

# **Christianity and Buddhism**

## **Two Paths One Ground**

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**for**

**Christina, Samuel, Zoe, and Kenneth Goodrow**

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# I

## Christianity: The Gnosis of Light

### The Mystical Teaching of Judaism and Christianity: The Omitted Bible

A great misfortune befell Christianity.  
—Eliphus Levi

Clearly, the Christian Bible, with its absence of sacred texts from the entire intertestamental period—the *Old Testament Pseudepigraphas* (excluded Jewish texts), the *New Testament Christian Apocrapha* (excluded *Gospels, Acts, Letters, Apocalypses*) including all Gnostic and *Essene* texts—has given us an extremely censored and limited view of the actual teaching of Jesus the Christ, and indeed, of the entire Judeo-Christian religious wisdom tradition. The deleted Christian *Apocrypha* gives us a clear picture of the life and belief of early Christendom.

The magnificent nondual mystical *Zohar* from the *Kabbalah*; *Hermes Trismagistus*; *Plotinus*; *Enoch*; *The Infancy Gospels*; *The Gnostic Gospels*; *The Essene Dead Sea Scrolls*; *The Apochraphal Acts*; *The Apocalypses*; all were omitted for arbitrary and political reasons by the Orthodox Christian Church during the first four centuries after Jesus. [Yeshua in Hebrew] Nearly all of the esoteric, interior, mystical, spiritual, participatory, experiential literature is omitted—sacrificed to the political ambitions and fears of the early Church bishops, and later, to the prevailing anti-spiritual, anti-metaphysical rationalism of the 17th century European Enlightenment. This early psychological attitude still characterizes mainstream Christianity to this day. What are the causes of this Christian catastrophe?

### The Gnostic Challenge to the Early Church

Although the essential pith teachings of Kabbalistic Valentinian Gnostic Christianity and Thomas Christianity (*Gospel of Thomas, Book of Thomas, and Acts of Thomas*) are essentially monistic and even nondual, most Gnostic speculative systems of the first three centuries after Jesus were ontologically dualistic regarding the separation of matter and Spirit, humanity and God. Indeed, this holds true of the outer exoteric views of all religions. The conventional, traditional view is materialistic and dualistic while the esoteric teaching is more subtle. [The wisdom traditions of humankind all possess three levels of understanding: exclusivist conceptual outer exoteric; inner esoteric; and 'innermost secret' noetic nondual nonconceptual unity of knowing subject and its perceived objects in God.]

In much of the Gnostic literature the phenomenal world of matter and humankind ("The Darkness") is but a shadowy Platonic reflection of the perfection of God ("The Light"). Here humanity and God are essentially separated by spacetime material reality, and are

destined to remain so only until reunited with God at physical death of the body. In this outer dualistic view, liberation during life is precluded. God is eternally transcendent, physically and spiritually, abiding in a separate cosmic realm—*Pleroma*. God is "other" and "alien" to humanity. [Marcion, the Mandaeans, Basilides] God is unknown and unknowable. Positive qualities appear—light, life, mind (*psyche*), spirit (*pneuma*)—but outer *exoteric* Gnostic theology, including dualistic outer exoteric Gnostic Christianity, is negative.

Christian Gnosticism borrowed heavily from Greek Hellenistic philosophy, particularly Platonic dualism, Orphism and Pythagoreanism, deriving its cosmogony (its origin) and cosmology (its nature) from Plato's *Timaeus*, as well as from the Hebrew *Genesis*. Dualism arises with the creation of matter by an evil Platonic demiurge (separate Creator God). Humankind is redeemed only by faith—*pistis*: exoterically belief; esoterically, self-ego-I surrender in the Savior that is Jesus the Christ who descends into spacetime to transmit to humankind the true Gnosis of Light (nondual primordial awareness wisdom, gnosis, *jnana*, *yeshe*) that is our 'supreme identity' as spiritual 'beings of light'.

The essential difference between the *esoteric* Gnostics and the Orthodox Church is this: The Church insisted that the way to salvation was simple faith (*pistis* as belief), whereas the nondual Gnostics insisted upon intrinsic Gnosis, indwelling Primordial Awareness Wisdom. Those who follow the way of the "Gnosis of Light" will be saved from a hell of continuous reincarnation and death. Reincarnation, the "pre-existence of the soul" and its transmigration through many lifetimes was an important doctrine of Jewish and Christian faith and belief until the second Christian Council of Constantinople in 553 CE.

The origins of both dualistic exoteric Gnosticism and its nondual version are highly syncretistic, the authors freely using the ideas of not only Plato and the Greeks, the Egyptians, Plotinus, the Hebrews, but Persian-Iranian-Babylonian speculative religious philosophy as well. Indeed, these two groups form the mainstreams of Gnostic theological speculation—Egypto-Greek culminating in Christian Gnosticism, and the Persian-Iranian culminating in Mani and Manichaeism. It was the Babylonian Mani (215-276 CE) who introduced dualistic Vedic, Buddhist and Zoroastrian elements into Gnostic Christianity. The great mind of Valentinus (c.100-165 CE) knew and taught a nondual Gnostic view.

Both outer and inner Gnosticism provided a challenge to the Christian Orthodoxy of the early Church that led to the defining of the dualistic, materialist, rationalist, anti-mystical view of the Church that characterizes contemporary Christianity today. [Pagels 1978, 2003, Meyer 1992] The Christian Roman emperors and early Church bishops responded to the Gnostic challenge by declaring all Gnostic teaching heretical, and fixing the *New Testament* canon (Council of Carthage, 397) to the exclusion of all Gnostic *Gospels*, *Acts* and *Letters*, except the *Gospel of John*, which was a Gnostic text, and the authentic *Letters of Paul*, which, although used as polemic by early Church heresiologists, was, in its esoteric aspect, profound nondual Gnostic teaching, as we shall soon see.

Foremost among the Gnostic sages were the producers of the heretical, mystical, nondual Valentinian doctrine of the great poet/scholar/mystic Valentinus (100-165), and his disciples Ptolemy, Heracleon, Theodotus, and Marcus (2nd century CE). Also of importance were the dualistic Gnostics Marcion of Sinope (85-165), and the Babylonian, Mani, founder

of pagan Manichaeism which so profoundly influenced St. Augustine.

Valentinus was Egyptian, educated in Alexandria by Theodus, the great disciple of Paul, and taught his nondual monistic Gnostic mysticism in Rome in 135 to 160 CE, to the particular consternation of Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon (in Gaul). The good Bishop's treatise against Gnostic heresy (*Against Heresies* 180 CE) is a five volume polemic—written in perfect Greek—against the exegesis of Ptolemy, the great Gnostic synthesizer of the nondual Valentinian doctrine. These Gnostic's rejected 1) the outer exoteric, vindictive theistic Creator God (demiurge) of the Greeks and Hebrews ("Men make gods and worship their creation", *Gospel of Philip*, Gnostic). 2) They refused to accept the authority of the Orthodox Church bishops. 3) They insisted that spiritual (*pneuma*) evolution and redemption in human beings is an internal, individual, mystical transformation, not an exoteric conventional system of confession and belief. That noble heresy led to the casting out of the great Valentinus and his followers from the early Christian Church in 143 CE.

By the time of the conversion to Christianity of the Roman Emperor Constantine in 313 CE and the first Council of Bishops in Nicaea in 325 CE, Jesus' great monistic nondual mystical teaching of the "Gnosis of Light" had been officially excluded from the Orthodox Catholic Church, and thereby lost to billions of Christians until the recent discovery in 1945 of the *Nag Hammadi Library*, and in 1947 of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*—mainly *Essene Scriptures*.

Ultimately the Gnostic teaching, both dualistic and nondual, of the first three centuries was assimilated into pagan non-Christian Persian-Iranian Manichaeism which had become the dominant religion in Central Asia by the ninth century, before finally succumbing to Islam. It survives today with the Mandaean in Iran and Iraq.

Esoterically, however, the Promethean nondual Gnostic teaching of the Thomas and Valentinian Christians continues today as the radical mystical teaching of the Primordial Awareness Wisdom gnosis (*jnana*, *yeshe*) that is our great Wisdom Tradition of humanity. There it may be rediscovered in the esoteric inner, innermost secret, and nondual teachings—albeit through slightly different metaphors—in the Buddhist tradition through Ati Dzogchen, Essence Mahamudra and Saijojo Zen; in the Taoist tradition of the yoga of the *Returning of the Light*; and in the Vedic/Hindu tradition of the Advaita Vedanta (monistic nondual *jnana* and *raha* yoga) of the great 9th century Hindu saint Adi Shankara.

### **Orthodox Heresiology and the Survival of the Christian Church**

In the first century after Jesus Christians were remarkably diverse in their faith and belief, but by 200 CE Christianity had become an institution, headed in Rome by a three rank hierarchy of bishops, priests and deacons, the guardians of the "one true faith". All else was heresy. Bishop Irenaeus, himself martyred by the Romans in 202, persecuted and suppressed the Gnostics and others, which led eventually to the concealing of the *Nag Hammadi* texts, sometime after the Creed of Nicaea (Council of Nicaea, 325). Outside of the "one true church there can be no salvation". [Bishop Irenaeus] When this Orthodoxy gained military and political support after Roman Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity (313), the penalty for heresy was death. The Orthodox teaching on the resurrection led by Irenaeus and



Tertullian legitimized a hierarchy of the Church through which all Christians must approach God. Yet, Gnostic teaching offered direct access to God through one's individual spiritual practice and realization under guidance of a qualified master in context of the spiritual community. For Gnostics the Church hierarchy was unnecessary for salvation. Clearly, such heresy threatened the Orthodox bishops, and their absolute authority over the early Church. Yes. The Orthodox penalty for such egregious heresy was death.

