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Bodhisattva Narrative in the New World Order*

Graeme MacQueen
McMaster University

Introduction

During the 1991 Gulf War it was common in Canada to encounter seminars and discussions relating the war to Christian principles and ideals. Christian Just War theory, for example, was frequently aired, and attempts were made to apply it to events taking place. Canadian Muslims discussed the concept of war in Islam, and applied their analyses to what was happening in the Gulf. It can be argued that all such attempts are naive, in as much as they wrongly assume that war is initiated and conducted on the basis of moral or spiritual values. Yet I believe such discussions are of great importance. For, on the one hand, if wars exist in a sphere entirely isolated from the moral and spiritual values formally honoured by a society, it is important that members of society discover this. They may or may not accept it, but they owe it to themselves and others to be aware of it. And if, on the other hand, war-making is not utterly cut off from a society's professed values, it is obvious that those making war must be held accountable by members of society who take these values seriously.

*This is a revised paper presented at the Fifth International Seminar on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace held in Seoul, Korea November 18-21, 1991.
During and after the Gulf War I gave some thought to the relation between Buddhism (especially Mahayana Buddhism) and the world order the war was apparently supposed to inaugurate. These reflections were presented at the 5th International Seminar on Buddhism and Leadership for World Peace in Seoul and are offered here in revised form.

A key concept in my analysis is that of “metanarrative.” I borrow the term from the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard, known for his contribution to postmodernism.\(^1\) Lyotard uses “metanarrative” and “grand narrative”\(^2\) to refer to stories that ground people's existence, give meaning to their lives. Like metaphysics, metanarrative is concerned with the underpinnings of human existence: what is really real, what is good, what is the direction of human development (if any), what is human nature, and so on. But metanarrative, unlike metaphysics, presents its concerns in the form of story.

According to Lyotard, many of the secular metanarratives that have been so powerful for the past few centuries are now losing their force. The great emancipation narrative of Marxism, for instance, according to which the proletariat acts as historical agent to rid the world of exploitation and to usher in a new age wherein there will be no more “exploitation of man by man,” is losing its believers. And so, according to Lyotard, are other metanarratives. He thinks, in fact, that increasing numbers of people in postindustrial society do not believe in any metanarrative anymore, and this leads him to his definition of postmodern culture: “I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives.”\(^3\) Furthermore, he says, “Most people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative.”\(^4\)

No doubt it is true that many of the great metanarratives are in trouble in specific contexts, but is it true that “most people“ have rejected metanarrative and do not miss it? I do not believe so. I believe that metanarratives are deeply implanted in the minds of individuals and societies, that they influence the way

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2. See, for example, ibid., pp. xxiii, xxiv, 15.
3. Ibid., p. xxiv.
4. Ibid., p. 41.
people lead their lives, and that in times of crisis they often break through to the surface of social life dramatically.

One of the main functions of narrative, as lyotard points out, is legitimation: enterprises or acts that cannot legitimate themselves are made credible and acceptable through incorporation within a grand story. I wish to begin this paper by discussing the narratives I believe were used to legitimate the founding act of the New World Order -- the invasion of Iraq-- and the way the New World Order is thus able to grasp the energy and commitment of people via their longing for grand narrative. After this discussion I will move to the very different narrative of the bodhisattva, the crucial figure in Mahayana Buddhism.

The New World Order

Last January the President of the United States gave a televised talk in which he announced the birth of a New World Order. During the talk and in other speeches around the same time, Mr. Bush clearly wished his words to contribute to, and to be understood within, certain narratives. Initially several stories were offered to explain what was happening, but as time went on some faded and a dominant narrative emerged. George Lakoff, who calls this "the fairy tale of the just war," gives the script of this narrative as follows:

"A crime is committed by the villain against an innocent victim (typically an assault, theft, or kidnapping). The offense occurs due to an imbalance of power and creates a moral imbalance. The hero either gathers helpers or decides to go it alone. The hero makes sacrifices; he undergoes difficulties, typically making an arduous heroic journey, sometimes across the sea to a treacherous terrain. The villain is inherently evil, perhaps even a monster, and thus reasoning with him is out of the question. The hero is left with no choice but to engage the villain in battle. The hero defeats the villain and rescues the victim. The moral balance is restored. Victory is achieved. The hero, who always acts honorably, has proved his manhood and achieved glory. The sacrifice was worthwhile. The
hero receives acclaim, along with the gratitude of the victim and the community."  

