get it into people's hands." None of these (un-agented) projects is a memoir. "They are more about the moment than the journey," says Evans.

This article originally appeared in the September 23, 2005 issue of PW Daily.

5

QUESTIONS FOR:

Arnie Kotler



ARNIE KOTLER is the founder of Koa Books, a Hawaii-based small publisher of books about politics, religion, culture and psychology. Kotler launched Koa Books in 2005 with the publication of *Not One More Mother's Child*, a memoir by controversial anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan. He's also the founding director of Parallax Press, which has published books on Buddhism since 1986.

Photo © Hannah Bertle

- 1. How did publishing Sheehan's book help Koa Books?**
Publishing *Not One More Mother's Child* as our first book brought us a lot of attention right away. Our Web site began getting lots of hits even before the book's publication. So we've tried to make the site a good place to learn about Sheehan, her schedule, her other writings and also about Koa Books.
- 2. Does working with a controversial public figure affect your company in negative ways, too?**
Yes, very much. Many people are extremely upset about Sheehan's stand against the war and how she accuses the president of lying. There's been a lot of smearing of Sheehan, her book and Koa Books.
- 3. What's the most challenging aspect of starting a small publishing company?**
The biggest challenge seems to be finding a level of activity where the work is enjoyable, meaningful and effective, and the company is still financially viable. I'm trying to benefit from lessons learned starting another small press 20 years ago.
- 4. What types of material are you looking for?**
Koa Books will publish nonfiction works on personal transformation (e.g., depth psychology), progressive politics and native cultures. We're working with Maxine Hong Kingston on a book of veterans' writings and with Hawaiian activist and educator Manulani Aluli Meyer on "Hawaiian ways of knowing."
- 5. What advice can you offer writers who want to submit to you?**
Please submit a concise description of the book and a writing sample. Because we're small, we can publish only a few books a year. But we'll try to help however we can by suggesting other possible publishers and offering feedback and encouragement.

— JACK CLEMENS



Independent Publishing Now!

- celebrating the vibrant indie publishing community -



May 19, 2016

IBPA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Arnie Kotler, founder of **Parallax Press**, **Koa Books**, and now **Arnie Kotler Editing Services**.

In 1985, Buddhist monk and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Thich Nhat Hanh suggested to **Arnie Kotler**, “Why don’t we start a press together?” Kotler took the ball and founded [Parallax Press](#) that year, crafting the bestselling *Being Peace* from Thich Nhat Hanh’s lectures. The book went on to sell nearly 1,000,000 copies. Arnie left Parallax in 1999 and moved to Hawaii, where a few years later he founded [Koa Books](#) to publish works on personal transformation, social justice, and indigeneity. Now Arnie has sold the Koa list to Chiron Publications to start [Arnie Kotler Editing Service](#), a freelance editing and publishing consulting studio. IBPA wishes Arnie great success in his new endeavor!