According to Elaine Pagels<sup>1</sup>, had Christianity remained multiform it may not have survived. Its survival may well be due to the organization and authoritarian theological structure of the early church. This process of establishing Christian Orthodoxy ruled out Gnostic/Kabbalistic mysticism, and all other options. The Gnostic inner esoteric view, based on direct spiritual experience, would not again surface until Meister Eckhart (d.1329) and Paracelsus (d.1541), and in the Protestant Reformation through mystics such as Jacob Boehme (d.1624). The outer exoteric Protestant movements however, remained within the framework of basic Catholic Orthodoxy established by 200 CE. Protestantism vigorously continued the suppression of esoteric and nondual Gnostic mysticism.

One cannot help but speculate: had the nondual mystic Valentinus won election to Pope (Bishop of Rome) certainly the *New Testament* canon developed at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and 'fixed' at the Council of Carthage in 397 would have been very much different indeed. And one wonders what would have been the collaboration of Valentinus and of the former Manichaean Gnostic St. Augustine whose conversion to Orthodoxy so profoundly influenced the fixing of the canon to the exclusion of the esoteric mystical texts.

### **Hidden Treasure at Nag Hammadi**

In 1945, at Nag Hammadi in Egypt—in one of the most important discoveries of the 20th century—Coptic translations of original Greek "Gnostic Gospels" were found in a cave by the shepherd Mohammed Ali. This spiritual treasure is known as the *Nag Hammadi Library*. Scriptures date from 3rd century CE. They reveal Jesus' teaching suppressed by Orthodoxy.

Then in 1947 was the discovery of the *Dead Sea Scrolls* in the Qumran Caves near the West Bank on the northern shore of the Dead Sea. These texts, written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek date from the late Jewish Second Temple period *circa* 3rd century BCE to 1st century CE. They reveal original texts from the ancient Jewish religious sect known as the Essenes. These greatly illumine the emergence of Christianity in the 1st century of Jesus the Christ.

These two great discoveries together give us an accurate and penetrating view of the life and belief of early Christianity, and of the actual mystical teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. The *Nag Hammadi* texts include authentic *Gospels*, *Acts* and *Letters*. Sadly, none of these texts are included in any Christian Bible. They are readily available in contemporary translations as the *Nag Hammadi Library* and the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, and in Barnstone and Meyer's *The Gnostic Bible* (2006). Why were these vital texts excluded from the Christian Bible?

<sup>1</sup> Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (1989); and *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (2003). There is no more authoritative and readable account of the drama of the emergence of Christianity than these concise books.

## Orthodoxy: Anti-Mystical Dualism of the Early Church

*The Gospel of Mary* (Gnostic) illustrates the Orthodox vs. nondual Gnostic viewpoints. Mary represents the Gnostic, feminine, mystical, visionary; Peter represents the skeptical Christian Orthodoxy, suspicious of seeing Jesus in direct yogic mystical vision.

Each Provincial, General and Ecumenical Council omitted more and more of the authentic esoteric interior, mystical texts. The esoteric content of the *Essene* texts (*Dead Sea Scrolls* 1947) and of the Gnostics (*Nag Hammadi Library* 1945) represents the early monistic, inner, secret and in certain texts, the "innermost secret" nondual direct yogic experiential teaching of Jesus. These texts were suppressed in their time and were permanently omitted from the *New Testament* when it was 'fixed' at the Council of Carthage in 397 CE.

Yes, it is generally agreed by historians and Bible scholars that the conventional Orthodox compilers, editors and revisers of what has become the Christian *New Testament* were ideologically and politically opposed to the esoteric, mystical teachings of the nondual Gnostics, and indeed, of all Gnostic teachings and texts, dualistic and nondual, except *John*, and as we shall see, *Paul*. [Cameron 1982, Mack 1995, Koestler 1996, Pagels 1989, Seely 1994, Layton 1987] The nondual wisdom gnosis is monistic ontological Antirealism.

The conventional, exoteric, anti-Gnostic, anti-mystical, anti-pagan orientation of the Christian Church today reflects Orthodoxy's victory over the esoteric, inward view of the *Gospel of Thomas* and of Valentinian Kabbalistic Gnostic Christianity. Exoteric material bodily salvation ('blessedness') prevailed over esoteric spiritual liberation/salvation, which is realization (*apolutrosis*) of the nondual "Gnosis of Light" of Jesus' *Abba*, primordial spirit Father of All, very light of perfect love-wisdom Presence that shines at the spiritual Heart of each human being. What then, did Jesus actually teach? How may we know it beyond belief?

### The Nondual Teaching of Jesus the Christ

Initiation (*teleosis*) into the Gnosis of Light (secret wisdom mysteries) was reserved for the spiritually advanced (the "elect") *pneumatic* Christians. To the uninitiated (the "called" *psychic or pistic* Christians) Jesus taught only in parables (*Matthew, Thomas, Peter, James*). The letter of Peter to Phillip (*Nag Hammadi*) speaks of Jesus after his death appearing as light on the Mount of Olives to teach the "mysteries of the universe". He appears as a bright, luminous presence, in contrast to Orthodox views where he appears in physical bodily form.

Bishop Irenaeus claimed that the legitimacy of the gospels was due to their authorship by Jesus' own disciples. Scholars now do not know who wrote the gospels, but it is universally agreed by Bible scholars that it was not the disciples.

*The Apocalypse of Peter* (Apocrypha) and *The Secret Book of James* (Gnostic) reveal how Jesus selected his more prepared disciples for special revelations leading to their spiritual liberation/enlightenment, attesting to the fact that Gnostic teaching emphasized realization by direct mystical, meditative/contemplative yogic experience. Lesser prepared priests and bishops were offered only "common" tradition. This 'method of the *siddhas*' that is the essence of the master/disciple relationship further threatened the dualistic exoteric

Orthodoxy of Bishop Irenaeus and Tertullian, ultimately leading to the declaration by the Orthodox apologists that *all* Gnostic teachings were heretical. The Church bishops argued that since no one had access to Jesus as did the apostles, later generations must look to the authority of the Church and its priesthood. The essential esoteric, and more subtle innermost secret and nondual mystical teaching of Jesus—that "the Kingdom of God is within you"—was thereby lost to billions of Christians over the next nineteen centuries.

By the latter part of the 2nd Century Orthodoxy insisted on "One God and One Bishop." Clement's (Clement I, Bishop of Rome) letter to Christians in Corinth (c. 90-100 CE) makes the first argument for dividing "the clergy" (priesthood) from the "laity". Whoever refuses to "bow the neck" to the clergy is guilty of insubordination "against the divine master himself." Bishop Ignatius of Antioch defended the same authoritarian principle.

Valentinus, the great poet master of nondual Gnosticism, received secret initiation from Theodus, a disciple of Paul, into the "Secret Doctrine of God." This advanced nondual spiritual discipline teaches that the God of Israel—the God of Orthodoxy—is not the highest God but a dualistic Platonic demiurge or exoteric separate Creator God, the external false "I am God and there is no other" of Christian Orthodoxy and of Israel.

According to the Valentinians and the Thomas literature, the protean encounter with true Gnosis (nondual primordial wisdom, *jnana*, *yeshe*), essential Gnosis of Light, lies in recognition then direct yogic experience through meditative contemplative practice (beyond conceptual belief)—under guidance of a living master—realization of indwelling Presence (*christos*, *logos*, *vidya*, *rigpa*) of monistic ultimate spirit Ground of Being of all spacetime phenomenal reality. That true Gnosis knows "The Depth" (*Bathos*) or multi-dimensionality ('many mansions') of selfless, timeless, perfectly subjective nondual God, Supreme Source, the one "All-in-All", the "I Am That I Am" of Enoch, Moses, and the prophets that is pure, primordial nondual *ultimate* Spirit Ground in whom arises all this *relative* stuff of reality.

*How may we realize this wisdom?* Through this always indwelling love-wisdom Presence of primordial awareness Ground of Being the initiate is "released" or liberated (*apolutrosis*)—redeemed from lesser Platonic creator demiurge and separate Creator God of Israel (*Yahweh*, *Elohim*). Here the initiate is embraced by transcendent spiritual truth of nondual godhead—by whatever hallowed name—beyond relative conditional existence, beyond discursive thinking of concept-belief (*dianoia*, *doxa*, *namtok*), indeed, ultimately beyond all distinctions and dualism, including the dualism of dual and nondual, exoteric and the esoteric responses, existence and nonexistence, indeed beyond human concept-mind altogether. That is purity and power of direct yogic contemplative experience—*yogi pratyaksa*.

Such is the ultimate nondual monism of Jesus' teaching on the Gnosis of Light as we discover it in the Valentinian and Thomas literature. It is lucid and present in nondual Nestorian Christianity of the Syriac Nicene Church of the East. It is essentially the same nondual Primordial Awareness Wisdom teaching that is the heart of esoteric Buddhism (*Mahamudra*, *Dzogchen*), Hindu nondual *Advaita Vedanta*, and nondual Taoism (*Tao chia*). It is this great primordial love-wisdom teaching that the masters, mahasiddhas, saints and sages of 'the three times' (past, present, future) have taught to their prepared disciples.