Although this narrative is very old, the American people responded to it not with incredulity as sophisticated postmoderns, but with great enthusiasm. It made the invasion of Kuwait meaningful and evil, and it made the invasion of Iraq meaningful and good. It legitimated Operation Desert Storm.

This narrative was not presented as a self-contained story but as an episode in the larger narrative of the liberatory destiny of the United States of America, according to which the United States is a chosen people with a mission to lead the world into ever greater freedom. Having finally worn down the adversary personifying opposition to this mission, the Soviet Union, the Liberator can now proceed to fulfil its historic task. The sphere under its beneficent leadership, the Free World, can now, in this "unipolar" order, expand to include the whole world.

There is a dynamic common to both of the above national narratives: competition and merit. Adversaries freely compete and one of them wins. The winner, having demonstrated superiority in a fair fight, takes its place at the top of the world as one who merits this position.

It would be wrong to hold that these narratives, being national narratives, cannot be metanarratives, cannot fulfil the grand role of metaphysics for individuals. Insofar as the individual identifies with the nation, the story of the nation will be at the same time the story of that individual; and insofar as the nation is put at the centre of reality, the story of the nation will be the unfolding of reality. Some of the most potent metanarratives in history have been national narratives.

5. "Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf," p. 4. This article was sent out urgently via computer networks just before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in an attempt to provoke discussion and contribute to the forestalling of that invasion. I have not been able to discover if it has since been published. Lakoff is a member of the Linguistics Department, University of California at Berkeley.
Other nations that joined the action against Iraq have their own national narratives, and these were drawn on freely to legitimate participation in the invasion.

And of course, Saddam Hussein and his associates had their stories. They were taking the field as champion of the Arab world -- or, in some versions, of the Islamic world -- against Zionist aggression as well as exploitation by the West as represented by the United States. They were challenging the sell-out of the Arab world by oil elites, such as the al-Sabah family of Kuwait. They were champions of the Palestinians -- indeed, of the weak and downtrodden in general. They alone had the courage to take the field against the strongest armies in the world. Their pluck and wit would allow them to draw together the wretched of the earth in a grand alliance that would bring down the oppressor. And so on. What may first appear as a grab-bag of different stories actually has a certain coherence. We have here another very old story, of the weak who dares to take on the strong. One might with profit read “the plover who fought the ocean” in the Pancatantra,6 or, as Lakoff comments, one might explore the various levels of meaning in the Arab proverb, “It is better to be a cock for a day than a chicken for a year.”7 We are dealing with a narrative the world will see much of in the future, especially in the poorer countries, and it rises to the position of metanarrative when it is installed in the centre of people’s existence and becomes the key to their self-understanding.

The Iraqi people had the misfortune of being caught between the two opposing sets of narratives. They were forced by Saddam Hussein & Co. to play the role of the plover who fought the ocean while being cast by George Bush & Co. in the role of primitive, unreasoning beast. It seems that many Americans, ignorant of the history and culture of Iraq, came quickly to view Iraqis, personified by Saddam Hussein, as a form of generic evil that could nicely stand in for all evil actors in the national narrative. Since Saddam Hussein was identified early in the Gulf War as Hitler, Iraqis became Nazis. At various other

times they had to stand in for Vietnamese, Nicaraguans and Iranians, all of whom had at some point challenged the destiny of the Liberator.

Numerous remarks made by U.S. pilots and soldiers during the war suggest that in their eyes an essential aspect of the war was the assertion by a higher life form of its power over lower life forms. "By God," said a pilot of the 6th Cavalry, after shooting down Iraqis in his night-vision Apache AH-64 attack helicopter, "I thought we had shot into a damn farm. It looked like somebody opened the sheep pen."8 "It was like turning on the kitchen light late at night," said Marine pilot Lieutenant-Colonel Dick White, "and the cockroaches started scurrying. We finally got them out where we could find them and kill them."9 These lower life forms are not historical subjects, but objects to be acted upon. They crawl about on the ground, primitive and vulnerable, while Americans fly over them like gods delivering divine judgment.

