



# **A Buddhist History of the West: Studies in Lack (SUNY Series in Religious Studies)**

*David R. Loy*

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*A Buddhist interpretation of Western history that shows civilization shaped by the self's desire for groundedness.*

Buddhism teaches that to become happy, greed, ill-will, and delusion must be transformed into their positive counterparts: generosity, compassion, and wisdom. The history of the West, like all histories, has been plagued by the consequences of greed, ill-will, and delusion. *A Buddhist History of the West* investigates how individuals have tried to ground themselves to make themselves feel more real. To be self-conscious is to experience ungroundedness as a sense of lack, but what is lacking has been understood differently in different historical periods. Author David R. Loy examines how the understanding of lack changes at historical junctures and shows how those junctures were so crucial in the development of the West.

“A polymath’s tour through intellectual and social history, David Loy’s Buddhist retelling goes far in revealing the historically conditioned limitations of many dominant Western terms, metaphors, and assumptions. By reinterpreting greed, ill will, and delusion as structural rather than personal problems, Loy offers a compassionate account of ways that we make ourselves unhappy and a trenchant critique of market capitalism’s manipulation of these habits of mind.” — *The Journal of Asian Studies*

“...his study of European history from what he calls the perspective of lack reveals astonishing yet previously barely highlighted insights into European thought ... Loy’s book is filled with observations and indictments of common myths that are not only provocative in nature but sure to challenge many of the presuppositions that the proponents of the so-called Western World hold dear.” — *Philosophy East & West*

“This book expands the dialog, enlarges the vocabulary, takes instruction from other cultural traditions, and throws light on our own Occidental problems. I like its clarity in a territory that is of critical importance and is intrinsically difficult. The book has to do with ways of coming to a better understanding of civilization, history, politics, and our own human psyches, and how it is that certain sets of problems—war and exploitation among them—keep arising. David Loy is opening up new territory that is of great value. He is a very exciting thinker.” — Gary Snyder, author of *The Gary Snyder Reader: Prose, Poetry, and Translations, 1952–1998*

David R. Loy is Professor in the Faculty of International Studies at Bunkyo University, Japan. He is the author of *Lack and Transcendence: The Problem of Death and Life in Psychotherapy, Existentialism, and Buddhism* and *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy*.

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