## The Gnostic Trinity: Father, Mother and Son

Nondual Gnostic texts describe God as a dyad embracing our masculine and feminine aspects. God is androgynous. The Son of God that descends as "The Mind" (awareness) is androgynous. God is not a separate Creator God. God is the nondual supreme source ground of everything, the Depth (*Bathos*), ineffable, unspeakable "Primal Father", "The Womb and Mother of All" (Valentinus). Christ speaks to John (*Apocryphon of John*, Gnostic): "I am the One who is with you always. I am the Father. I am the Mother. I am the Son". An esoteric trinity. In the *Gospel to the Hebrews* (Gnostic) Jesus speaks of "My Mother, the Spirit."

In the *Gospel of Thomas* (Gnostic) Jesus speaks of "the Divine Father, the Father of Truth, and the Divine Mother, the Holy Spirit." In the *Gospel of Philip* (Gnostic) Spirit is both Mother and virgin, the counterpart and consort of nondual divine God the Father. "The Father of everything united with the virgin who came down." Here, the untainted, primordially pure selfless Holy Spirit (feminine) descends from formless, timeless, selfless awareness ground into physical world of form. Because the process is allegorical and symbolic, not literal, it is Spirit that is virgin. Christ therefore, born of virgin spirit (esoterically) became interpreted exoterically as "born of a virgin." The Gnostic author of the *Gospel of Philip* ridicules the literal-minded Christians who mistake this process for a magical virgin birth through Mary, Jesus' biological mother, as though she conceived her holy child apart from Joseph.

Adam (primal humanity), being one, is the androgyne who "contains the female within him." [*Thunder*, Gnostic] "I am androgynous, Mother and Father, I procreate myself, I am the womb of the All, I am the glory of the Mother." Our Divine Mother archetype.

The conventional exoteric view of the trinity is of the identity of essence (*homoousia*) of Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Esoterically the view is identity of the divine Primordial Father (*Abba* in Aramaic, the language that Jesus spoke), nondual primordial source of all relative spacetime phenomena with the divine *Kosmic* Mother, pure, unconditioned virgin Holy Spirit who 'descends' upon *pneuma* Holy Spirit breath in the body into conditional, relative spacetime. That creative Divine Mother Nature of Mind (timeless awareness) and all mental and physical form, and The Son—"The Mind"—divine indwelling *christos*, Christ nature seed of form is unrealized spiritual potential of each human being. Each human incarnation descends from the Father/Mother/Creator aspect of nondual primordial Spirit Ground into the world of form, "the Logos made flesh" whose indwelling divine Christ nature (*christos*) Presence realizes then actualizes or demonstrates through compassionate conduct (*hesed*, *charis*, *patheos*, *bodhicitta*) the great nondual truth that "the Kingdom of God is within you", that "Christ liveth in you." That is what Jesus the Christ realized, then taught to all of us.

It is told by our Primordial Wisdom traditions that this timeless, selfless primordial awareness Presence is "always already" present in all beings, and that human beings have the potential to actualize or realize it through committed practice of the "spiritual" path in this very lifetime, prior to death of the body. This great truth, according to the Valentinian and Thomas literature is what Jesus taught. Is what the Buddha taught. [Ch. II]

The monotheistic incarnation theology of both outer exoteric and inner esoteric views of the foregoing trinity christologies agrees as to the identity of the essential nature

(*hypostasis*) of the three aspects or three natures of the one transcendent yet immanent God. Such an understanding is expressed in the Johannine *Logos* christology derived from the monistic Neoplatonic metaphysics of Plotinus and of the Stoics, and is a nondual monistic transcendental theology. This triune essential nature of nondual God is monistic for it is of one sacred substance (*homoousia*): Primordial Father, Mother Holy Spirit, *Christos/Logos* Son. The three are an inseparable prior unity. Trinitarian Monotheism. Ontological monism.

Differences in view lie in the emphasis. The exoteric orientation emphasizes the separate, material, bodily aspect of the incarnation (descent of Spirit), resurrection and return (ascent of Spirit) to the *Logos* as Jesus, mystical *Logos*, Son of the one Hebrew God. Here, Jesus is God. Jesus the *christos* Presence and humanity are viewed as separate. Thus the dualism.

*The esoteric and the nondual emphasis of the Gnostic Thomas and Valentinian teaching is indwelling spiritual Presence (christos, I Am) of divine Logos that is one essential nature, not just of Jesus who realized it, but as present in each human being. It is this Presence that the incarnation of Jesus—the Son of Man, mortal human avatar—reveals and mirrors to us as our actual identity is awakened and resurrected through the gradual process of spiritual (pneumatic) transformation—nondual realization of luminous, numinous Gnosis of Light.*

### **The Gnostics Openness to Women**

The Gnostics showed a rare and remarkable openness to women. Jesus violated Jewish law by speaking openly with women and including them among his companions. Though Paul acknowledges women as his equal "in Christ", he would not advocate their equality socially and politically. By the end of the 2nd Century women's participation in Orthodox worship was explicitly condemned by the Church as heretical.

Meanwhile, the *Dialog of the Savior* (Gnostic) praises Mary the Magdalene above Thomas and Matthew. Her gnosis and compassion surpassed even Peter's, yet she was never recognized as an apostle by the Orthodox Church. In the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* Mary Magdalene represents primordial love-wisdom gnosis, whereas Peter, Matthew and "the disciples" cannot comprehend this nondual esoteric teaching. Although Clement of Alexandria affirmed women's active participation in the Church, the Orthodox majority adopted Tertullian's uncompromising position that women were not worthy of active participation. This global blatant bias against women persists even now in both Catholic and Protestant Christian Churches.

Moreover, the Valentinian Gnostics view of sexual intercourse is unique in the history of Judaism and Christianity. Sex between husband and wife promotes spiritual development! The Hermetic/Gnostic idea of androgyny, the male/female polarity within each human being was further developed by this Christian Gnostic group, and by the Gnostic communities of Thomas and John. Theodotus and his disciple Valentinus may have had access to Tibetan *Bön* and/or Vedic tantric teaching regarding the use of sexual energy in spiritual practice. The Babylonian Mani (215-276) was certainly familiar with Vedic and Indian Buddhist tantric tradition and practice.

## Martyrdom and the Passion of Jesus

The exponents of heresy in the 2nd Century, those Orthodox Christian Bishop apologists— Ignatius, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Justinian—all affirmed martyrdom at the hands of the Romans and considered those who opposed it heretics. Even those Gnostics who were martyred were denied its value—they were merely “a sort of retinue for the true Orthodox martyrs”. [Pagels 1989]

However, most Gnostic heretics opposed martyrdom on religious grounds. They did not believe that martyrdom alone offers redemption. Further, it was a foolish waste of life, an easy way out— as if “through suffering for one hour they purchase for themselves eternal life.” [*The Testimony of Truth*, Gnostic] As if God desires human sacrifice. As if salvation/enlightenment were not about living, but merely dying. *The Apocalypse of Peter* (Gnostic) describes how Peter finally becomes enlightened and discovers the true meaning of the Passion of Jesus. The seduction and coercion of followers and children to be slaughtered, and expressions of joy at this is repulsive to Peter according to the Gnostic author of this text.

The Orthodox view of The Passion of Jesus the Christ is as a sacrifice, an expiation which somehow redeems all of humanity from guilt and sin. The Gnostic view is quite different. Here, Jesus’ death is a Promethean paradigm that recognizes the divine *christos* seed Presence and its divine potential for liberation that is always present within all human beings.

Christ's suffering during his crucifixion is assumed by all Gnostic texts. Most are concerned to show how his incarnation as human was an injunction, an exemplar by a great avatar who incarnated from God the Primordial Father to demonstrate the way to transcend and prevail over suffering and death by virtue of divine light, very Gnosis of Light that lives immortal at the heart of each human form. He demonstrated the Way to transcend this mortal coil and to “overcome the world.” He taught that to “confess Christ” means not outer confession to being a Christian before a judge, or to friends and associates, but to confess and demonstrate Christ Consciousness, inner *christos* Presence in compassionate, everyday acts and conduct. “The greatest commandment is love,” and love is the daily activity and action of compassionate, loving service; giving wisely to others—*charis*, *hesed*, grace, charity, *tonglen*, loving-kindness, mercy, *ahimsa*, *karuna*-compassion, *bodhicitta*. “Therefore love one another as I have loved you.” That is precisely the Primordial Wisdom view (gnosis, *jnana*, *yeshe*) of our Great Wisdom Tradition, whether Veda/Vedanta, Taoist, Buddhist, Judaic, or Islamic.

Sadly, the exoteric Orthodox view of martyrdom finally prevailed. Roman persecution gave solidity to the Church organization. It encouraged communication—consider Ignatius letter on his way to death in the arena—increasing doctrinal, ritual, canonical, and political uniformity and unity “even to the ends of the earth”. [Irenaeus]

Gnostics however, who resisted this conformity were scattered and lost. [Pagels, 1989] The esoteric truth is however, that Jesus' sacrifice redeems humanity from “this ocean of incarnation and death” (Paul) only when an individual realizes, then demonstrates the “Great Love” of nondual God the Father through moment to moment kindness, generosity and compassionate service to other beings. Wonder of wonders such harmless happiness begins again and again for each one in this eternal moment now, upon each mindful breath.