Insect references are especially revealing. Descriptions of opponents as insects go back decades in U.S. military experience and are closely tied to air power.10 The pilot sees the enemy on the ground as small, alien, insignificant. This perception combines with standard racism and the objectification of the enemy common in all wars to produce a racism of diminishment. The enemy is an ant, a termite, a spider, a cockroach. The significance of this is apparent when we consider that the insect is one of the few forms of animal life that one can kill in whatever numbers and by whatever means one wishes (one may even talk about "extermination") without this being considered a moral issue. On an

11. Napalm apparently came into use against Iraq during late February. In view of the much discussed fear that Saddam Hussein might resort to chemical weapons, it is interesting to note that according to resolution XXIII adopted by the International Conference on Human Rights held under UN auspices in 1968, "the use of chemical and biological means of warfare, including napalm bombing [my emphasis], erode human rights and engender counter-brutality." See the United Nations document, Napalm and Other Incendiary Weapons and All Aspects of Their Possible Use: Report of the Secretary-General (New York: United Nations, 1973), p.1.
enemy identified as an insect one can drop napalm,\textsuperscript{11} phosphorus\textsuperscript{12} or whatever else. It is not a moral issue, for these substances are merely cosmic insecticides.

When Mr. Bush announced the New World Order he was speaking in the imperative mode, as one who felt in a position to inaugurate that order. He said, in effect, “Let the New World Order begin.” His announcement was a cosmogonic statement, and the launching of an air strike against Iraq became the accompanying cosmogonic act. We have a right to consider prominent features of the war as features of the proposed new order. The following seven points might serve as a manifesto of this new order.

1. The world is a meritocracy. Those with merit rise to top in this system, enjoying prosperity and dominance. Within nature \textit{homo sapiens} has risen to the pinnacle; among economic and political systems the capitalist system has triumphed; among capitalist societies the United States of America is chief.

2. The position as chief is necessarily held by the nation able to guarantee the stability of the meritocracy. This stability requires the possession of supreme military force, the property of the U.S.A.

3. Those societies low in the meritocracy are not only less meritorious but less valuable. Individuals in such societies are only quasi-individuals; they have an essentially mass existence and grope at the bottom of the hierarchy in an animal-like mode of existence.

\textsuperscript{12} Phosphorus may be used as the main ingredient in an incendiary weapon or as a supplement to other materials (often as an igniter). In the invasion of Iraq it took its toll, as a Canadian surgeon working on Iraqi prisoners of war discovered:

“‘We start to clean them out and they start to smoke. You see it like cigarette smoke: thin wisps, depending on how much phosphorus is left.’

Unless it is removed, he said, the body keeps on burning. It will smoulder like a piece of not coal. And if there is a lot of oxygen, it will flame like a candle.”

4. Those high in the hierarchy have achieved individual subjectivity and differentiation, and with these refinement, sensitivity, intelligence, culture. Only they are persons in the full sense of the world. Through them the universe has achieved intelligence. Other groups have myths, while this group has knowledge, science. It masters history and becomes the conscious subject of world evolution.

5. The great meritocracy is good not only for those on top but for everyone. Everyone can progress in material, intellectual and spiritual achievement.

6. Upward progress must, however, take place according to the rules and pace prescribed by those in positions of power, that is, those at the top. Attempts to short-cut the evolutionary process—for instance, by using military force to win access to resources—may be resisted. Such resistance aims at the achievement of stability. It may be forceful but is by definition never violent. Disruption of the rules alone constitutes violence.

7. Material, mental and spiritual are convertible currencies. Those at the top of the hierarchy are well endowed with all these things and can transform any one to any other. It may seem as if wisdom is diminishing, when, presto! one establishes a think-tank and buys the needed wisdom. It may seem as if a crucial material substance (such as petroleum) is diminishing, but the excess of intelligence at the top can be relied on the find more or to find substitutes. Apparent limitations in any one realm can always be overcome by drawing on the abundance in the others.

The Bodhisattva Metanarrative

As we arrive at the story of the bodhisattva, I take over the role of storyteller from George Bush and Saddam Hussein. They have given us narratives within which people can discover themselves. I am doing the same. In both cases story is introduced to give meaning and energy to our existence. But the spirit of my offering is different from the spirit in which Mr. Bush introduces Desert Storm. I given my story to those who are interested, in an experimental spirit. Mr. Bush offers his via an enormous apparatus of domination.
As people resist social, economic, political or cultural orders that are imposed on them, they frequently resorted to ancient narratives. They find power in such narratives. Christian liberation theology, while insisting on rigorously up-to-date accounts of contemporary social reality, is based on an old set of narratives. And indigenous peoples throughout the world have often found it necessary to combine careful and precise accounts of the situations they face with a rootedness in traditional narratives. Whatever else they do, such ancient narratives enable one to gain some critical distance from the overwhelming contemporary narratives and visions formulated by powerful groups and propagated widely and forcefully throughout the world by the mass media. The bodhisattva narrative with which I am dealing here does not become irrelevant, therefore, by being old.