## Physical Experience or Spiritual Experience?

Orthodox Church tradition insists on a material, bodily interpretation of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Exoterically, bodily, not spiritual experience is the central fact of human life. What one does physically (or abstinence from it): eat, drink, sex, work, death is what marks spiritual life and development. Those esoteric and nondual oriented Gnostics however, viewed the physical dimension as immaterial or illusory (not nonexistent) and emphasized the "inner spirit" and the direct contemplative or mystical experience of the divine within each individual. For these nondual Gnostics it is the mortal human Jesus that descended into spacetime to demonstrate this inner spirit of the *christos* Presence or Christ nature within each human being. Unfortunately, this is not the Jesus that Christians have idealized and worshiped for 2000 years. It is an immortal 'Jesus as God' that Christians have worshipped. *During his life Jesus cautioned against such an outer exoteric idealization or deification of any individual human—including himself—at the expense of personal realization of divine christos Presence within each human being.* "Seek the Kingdom of God within you." "Become a disciple of your own mind who is father of truth." "I am not your master...Light the light within you." Jesus' teaching always directs us to turn to the "light within"; that innermost secret spiritual Gnosis of Light that is our authentic supreme identity of supreme source Ground of Being of everything. Indeed, that is the esoteric teaching of all of the spiritual masters and adepts of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition of humankind.

*The Gospel of John* was a Gnostic primary source. Yet it was included, after much debate, in the Orthodox *New Testament* canon. *John* speaks for the Christ: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me." Here one finds God only through Christ, and one finds Christ only through the Church. Thus Orthodoxy was strengthened. Conversely, the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* avoids this connection of agency through the priesthood of the Church. "There is light within a being of light, and it lights the whole world. If he does not shine, he is darkness." Here, one is directed to the innermost Gnosis of Light that is the "disciple of your own mind." The esoteric Gnostic Gospels of *Thomas*, *Philip*, *Mary* and many others were of course, all omitted from the Orthodox *New Testament* Bible.

Dualistic Christian Orthodoxy defined God oppositely from the nondual Gnostics, who considered theology to be anthropology. The perennial truth "Know thyself" (Socrates) is the imperative to know one's own *gnosis*, one's essential mind nature. That mind essence is spiritual quest par excellence, for ultimately and in spirit we are all enfolded and arise in nondual perfectly subjective Spirit Ground. Beyond ethnicity, creed or belief we all share the same God. Yes, on the accord of our Great Wisdom Tradition, this lucid numinous Ground of Being is the 'supreme identity' Presence of each one of us, without a single exception.

*To "know thyself" deeply and authentically is to recognize, realize then manifest that nondual logos/christos heart Presence of very source and nature of timeless, formless, selfless primordial awareness-consciousness ground, luminous essence and nature of mind, by whatever holy name, always already present at spiritual Heart of each and every human being. That is who we are.*

Such was profound esoteric Hebrew, Hellenistic, Hermetic/Orphic/Vedic mysticism which Moses and the Jews, and Jesus, and the nondual Gnostics inherited from the Ancients.

So yes, the nondual Valentinian Gnostic view of our human condition was much different from Christian Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy followed the dualistic Hebrew tradition of the *Old Testament* that sin separates humanity from God. Sin (*hamartia*), "missing the mark," is redeemable only through the agency of Jesus and the Church. Gnostics however, viewed *hamartia* as primal ignorance—*avidya* in the Hermetic, Vedic-Hindu and Buddhist traditions. *Hamartia* or ignorance creates the suffering (*pathos*), that is forgetfulness or *amnesia*, unconsciousness or unawareness of our divine indwelling spirit Gnosis of Light.

The Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* warns that transcendental self-discovery involves much inner turmoil for self. Here Jesus criticized the magical view of "The Kingdom of Heaven" as a literal physical place. "The Kingdom of God is within you and it is outside you; it is spread upon the face of the earth, but you do not see it." The Kingdom of Heaven then, is a state of always present *christos* Presence, mystical, transcendental enlightened Christ Consciousness. Human salvation and redemption, liberation, enlightenment (*apolutrosis*) comes not through a future physical historical event—a paracletic Second Coming—but through practice of the spiritual path that is free will and choice of ego-self-transcending internal spiritual transformation within each individual. "Who is it that seeks, and who is it that reveals?" It is not an external teacher said Jesus. Nor is it Jesus himself. "I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become the luminous spring that I have tended". [ *Thomas 13*] The master/teacher only guides and mirrors divine *logos/christos* Presence that is always already present at spiritual Heart (*hridayam*) of the devotee/disciple. "The one who reveals" is bright indwelling Presence of Christ Nature, the guru/teacher/knower within each human heart-mind, mirrored always by the outer Guru. That external 'master' however, is necessary to guide the disciple to this realization. Master helps disciple to "become a disciple of your own mind which is the Father of Truth." [ *Testimony of Truth, Gnostic*]

"Each human being is a dwelling place and therein—at the spiritual heart—dwells an infinite reality, the very source of the kosmos, yet it exists in a latent condition." [Simon Magus]

How does one accomplish the Gnosis of Light? *Zostrianos* (*Nag Hammadi Library*) tells us that we must transcend physical desires, reduce the chaos of conceptual mind by meditation and mantra prayer (e.g. the "Jesus Prayer"), receive the vision from the "messenger of light," and do not be discouraged along the way. [Compare with the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist *Three Statements of Garab Dorje* in Boaz 2025 *The Open Secret of Human Happiness*]

Such a difficult interior contemplative path was not for the uninitiated masses. One who receives, practices, then realizes the true Gnosis of Light is "no longer a Christian, but a Christ." [ *Gospel of Philip, Gnostic*] Such a one realizes, then demonstrates through compassionate conduct the innermost secret Gnosis of Light—the Christ Consciousness that is indwelling *christos* Presence of Christ Nature Buddha mind present in all human beings.

Orthodoxy on the other hand required only a confession of the simplest essentials of faith and celebrated simple rituals demanding a minimum of spiritual commitment. It is difficult to see how the Christian religion could have survived without this basic, simple framework. Powerful ideas do not make a religion powerful.

—Elaine Pagels 1989



## The Price Paid

What was the result for future generations of Christians due to the omissions and distortions by the early Orthodox Church of Jesus' ecstatic nondual mystical vision and teaching? Today, in the 21st Century, the vast majority of the world's Christians have not been introduced to the great nondual mystical Gnosis of Light that we now know was the heart essence of Jesus' actual teaching. Nor have the billions of Christians of the past twenty centuries. The profound nondual practice of transcendence of egocentric 'primal ignorance' (*hamartia/sin, avidya*)—direct selfless *kenosis* yoga that Jesus transmitted—is available (at least in written form) in the mystical nondual Gnostic texts of the Valentinians, and of the *Thomas* literature, and of other Christian texts referred to at the beginning of this chapter. The *Nag Hammadi Library* and *The Gnostic Bible* are excellent sources in new translation for this vital material. [Meyer 2007, Barnstone 2006] However, without the physical presence of a living qualified master to mirror the inner love-wisdom gnosis and to guide the teaching these, and all esoteric texts remain largely exoteric. Buddhism offers such guidance.

*Now, 2000 years after the death of Jesus the Christ these sacred texts remain taboo for many Christians. An exoteric, anti-mystical conventional Christian religion has prevailed in this Postmodern world of scientific and spiritual materialism. And our essential Primordial Wisdom Tradition teaching of the esoteric transmission of the nondual love-wisdom from master to prepared disciple has been mostly lost to Christianity. Still, qualified esoteric Christian teachers are available.*

Yes. The popularization and "universalization" of Christianity by the early Church offered salvation through mere external exoteric faith, ritual and law, rather than through rigorous ego self-transcending contemplative meditation on and realization of the nondual Gnosis of Light that Jesus taught. This popularization allowed the later bishops of the Orthodox Church and their Roman converts to suppress the great monistic, nondual primordial wisdom teaching of Jesus the Christ that is his transmission to us of "The Word" of the *logos christos* Presence that is lucid indwelling Gnosis of Light. Indeed, most scholars agree, the *Gnostic Gospel of Thomas* and the esoteric nondual Valentinian Gnostic record of the teaching of Jesus is far closer to his actual teaching than the anti-mystical, exoteric Church doctrine represented in the canonical *New Testament* of contemporary versions of the Christian Bible. [Cameron 1982; Koester 1990; Layton 1987; Meyer 1992; Barnstone 1984; Kingsland 1970; Pagels 1989; Duling 1979; Funk 1995; Grant 1966; Mack 1993, 1995; Schoedel 1972, 1980; Williams (1988); Wallace 1992; Boaz 2025]

## Christian Metaphysical Ontology

'Ontology' is conceptual pursuit of the *ultimate* nature of Being. What then is essential Christian ontology? Notwithstanding St. Anselm's logically inconsistent *Ontological Proof for the Existence of God*, we have seen that Jesus the Christ taught of God the Father, monistic, nondual ultimate Spirit—timeless, selfless ("*kenosis*"), perfectly subjective 'ground' in whom all objective spacetime reality arises and abides—beyond any theistic conceptual duality of Creator and Creation. Who am I? Indwelling luminous "I Am" Presence of Ground of Being.

## The Transcendence of Self-Ego-I: Faith, Belief, Gnosis

"Faith" translates the Greek "*pistis*." Exoterically "*pistis*" is belief; esoterically it is *kenosis* surrender of self-ego-I, an opening to receive innermost love-wisdom Gnosis. That was the nondual Gnostic understanding. But by 189 CE, with the elevation to pope of Demetrius I, Bishop of Alexandria in the Egyptian Roman Empire, "faith" had become for Orthodox *pistic* (*psychic*) Christians merely conceptual belief (*dianoia*, *doxa*) which was demonstrated in legalistic, ritual and moral terms. Faith as ego deconstruction and surrender is contemplative/experiential (*epinoia*/penetrating insight) and emotional (*bhakti*, devotion)—is conducive to esoteric meditative practice of mystical ascent into the indwelling Gnosis of Light—*christos* Presence—Christ mind, Christ Consciousness within you here and now.

'Faith' as concept, belief and ritual without surrender of egocentric motives emphasizes objective third person ego-serving conventional conceptual belief and self-serving morality. Faith as ego self-surrender (*kenosis*) opens to That that is beyond our objective dimension and necessarily enters in the realm of first person subjective, contemplative or mystical experience—ego-transcending deep nondual prayer/meditation. As human heart-mind opens to receive, ego with its concepts and beliefs recedes—breath by mindful breath—into deep subjective cognitive background that is our divine source ground, *ultimate* supreme source of all that arises here in *relative* space and time. That *direct* experience of nondual Spirit is essentially a subjective emotional devotional (*bhakti*) and experientially receptive opening (*yin*), and is prior to objective mental operations of concept and belief (*yang*). It is an urgent psychological truth of the traditions of our human Primordial Wisdom Tradition.

Second century theologians Clement of Alexandria (150-215) and his disciple Origen (185-225) at first attempted to mediate between the dualistic conceptual, ritualized, legalistic Mosaic tradition of the Hebrews and Orthodox Christians, and the nondual heretical monistic Gnosticism of emerging esoteric Christianity. Both men were said to espouse dualistic Orthodoxy and may have engaged in polemics against heretical esoteric Gnostic teaching. Both were almost certainly early initiates of the nondual Gnosis of Light.

*Origen of Alexandria.* Upon Clement's departure from Alexandria in 203 Pope Demetrius I appointed the great early Church Neoplatonic philosopher, scholar, ascetic, and Bible textual theologian Origen of Alexandria to succeed Clement as head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria. Origen was the most prolific Christian author of late antiquity. His grand thesis *On The First Principles* revealed Christianity in an utterly profound esoteric, even nondual text that remains foundational for all later Christian theology. He was fluent in the primary dialects of both Greek and Hebrew, and perhaps Coptic as well. He taught human free will that *chooses* to know the perfection of nondual Ultimate Truth, *paramartha satya* (Plato, Plotinus, Gautama Buddha); reincarnation of the immortal soul; Christ's physical/emotional human nature, and Christian pacifism. Origen was strongly opposed to *docetism*—that Jesus incarnated not into a human body-mind, but as God Himself.

Was Origen Orthodox or nondual Gnostic? Emperor Justinian I ruled him a heretic and condemned his texts to the flames. The Second Council of Constantinople of 553 CE also

condemned his esoteric and nondual work in primordial wisdom tradition of humankind. The subtle spirit mind of Origen had a penchant for philosophical speculation beyond that found in Christian Scripture available to him. Thus was he fluent and comfortable ambulating between authoritarian Christian Orthodoxy and the heretical nondual Gnosis of Light that was the esoteric teaching of Jesus the Christ, and of Gautama the Buddha.

Origen taught that there are three ways we may interpret scripture: 1) "flesh" is exoteric, dualistic, conceptual, objective, literal, textual/historical; 2) "soul" is the ethical/moral dimension of compassionate action/conduct for benefit of living beings; 3) "spirit" is the nonconceptual, nondual, subjective, contemplative mystical Depth (*Bathos*).

Origen was censured by Pope Demetrius I for insubordination, and for introducing nondual Gnostic heresy into his theology. A jealous Demetrius convened in 232 CE a synod which banished Origen from the Egyptian Christian Church of Alexandria.

For Clement and his heart-son Origen, 'faith' had two aspects. With the *pistic* Christians they believed that faith as belief, law, ritual and moral correctness was necessary for salvation. But they also understood and argued that direct, mystical, non-rational, *pneumatic* direct *prana* Gnosis was a necessary aspect, perhaps even the very basis of authentic Christian faith. "From the beginning you are immortal god-children of eternal life." [Clement, *Stromateis* IV, 89 2-3] Told Gautama the Buddha of this present age, "Wonder of wonders, from the very beginning all beings are primordial Buddha." [Chapter II below]

Yes, for early Christianity there were two types of Christian, the exoterically oriented *pistic* or *psychic* (mind) Christian, and the more spiritually mature, esoterically or mystically oriented *pneumatic* (spirit, *prana*, breath) Christian who grew in his/her faith under guidance of an initiated apostolic lineage spiritual master—Jesus, Paul, Theodus, Valentinus.

As we have seen, the Gnosis of Light—trans-conceptual nondual primordial awareness wisdom, *jnana/yeshe*, *vidya/rigpa/christos* Presence—whatever the tradition, has always been transmitted via this "method of the *siddhas*"; that is to say by a qualified, or even enlightened/liberated lineage master to the prepared mind of a disciple or devotee. Due to the subtlety of nondual *kenosis* or selfless 'noself' (Buddha's *anatman*) nature of innermost luminous Gnosis, and the prodigious defenses of the dualistic, self-centered 'spiritualized ego' in resisting its own deconstruction and evolution, intervention by a qualified master is absolutely necessary to Development Stage success, then to ultimate Completion Stage, then Perfection Stage of that prodigious process. 'Spiritual pride' makes that truth a bitter pill.

The Socratic dictum "know thyself" expresses this noble intention. So yes, "It is impossible to know ourselves by ourselves." [Suzuki Roshi] In the process of the deconstruction and transcendence of the destructive self sense—narcissism of self-ego-I—it is the spiritual master who helps the student 'cut through' (*treksho*) the maze of *samsara*, "this ocean of incarnation and death" (Paul), all the way to the end of it. That is the spiritual path.

This then was Jesus' esoteric, mystical teaching of the bright nondual Gnosis of Light that was omitted from the *New Testament* of the Christian Bible. Well, what precisely is this wondrous Gnosis of Light that dwells at spiritual Heart of each human form? What is its relationship to both our *relative* human flourishing, and our *ultimate* human happiness that is spirit liberation enlightenment? That question concerns the way human life is to be lived.

# The Gnosis of Light

Behold the light!...the true light which lights every one that comes  
into the world.

—*Gospel of John*

## The Presence

Jesus taught the truth (*alétheia*) and the goodness/beauty (*agathos/charis/kalos*) of the ancient mysteries, the Primordial Wisdom Tradition of our species that was the radical nondual monistic teaching taught by the great masters of antiquity, and by the great masters who founded the historical religions. This love-wisdom tradition of humankind belongs equally to them all. Esoterically, there is a prior and transcendent unity at the heart of all our human love-wisdom traditions. That unity is subtler or deeper than the exoteric conceptual, moral, theological, epistemological and ontological similarities revealed by philosophy. That unity is the pinnacle where the exoteric traditions merge. That formless timeless unity is base or source ground in whom they all arise. Here lies the implicate, monistic, nondual primordial awareness unity that transcends yet embraces the explicate realities of our wisdom traditions. It is that union of *ultimate being* itself ('interbeing') that is our heart's desire through the *relative becoming* process of the interdependent continuum of outer, inner, innermost secret and nondual religious and philosophical views and practices, albeit expressed through different metaphors, and differing levels of subtlety of understanding. This Base (*gzhi*) or "supreme source" (*Bathos*, *shunyata*/emptiness, *Trikaya*, Ultimate *Bodhicitta*) in whom everything arises is nondual intrinsic "Primordial Awareness Wisdom" —bright clarity-bliss of the Gnosis of Light (*jnana*, *yeshe*).<sup>2</sup>

That nondual Gnosis of Light is the heart essence of esoteric Christianity. This view is perhaps best stated in the one Gnostic Gospel that was included in the *New Testament* canon, the *Gospel of John*: "Behold the light!...the true light which lights every one that comes into the world." It is this light, this potential for enlightenment that is the bright, unawakened "Presence that lives sleep-waiting within each human form". [Schofield 1973] It is this light that is the subject of the profound primordial mystery, subject of the esoteric transcendental aspect of our descent from primordial Ground of Being, and our ascending path of return. This luminous Presence (*christos*, *vidya*, *rigpa*) is the very primordial light of *Genesis*, arising from the Depth (*Bathos*, emptiness) and dwelling at the spiritual Heart of every human being. This true Gnosis is more profound than the dualistic doctrines of the Gnostic Christian heretics. It is more profound than the transcendental theology of the great theologians Clement of Alexandria and his disciple Origen; more profound even than the nondual Valentinian and Thomas teaching. Indeed, the nondual true Gnosis of Light is utterly beyond the grasp of human concept

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<sup>2</sup> Our Great Wisdom Tradition assumes that this greatest or subtlest Primordial Awareness Wisdom dimension is hidden from egocentric conceptual mind to varying degrees—from slightly hidden to deeply hidden. It is revealed, step-by-step as the spiritual aspirant ascends through practice of the path of gnosis. Paradoxically, it is given immediately, in this very moment now to the prepared aspirant who will open to receive it. This seeming paradox of the hidden gnosis *vis-a-vis* its immediate Presence at the spiritual heart is the "paradox of the path." It defines the "problem of gradualism." The paradox of seeking happiness, whether relative or ultimate, is this: "We cannot *become* happy later. But we can *be* happy now". [Adi Da Samraj]

and belief, transcending the mind altogether for it is the eternal mystery of the very clear light Nature of Mind. It is this Gnosis of Light that arises from and opens into the basal primordial Ground of Being Itself. Therefore, this unity of love and wisdom (philosophy as *philos/sophia*) is the essence or Nature of Mind (*Ein Sof*, nondual Primordial God the Father, *Tao*, *Brahman*, *shunyata*, *cittata*, *sems nyid*). That Gnosis of Light is the original creative utterance (*Logos*, The Word), remembrance, recognition and ultimate realization of our primordial 'supreme source'.