I have chosen to restrict my discussion not only to the Mahayana form of Buddhism but also to the early, Indian phase of the tradition. I believe it would be possible to formulate my arguments to make them more generally representative of the Buddhist tradition. My choice has been dictated, in part, by the limitations of my own expertise.

The bodhisattva has always been portrayed in relation to an order. Mahayana scriptures, although they infrequently discuss directly the social, economic and political orders of their day, make constant reference to the cosmic order. This cosmic order, the general outline of which was apparently adopted from Indian cosmology of the time, was seen as a vast hierarchy. While not precisely a meritocracy (those at the top do not, in Buddhist versions of the system, really rule), it is certainly a merit system. Beings that perform meritorious deeds rise to the top, existing as gods (devas) and enjoying all sorts of pleasures, while those that produce less merit find themselves ranged at various levels in the order -- possibly as human beings, or as sub-human animals, or in the agony of one of the hells or purgatories. I have often wondered whether this grand system is not, in part, a metaphorical representation of human life on earth, with its range of options from the most privileged, who, like the Gods of the Thirty-Three, have only to conceive an idea in their minds in order to produce anything they may desire, down to the most deprived, who suffer from unrelieved hunger, thirst and torture. Whether or not this is so, it can be seen that this world
merit system allows for the possibility of change, permitting beings to make their own futures through conscious moral action; yet, at the same time, it can be a perfect forum for blaming the victim by excluding the possibility of innocent suffering and oppression and asserting that all beings get what they deserve.

When we look around us at the world it is obvious that one of the realities we must acknowledge is that of hierarchy. The interpretation of a hierarchy as a merit system not only has explanatory power but offers as well a kind of comfort. The interpretation becomes an expression of faith in the goodness of the world as we find it. But this account of reality can seldom withstand a careful scrutiny, and so it is that the early Mahayanists, like the advocates of the New World Order, have an incomplete faith in this merit system. In the case of the advocates of the New World Order, We need only look carefully at their statements and actions to discover that they are quite aware of the role of accident, inherited wealth, brute force and so on in the gaining and maintaining of a position at the top of the world political hierarchy. We also find them reluctant, despite contrary rhetoric, to allow competition on a level playing field; and the displacement of those in power is considered out of the question, regardless of the challenger's claims to "merit." For their part, the Mahayanists, for quite different reasons, also manifest deep discomfort with the merit system as an adequate representation of the world.

In his 1932 book, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, Har Dayal says of the great bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokitesvara:

"As a bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara is the personification of Mercy. He abrogates and nullifies the old law of karma, as he visits the purgatory of avici and makes it a cool and pleasant place (Ka. Vy., p. 6). He goes to the realm of the pretas and gives them plenty of food and drink... In the purgatories, he creates a lake of honey and wonderful lotuses... In the country of Magadha, he finds that the people have become cannibals on account of a famine: he helps them by raining down water, rice, cereals, clothes..."
Some will say that the text to which Dayal is here referring, the Karandavyuha, is a late “Puranic” sutra and not typical of Indian Mahayana. Yet I believe Dayal’s description of Avalokitesvara’s abrogation and nullification of karma captures something that was crucial to the bodhisattva conception from the very beginning: the bodhisattva’s task is not to determine who among the starving deserve food but to give food to the starving. It is not the bodhisattvaìs task to give beings what they deserve, no matter what criteria are used to determine this, but to give beings what they need.

If merit were the final word about goodness and truth in the universe there would be no need for the bodhisattva at all. We would need only priests to sing the praises of the order and intellectuals to make it sound reasonable. The bodhisattva is an altogether different sort of being. The fundamental principles according to which the bodhisattva acts are not produced by the order, do not sustain the order, and, in fact, may even violate it, because the rules of the order do not represent the highest good either in the universe at large or in living beings. These highest goods are enlightenment and compassion and the aspiration to bring them to perfections.