It is this Gnosis of Light that is the actual supraconscious motive for our apocryphal seeking strategies for happiness. The great adepts and masters of the past and of the present have taught and demonstrated this great truth through the example of their lives. And astonishingly, "It is already accomplished from the very beginning". "For those with ears to hear, let them hear." For those who will, surrender and receive this always already present divine indwelling Presence of lucid Gnosis of Light. That is our 'supreme identity'—who we are.

Why then is this great wisdom teaching mostly absent from Abrahamic monotheism—Jewish, Christian, and Islamic spiritual practice?

### **The Betrayal of the Gnosis of Light**

Our conventional religious institutions do not desire to transcend the egoity that obstructs realization of the gnosis love/wisdom, but to serve it. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche has termed this egocentric 'spiritual' motive "spiritual materialism". Our prevailing global massmind ideology is Scientific Materialism whose legacy emotionally conditions us to accept and cling to belief in a complex of divisive conceptual and belief systems ("hang ups," *cathexes*, *samskaras*) that deny this indwelling 'supreme identity'—this primordial love-wisdom light that we actually are. We are reduced by such radical objectivist materialism to "ghosts in a machine." [Ryle, Koestler] The deep subjective realities of God and Spirit have now become no more than 'artifacts of neurochemical brain activity'. We feel guilty and unworthy of the love and the wisdom that is our birthright as "children of the light" (Jesus), human participants becoming/being the very Gnosis of Light. As Jesus told, "The sins of the parents are visited upon the children"—generation after generation.

A great misfortune befell Christianity. The betrayal of ancient Mysteries by the false Gnostics—for the true Gnostics, that is, those who know, were the Initiates of primitive Christianity—caused the true Gnosis to be rejected, and alienated the Church from the supreme truths of the Kaballah, which contain all the secrets of transcendental theology.  
—Eliphas Levi, *The Mysteries* [A.E. Waite, in Kingsland, 1970]

As we have seen, the esoteric understanding of the indwelling, intrinsic primordial wisdom Gnosis became hardened into exoteric, conventional dogmas and the "True Gnosis of Light" became heresy. We have seen how the power of the early Orthodox Church became gradually vested in an ambitious, material priestly hierarchy who, from the earliest apostolic period established a powerful orthodoxy fanatically opposed to the profound esoteric mystery teaching descended from prehistoric wisdom masters to Hermes, Enoch, Moses, then to Jesus, to Paul, to Theodius and his great disciple, poet-

master Valentinus. That zealous orthodox priesthood was the fanatical "Christ Cult" of the early Christian Orthodox Church of the first and second centuries. Tragically, this betrayal of the true Gnosis of Light came to include the great Gnostic wisdom initiates Clement, Origen, and Augustine upon their coerced conversion to the exoteric Orthodoxy. It became the sworn goal of this group to destroy every trace of the Gnosis wisdom texts throughout all Christendom. [Mack 1995] The catastrophic result was that the Gnosis of Light love-wisdom teaching of Jesus and of those great Hebrew prophets before him was lost to the world until discovery of the *Nag Hammadi Library* in 1945, and the *Dead Sea Scrolls* at Qumran in 1947.

### ***Christos Presence: The Kosmic Christ, Heart Seed of the Gnosis of Light***

The primordial wisdom mystery teaching of the "Gnosis of Light" is this: each individual of our human species has an inherently divine nature, or "heart essence", an indwelling Christ/Buddha/Tao love-wisdom awareness Presence that is our natural 'supreme identity'. "The Nature of Mind is primordially pure from the very beginning." [Nagarjuna]

It is told in our wisdom traditions that such a primordially enfolded and realized humanity unfolded and separated from that formless, timeless, selfless ground and descended into this material world of flesh and ego, yet desires to be released, to realize and return to the actual spiritual perfection or wholeness that is paradoxically, our 'supreme identity' from the very beginning. This return to, or realization of our aboriginal, inherently divine nature is the great esoteric truth of the perennial mythical archetype of "the eternal return" to that prior yet always present state of wholeness union with Spirit Ground.

This truth of our apparent descent into material spacetime and the realization-return to essential, nondual perfectly subjective Ground of Being is present in inner esoteric and greater esoteric nondual wisdom teachings in all of our primary religious/wisdom traditions.

That truth is descended to Christianity through the esoteric and innermost secret tradition of the Hebrews (Moses, Jesus, Paul, *Kabbalah*), and the Greeks (Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus). This teaching was present in the Hellenistic mysteries which were descended from the Hermetic/Orphic and Vedic mystery traditions and their prehistoric antecedents.

That which is called the Christian religion existed among the ancients, and never did not exist, from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion which already existed began to be called Christianity.

—St. Augustine [*Epis. Retrac., I, xiii, 3*]

Thus it is the nature and destiny of humanity—on the accord of this ancient teaching of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition as it is embodied in esoteric Christianity—that "in the beginning" humankind was spiritually divine and whole, not separate from our nondual Father-Mother-Creator-God. Humanity descended from this Eden consciousness into matter, became clothed in "coats of skin," polarized into two sexes, evolved a material separate self-ego-I, and became forgetful (*amnesia*) of our primordial divine Spirit Source Ground. This theme is constant in the various creation mythologies of our species. This is the hell of

*samsara*: the sin (*primal ignorance, hamartia, avidya, marigpa*), suffering (*pathos, dukkah*) and death (*thanatos*) that is the story of the *Old Testament*, and in the East of the ancient *Vedas*.

Now in both West and East it is indwelling selfless (*kenosis*) Spirit Presence of this divinity, realized through the *sadhana* of the yoga of practice of the spiritual path (*marga, lam*) that develops our "*paracletic faculty*" to realize the forgotten Gnosis of Light. The ripening of this seed of divine potential facilitates the spiritual reunion and return to our primordial source ground—by whatever holy name—that is the esoteric innermost teaching of the *New Testament*, and of nondual Buddhism (Essence Mahamudra, Ati Dzogchen), Advaita Vedanta, and Taoism (the yoga of the *Returning of the Light*).

That inherent, primordial spiritual nature (Christ Nature, Buddha Nature, *Ein Sof*), that luminous, numinous "I Am That I Am" Presence of Moses and the Hebrew Prophets—heart-seed always already present at spiritual Heart of each human being—is esoterically, the old news and the 'good news' of the teaching inherited and transmitted by Jesus the Christ and by Gautama the Buddha. That is the primordial awareness Gnosis of Light revealed and demonstrated through the historical person of Jesus as the Christ Principle; and divine "*I Am Presence*" of Buddha Shakamuni (*Tathagatagarbha* heart seed of buddahood). This Christ/Buddha Nature Presence is actual 'supreme identity' of the human being. That is the 'Fruitional View'. Who am I? "I Am That I Am!" "*Tat Tvam Asi!* That I Am"! Presence of That.

Therefore, it is innermost *kosmic christos*, not the person or personality of Jesus, and not Jesus as God that is to be realized by each human being through the teaching and the yoga or spiritual practice of the Gnosis of Light. It is the *christos* that is the 'Kosmic Christ' Presence, "the living Jesus", "the living Buddha" that dwells within the heart and mind of each human being and shall, in due course and by grace, be resurrected and realized by each one of us.

And thereby the collective whole of humanity shall be released, liberated and returned in Spirit to the Eden consciousness of the nondual divine "That I Am" Presence of our supreme source. That (*christos, vidya, tathata*) 'innermost secret' Presence is the great Primordial Wisdom mindstream of the Kosmic Christ that has been realized and actualized in the world by Jesus the Christ, and by each of the great buddhas and *mahasiddhas* of the past, and of the present, and will be realized by the avataric christ/buddhas yet to come. Thus it is on the accord of the innermost secret teaching of the noble Great Wisdom Tradition of our kind.

The initiatory levels or degrees of depth of realization of this esoteric perennial mystery teaching remain of course, merely exoteric conceptual understanding until actually realized and demonstrated—gradually step-by-step, then suddenly by the disciple/devotee in the everyday life world—from initiation, to enlightenment, to the realization of innermost *christos* and its actualization in the world through compassionate activity, and beyond. Such a one, according to the *Gospel of Philip* (Gnostic) "Is no longer a Christian, but a Christ."

### **Resurrection of the Kosmic Christ**

Hence, it is our indwelling Kosmic Christ that is to be realized through the radical nondual Gnosis of Light, promethean blissful "clear light" teaching of our Primordial Wisdom Tradition. Yes. That realization of non-separate innermost secret Kosmic Christ is the realization of Christ Consciousness, Christ Nature, Buddha Nature, infinite Hebrew *Ein*

*Sof*, primordial Presence, by whatever sacred name, divine original face of each human being, of all sentient beings, and indeed, of all relatively manifested spacetime conditional reality. Thus there is the *ultimate* implicate order of perfectly subjective "Big Mind" (Susuki Roshi), the mindstream of *Christ Presence*, *Abba* nondual Primordial Father of Jesus the Christ, buddha mind that transcends and embraces everything. And there is included within *That* the conditional world of spacetime reality—"Small Mind"—*relative* explicate order of the objective world of related things. Again, it is this Christ-Buddha indwelling mindstream essence that is, according to our Great Tradition, luminous Presence (*christos*, *vidya*, *rigpa*) of Primordial Awareness Wisdom (gnosis, *jnana*, *yeshe*), 'supreme identity' of our 'supreme source' ground—*Bathos*, formless Depth in whom this all arises.

The spirit realization of the Kosmic Christ, according to Paul, must be "found and brought to birth as the Christ in you" in order to be lifted up from "this ocean of incarnation and death." Jesus' resurrection is for Paul, not a temporal "judgment day," but a transcendent Gnostic mystical awakening or enlightening: "Awake thou that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine within thee". [Paul, *Ephesians*]

Throughout the canonical *New Testament* and the noncanonical Gnostic Scriptures, Christ Consciousness—*christos/logos*—as the potential realization of the Gnosis of Light is presented continuously in outer exoteric symbol and allegory as the fall and resurrection of each individual, and thereby of humanity collectively. Humanity has been crucified upon the cross of material form. Today we see this in dreary scientific and spiritual materialism.

Once again, our spiritual ascent—resurrection, liberation and return—is accomplished through the practice of the spiritual path, the yoga (union of matter and spirit) of the path to realization of numinous always already present Presence, our Christ Consciousness, the indwelling *christos* or Kosmic Christ that is, and shall always be, our original divine nature. From the Fifth Gospel, the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* Jesus speaks:

If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you. There is light within a being of light, and it lights the whole world.  
If he does not shine, he is darkness.

*Christ is Risen*. The great truth "Christ is Risen" is, esoterically, the personal realization that the conditional self-ego-I of every human being has already been resurrected into the Gnosis of Light that is the "I Am" Presence, (*christos*, *vidya*, *rigpa*) that is not other than, or in any way separate from our divine 'supreme source', *Abba* God the Primordial Father, nondual perfectly subjective all-embracing Spirit Ground. "Christ is Risen" is the truth that "it is already present and accomplished from the very beginning" (Garab Dorje); that each one of us is already resurrected into the light, here, now, at the Heart, when we listen, recognize, awaken and then realize *That* (*tathata*, *christos*) that we already actually are. That is the 'innermost secret' primordial awareness Gnosis of Light. That remembrance is moment to moment realization. Happiness Itself. The actualization of it through kind, compassionate action naturally follows. "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." [Lao Tzu]



## The Gnostic Christian Nondual View: Kabbalah, Valentinus, Thomas

We have seen that some contemporary scholars (Jonas, Rudolph, Churton) view the entire Christian Gnostic record of the first two centuries as theologically and ontologically dualistic regarding the separation of matter and spirit, humanity and God. But it is not so. Well developed nondual monistic (all reality is of one ground) teaching arises in Gnostic Valentinian literature of the 2nd century CE. [Schoedel, Dawson, Layton] Of God the nondual Primordial Father: "He possessed The All dwelling within him". [Valentinian Exposition] "In the Unbegotten One, all things exist at once". [Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*] According to Bentley Layton (1987) this teaching assumes a nondual monistic ontology characteristic of "Stoic pantheistic monism [where] all is embraced by God and ultimately all is God". William Schoedel (1972): "Such theology presupposes a non-dualistic cosmology. For it does not allow that the God who contains all things is limited by any other reality". The Valentinian first principle, supreme source of 'The All' is that nondual Primordial Father (*Abba* in Jesus' Aramaic dialect), the Depth (*Bythos* or *Bathos*). From this masculine aspect of godhead emanates 'The Son' that is 'The Mind', intrinsic primordial awareness descended from Source into mental and physical form. Thus, from monistic One arises plurality—'The Many'. This feminine aspect of godhead is called 'The Silence', direct yogic experience (*yogi pratyaksa*) of noetic Primordial Awareness Wisdom that is utter quiescent equanimity; as Jesus told, "the peace that passes all understanding."

In short, this androgynous male/female dyad that is 'The Son' descends as 'The Mind' into spacetime as dimensions (*aeons*) of mental and material form. All together these entities, these "members of The All" constitute the *pleroma* or "fullness" of aboriginal Primordial Father that is nondual godhead. [Layton 1980, Schoedel 1972, Thomassen in Meyer, 2007] Jesus is physical embodiment of the Son (Mind), personal indwelling *christos* Presence who incarnates from empty *Bathos* Ground into spacetime form in order to teach to we suffering human beings the redeeming Gnosis of Light that is indwelling birthright of each one of us.

Two of the great *Nag Hammadi* texts, Valentinus' *Gospel of Truth* (Gnostic) and the *Tripartite Tractate* (Gnostic) explicate this profound, if fantasque, Gnostic ontology. *These pivotal texts represent a transition in Christian history from the outer exoteric Hellenistic Platonic dualism of earlier Egypto-Greek and Gnostic teaching, and from the dualism—the essential separation of humanity and God, matter and spirit—of the Hebrew Tanakh (The Old Testament), and of the developing Christian Orthodoxy, to the inner esoteric and then radical nondual experiential mysticism of Kabbalistic, Valentinian and the Thomas teaching.* Exemplars of this great transition process include, as we have seen, the great Gnostic theologians Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, Book IV), and especially his great disciple Origen, and later, Saint Augustine before their probable, lamentable coerced conversion to the Christian Orthodoxy.

And yes, both the gnostic *Gospel of Truth* and the *Tripartite Tractate* emphasize inward mystical *epinoia* (*bhavana*, *vipashyana*, *dhyana*, *samadhi*). *Epinoia* is the penetrating insight of immediate contemplative or meditative, nonconceptual wisdom gnosis *vis-a-vis* exoteric, conventional concept and belief (*dianoia*, *doxa*) in the separate Platonic creator demiurge and the exoteric dualistic Creator God of the Hebrews and of Orthodox Christians. Both of these

lovely texts utilize the nondual Kabbalistic mysticism of ancient *Raza Rabba* (The Great Mystery), and 2nd century mysticism of the *Zohar* of Simeon ber Yohai. [*Zohar* is said to have been completed in the 12th century by Moses de Leon.] These secret teachings are antedated by a thousand years in the Hebrew *hekalat*, and through the *logos/christos* incarnation of the great Hebrew patriarch and deathless master Enoch, transcendent Guru to para-historical Moses.

The *Gospel of Truth* speaks of redemption (*apolutrosis*, release, liberation, enlightenment) as "Revealed to be perfect through the mercies of the Father". That is hidden mystery of Jesus the Christ. Through him he enlightened those who were in darkness because of forgetfulness. [Grant 1961] This forgetfulness (*amnesia*) begets atavistic primal ignorance (*hamartia/sin*, *avidya*, *ajnana*, *marigpa*) that perceives phenomenal world of matter as objectively ultimately real and ontologically separate from the *pleroma*—formless, timeless, selfless primordial boundless whole of perfectly subjective nondual Spirit—"The All"—*Bathos/Depth* that is nonconceptual nondual godhead, Primordial God the Father of Jesus the Christ. It is that divine Spirit Presence (*christos*) who dwells within us always. Yet, as Jesus told, "You do not see it."

Valentinus laments this condition of "not seeing and not hearing" in which we arise and dwell within nondual God, yet we have no awareness of it. Told Jesus to his prepared disciples: "That happiness you seek, the Kingdom of God, is already present within you, and it is spread upon the face of the world, but you do not see it." [Luke 17]

Through this fundamental primal ignorance (*hamartia/sin*) of the nature of Spirit Ground and its realities, and our place and participation herein we see, not luminous primordial unbounded wholeness, *Bathos* of the *pleroma*, but merely its illusory Platonic shadows that constitute the seemingly separate painful chaos (*samsara*) of this suffering world. What to do?

For Valentinians noetic nondual (body mind spirit subject-object unity) God is singular one and only reality, beyond our concepts. There is only God. Gnosis of Light that is within us is light of love and wisdom that dispels divisive darkness of ignorance that brings suffering and death—so that we may know there is no *ultimate* separation between humanity and God. The world of form arises, dwells and decays within The Depth of Primordial Father God, who transcends yet embraces every participating fragment of that *kosmic* unbounded whole.

How shall we know That? We finally decide to consciously *manage our awareness*. We choose gentle conscious '*placement of attention*' upon that bright Spirit Presence as it rides the *prana/pneuma/holy spirit* life force breath in the belly—the *hara/dō* chakra deep in the gut near the base of the spine in the vertical 'central channel'. That is 'The Meditation' of our wisdom traditions. [Appendix A] We receive the wondrous benefit of such practice in proportion to our engaged practice of it. Now we wisely engage the perennial "three gems": the spiritual master in your tradition, the highest teaching in your tradition, and the spiritual community. [Appendix D]

The monistic nondual Gnostic Valentinian view is antithesis of common Gnostic dualism. Just so, this Gnosis narrative partakes in the very innermost secret nondual core of our Primordial Wisdom Tradition, whether Buddhist *Dzogchen*, *Advaita Vedanta*, or *Zohar/Kabbalah*.