The bodhisattva does not look to beings at the top of the cosmic hierarchy for teaching in enlightenment and compassion. In fact, there are in the Indian Buddhist tradition more stories about the compassion and wisdom of animals than of the compassion and wisdom of the gods. These qualities come through struggle, pain and sacrifice, not through ease and pleasure, and they can be found in the lowest of beings. And although the bodhisattva is described as regarding all beings as his or her children -- an apparently paternalistic attitude -- the bodhisattva is in the same breath described as regarding them as mother and father. The bodhisattva is prepared to learn from beings and does not regard them as inferior.

The Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita says: “The Bodhisattva has not abandoned all beings. He has made the special vows to set free all those beings.”

We are in the presence of an emancipation narrative, but one very different from the national emancipation narratives seen earlier. The subjects (actors) are not nations; the dynamic is not competition; the goal is not dominance; force is not an option. The essentials of this narrative can be given as follows.

In the vastness of immeasurable space, in time with neither beginning nor end, a living being has an aspiration, the aspiration to understand the condition of being-in-the-world and to be free of suffering. The aspiration embraces other living beings, for it regards them as part of the “we” that suffer.

The aspiration is the “thought of enlightenment” (bodhicitta), the arising of which makes one a bodhisattva and makes bodhisattvatic action possible. Standing in this aspiration a being is no longer imprisoned by the cosmic order. This being has a new vision of, and insight into, the world, which engenders a purpose for living. Having this vision and insight the bodhisattva is no longer utterly lost, no longer in a conditions of pure wandering (samsara). The bodhisattva makes a vow to attain the goals of understanding and freedom from suffering and to bring others to this goal, and further vows to establish, when enlightened, an environment or condition of being (Buddha-land, buddhaksetra) in which beings will be sufficiently free from material want to devote themselves to intellectual and spiritual cultivation. The bodhisattva then sets out on the difficult journey, which may take an enormous time to complete but which is given energy and direction by the aspiration and vow.

15. Ibid., p. 225.
16. “After I have won enlightenment, I will see to it that in my Buddha-field no such deserts exist, or are even conceivable. And I will bestow on all beings so much merit that they shall have the most excellent water...after I have won enlightenment, in that Buddha-field there will be no foodless wastes, and none will be even conceivable...after I have won full enlightenment, all beings in my Buddha-field shall not suffer from sickness, and shall not even know what it is.” Ibid., pp. 218-219.
Note the relationship, in this narrative, of the bodhisattva's pilgrimage to the cosmic order. The aspiration that sets the bodhisattva on the path does not come from the natural functioning of this order. It comes mysteriously, usually through contact with another being who has had the aspiration. This lineage has nothing to do with travelling up and down the cosmic hierarchy. It is fundamentally outside the system.

Bodhisattvic action is based on the anti-hierarchical insight into, in Santideva's words, "the equality of the other and of the self" (paratmasamata). This insight, when genuinely experienced, is inevitably subversive of dehumanizing hierarchies that disguise themselves as merit systems. It is one of the most politically potent of insights. In keeping with the aspiration for enlightenment, it ties the epistemic or noetic (it is an insight) to the normative (certain "shoulds" and "musts" follow the insight). It is directly linked to that most subversive of concepts, "justice."

When former U.S. military officer Brian Willson sat down on the train tracks outside the Concord Naval Weapons Station in California on September 1, 1987, with a group of protesters, aiming to block weapons shipments to the Nicaraguan Contras, he said: "We are not worth more. They are not worth less." By "we" he meant U.S. Citizens and, more widely, members of the First World; by "they" he meant Nicaraguan peasants and, more widely, members of the Third World. His words and his action can, it seems to me, be seen as the political expression in the contemporary world of the "equality of the other and of the self." And when the decision was made to run down the protesters, and Brian lost both his legs beneath the munitions train, he concretized for us the

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17. Santideva captures this sense of mystery thus: "As a blind man my obtain a jewel in a heap of dust, so somehow, this Thought of Enlightenment has arisen even within me." Marion Matics, trans. and intro., *Entering the Path of Enlightenment: The Bodhicaryavatara of the Buddhist poet Santideva* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), p. 155.


19. The facts given here were obtained largely from unpublished sources, including discussions with Brian Willson.
bodhisattva “sacrificing hands and feet” (hastapadan parityajan)²⁰ for other beings.

In the Bodhicaryavatara Santideva says: “There is certainly no accomplishment, no Buddhahood, or even happiness in the realms of rebirth, for the one who does not exchange his own happiness for the sorrow of another.”²¹ “Another’s sorrow is to be destroyed by me,” he says, “because it is sorrow like my own sorrow.”²² He refers to the exchange of self and other as the “supreme mystery”²³ of the bodhisattva’s path. This mystery certainly belongs to a lineage outside the dominant First World order.²⁴ It violates a fundamental principle of that order, indirectly taught to us from childhood and now, with the proclamation of the New World Order, more firmly entrenched than ever: “We are worth more. They are worth less.” Being worth less, they can, when designated as enemies, be slaughtered in the night from Apache attack helicopters. To resist this principle of hierarchy is, like Brian Willson, to resist both politically and spiritually. I do not hesitate to call this resistance bodhisattvic action.

Bodhisattvic action, as I speak of it here, does not entail formal adherence to Buddhist doctrine, nor need it be as dramatic as Brian Willson’s. Every action that brings into the world the mystery of the equality of the other and the self, in however humble a way, is bodhisattvic action. It becomes part of the plot of one of the great narratives of humanity.

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²¹ Matics, p. 205.
²³ Ibid., p. 204.
²⁴ I do not wish to imply that there is a single order in North America within which people outside the First World are devalued. There are elements in the political and cultural traditions of North Americans that tend toward the valuing of all human beings as equal. But these elements are under systematic attack by contrary forces in the political and cultural orders and, strikingly, in the dominant economic order.
Choosing our Stories

To show that narrative has been used, as in the Gulf War, to legitimate a set of actions, is not automatically to prove the set of actions wrong. We all use narrative to interpret our world and there is not reason we should not. But in choosing our stories we should keep three questions in mind: Is the narrative respectful of the truth? Is there a sound connection between the narrative and the action it is supposed to explain or legitimate? Is the narrative a worthy one for human beings?

Stories that capture the imagination and energy of large numbers of people usually contain some elements of truth. This is certainly the case for the Gulf War narratives. Iraqi armed forces did invade Kuwait; they did pillage, kill and torture. A story that incorporates these facts is certainly not all false. And, on the other side, the all-Sabah family is extraordinarily wealthy and invests its wealth in such a way as to benefit the industrialized world and increase its strength and dominance rather than in ways that would benefit the Arab world. A narrative that incorporates these facts is not entirely without foundation. Yet each narrative fails to do justice to the complicated truth of the situation.

Quite apart from the truth or falsity of a narrative or set of narratives, we must be attentive to the relations between story and act. There is frequently a point of mystification where the story ends and the action begins. It is true that Iraqi armed forces invaded Kuwait and caused great suffering. I also assume that this should be unacceptable to the world community. It does not follow from this that one is justified in invading Iraq, causing twenty to fifty times more casualties than the original invasion. Narratives are dangerous if we are unable to distinguish what they legitimize from what they do not legitimize.

25. This estimate is based on claims of 2000 - 5000 Kuwaitis killed during the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait and 100,000 Iraqis killed during the invasion of Iraq. These are figures that became rather standard during the war. A Greenpeace-sponsored study by Peter Bahouth and Willian Arkin reported, in late May, 1991, somewhat higher figures for casualties in the invasion of Iraq (The Globe and Mail, May 30, 1991, A16). Studies of the health of the Iraqi population since the end of the war suggest that the imbalance between the two invasions continues to increase.
Finally, a community should subject its narratives to moral scrutiny, asking whether or not they are worthy of the values of the community. Is the central national narrative of the United States really a worthy narrative? Is it not time Manifest Destiny was put to rest?

As I conclude, let me say that I believe there is as great a thirst as ever for metanarrative, and that the question is not whether or not there will be metanarratives but what the accepted ones will be. Will they be grounded in reality or fantasy? Will they be worthy of our commitment or will they betray us to the unworthy? Will they draw us toward morality, centeredness and wisdom, or will they draw us towards brutality, dissipated consciousness and stupidity?

The New World Order has been announced but is not fully realized. George Bush continues to narrate, and the real world continues, in diverse ways, to resist his narration. Bodhisattva narrative will continue to be part of this resistance.