When speculating about the "highest" or most subtle nondual "innermost secret" teaching of any tradition it may be useful to note that there are levels of depth of understanding of this greatest teaching—from the subtlest discursive understanding, through the penetrating insight of the union of *shamatha/vipashyana* (*ennoia/epinoia*), to the omniscient

realization of Christ or Buddha. Such levels or dimensions of human knowing are functions of the psycho-spiritual life stage evolutionary development of the individual aspirant.

Moreover, with the exception of Christ, Buddha, or a *mahasiddha*, the teacher, speaker, or interpreter introduces a personal subjectivity into the transmission of the teaching. There seems to be a profound impulse, even a *prima facie* moral imperative to share our innate Primordial Wisdom with one another. Yet there exists a protean abyss between our view and our conduct. We will not be taken seriously until we practice our praxis. Thus do we proceed.

Yes, for the esoteric oriented Christian *pneumatic* Gnostic, Jesus demonstrated the *logos-christos* that is present as the divine Gnosis of Light Presence within each human form, an inherent, already present, divine spiritual potential awaiting recognition, then realization. For these Christians neither the human Jesus, the great exemplar and master teacher of the Gnosis of Light, nor a glorified Jesus as God, was an object of worship. For the nondual Valentinus and Thomas Gnostics it is the *logos-christos*, Christ Nature, Mind of Christ, very Presence of nondual God that abides always at the human spiritual Heart (*hridayam*). That arises as the *prana/pneuma* holy spirit breath in the human body. Jesus' great realization exemplified That.

*Thus, in the Valentinian Gospel of Truth and in the Tripartite Tractate we see a fully developed nondual, monistic transcendence of the persistent dualism of matter and spirit, humanity and God, body and soul, soul and the divine present in exoteric Hellenism, Orthodox Judaism and Orthodox Christianity.*

Through the Valentinian texts, and also in the Thomas literature we discover the Gnosis of Light that is nothing less than the nondual wisdom teaching found at the esoteric and nondual heart of all of the traditions of our Primordial Wisdom Tradition, as we have seen. That is the great innermost secret spiritual teaching that was descended to Jesus from Enoch, Moses, and the *hekalot*, to the mystical Zohar and Kabbalah, and from the ancient Orphic/Hermetic mystery religions, and passed forth through the esoteric mystical gnosis teaching of the Apostle Paul, and on to Paracelsus, Meister Eckhart, Saint Teresa of Avila, and Saint John of the Cross. Some of these initiates realized, then actualized through the Gnosis of Light the actual *christos/logos*, indwelling Spirit Presence of Kosmic Christ that abides as heart seed potential, according to the *Gospel of Thomas*, in each and every human being. That is as well nondual teaching of the Buddha.

Clearly, the authors of the great Gnostic Valentinian texts, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and other incipient nondual Gnostic texts (e.g. those non-Christian Hermetic *Nag Hammadi texts: Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, *Asklepios* and the *Prayer of Thanksgiving*) perceived, perhaps realized in the life world the esoteric "innermost secret" Nature of Mind that is nondual God the Primordial Father, ultimate source Ground of Being of all arising spacetime stuff. Clement of Alexandria speaks of monistic "Monadic Gnosis," and the metaphysical unity of all relative spacetime being in nondual God. Valentinus tells of "Source of the All, the Ineffable One liveth in the Monad...alone, in the Silence, and none was before him." [*A Valentinian Exposition, Nag Hammadi*] "Your Father in Heaven is One." [*Interpretation of Knowledge, a Nag Hammadi text*]

*The view of the Valentinians and of the Thomas Christian Gnostics then, was that God—Abba the Primordial Father—was the nondual supreme source ground of all phenomenal being, and that Jesus the Christos was a mortal avatar who, during his human life "overcame the world". That is to say, he realized, then demonstrated the truth of our inherent indwelling Christ Nature, our divine Presence—prior and present actual identity as "Children of the Light." Told Jesus: "We come from the Light."*

### Three Aspects of Human Knowing: Gnosis, Sophia, Dianoia

Nondual wisdom Gnosis (*jnana, yeshe*) is ultimate “primordially pure” luminous clear light mind that opens into timeless, formless, selfless Ground of Being. Gnosis is our innate, present, indwelling noetic nondual (body, mind, spirit subject-object unity) primordial love-wisdom accessed through immediate, subjective knowing-feeling yogic direct experience (*yogi pratyaksa*). Gnosis abides beyond relative belief or conceptual objective empirical knowledge (*dianoia, episteme*). Nor is it relative discriminating penetrating wisdom (*sophia, prajna, sherab*) that consumes the *kleshas* (obstructive negative emotions) and prepares the mind to open and receive Gnosis. Gnosis is direct, penetrating nondual meditative/contemplative spiritual insight/intuition (*epinoia, vipashyana*) of naked (*rigpa jenpa*) Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*jnana, vidya, yeshe*) of our ultimate supreme source (God the Father, Tao, *Nirguna Brahman, mahashunyata, dharmakaya, Samantabhadra*) in whom arises all relative spacetime phenomena.

“Awareness” translates *ennoia*; “mindfulness” translates *aponnoia*; concept/belief translates *dianoia*; “empirical experience” translates “*episteme*”; “relative discriminating wisdom” translates *sophia, prajna*; “nondual primordial awareness wisdom” (*jnana/yeshe*) translates *gnosis*; “primordial presence” of the Ground is *christos, vidya, rigpa*; “Supreme Source”/“Depth” translates *Bathos*. This timeless, subjective ultimate source Ground of Being—“Big Mind” (*paramartha*)—transcends yet embraces “Small Mind” (*samvriti*), relative, perceptual, conceptual knowledge and discursive thinking about this vast boundless whole shebang.

So, our perennial wisdom Great Tradition teaches the dialectic of the “Two Truths”: Relative Truth (*samvriti satya*), finite objective relative-conventional empirical spacetime reality with its physical and mental phenomena, and Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*), infinite, nondual perfectly subjective unbounded whole itself. That Ultimate Reality transcends yet embraces the phenomenal dimension of Relative Truth in a one truth unity. This world of Relative Truth includes the dyad of outer exoteric and inner esoteric reality dimensions. That esoteric dimension includes yet deeper subtler strata of ontic formation.

Gnosis is the knowing aspect (*buddhi, shepa, vidya*) Of the nondual essence and Nature of Mind, beyond the duality of subject and object, prior to the discursive and emotive function of mind (*manas, namshe, vijñana*). Thus Gnosis is nondual primordial wisdom in that it transcends, yet embraces temporal relative knowledge (*samvriti*) of spacetime phenomena. “To know oneself at the deepest level is to know God.” [Monoimus] Here, knower (*gnostikos*) and known (*gnosis*), subject and object, spirit and matter are not separate but participate together as the spacious unbounded whole in a pristine naked noetic relationship of identity.

Exoterically oriented Jews and Christians have practiced a dualistic separation of humanity from nondual God for 12 thousand years. Such a view represents the atavistic primal ignorance (*avidya*) that is *hamartia* (sin), literally “missing the mark.” The *Gnostic Gospel of Thomas* speaks not of sin and repentance but of ignorance (*hamartia/sin, alogos, avidya, marigpa*) and enlightenment (*logos, apolutrosis, vidya, rigpa, liberation, bodhi, moksha*). It is this now present liberation/enlightenment that is, according to the highest, subtlest teaching of our wisdom traditions, the end of all our seeking—ultimate harmless Happiness Itself (*beatitudo*,

*mahasukha, paramananda*)—very ground of relative human flourishing (*eudiamonia, felicitas*).

That 'double happiness' spontaneously arises upon our natural timeless primordial awareness as the “innermost secret,” nondual ultimate Reality Itself. Selfless bright Presence of That. And yes, the realization of these ascending levels of knowledge and love-wisdom is a function of the psycho-spiritual life-stage development of the spiritual aspirant.

As to the experience of these hidden dimensions, whether conceptual *dianoia* or direct contemplative *epinoia/gnosis*, it is most important to maintain the understanding awareness that these dimensional reality realms—these “many mansions of the Father’s house”—arise in a relationship of interconnected interdependence with one another, and with the great noetic nondual (body mind spirit, subject-object unity) whole itself, and therefore possess no inherent, independent intrinsic existence in themselves. This is especially so for the Ultimate Truth dimension that is boundless whole of ultimate primordial ground of all arising phenomenal reality. That too is absent and empty of any intrinsic absolute existence. To use a Buddhist metaphor, even the *ultimate* emptiness 'groundless ground' in whom this all arises is itself empty of any whit of inherent existence.

Meanwhile, spacetime phenomena continue to appear to sentient beings as this continuum of gross *relative* conventional stuff. Great *ultimate bodhicitta* gift (*jinlo*) of our lives. That gift spontaneously manifests as *relative bodhicitta*—kind compassionate engaged action/conduct for the benefit of living beings. That is portal into the very Ground of Being.

But there is no need to *believe* any of this lofty, too often schizoid conceptual elaboration. It is quite beyond belief and our concepts about it all. Still, it is essential to fully engage both aspects of our *noetic cognitive doublet*, unity of our two human cognitive dimensions—objective conceptual, and subjective contemplative. We learn to reveal then unpack our deeply subjective *ultimate* spirit love and wisdom (*gnosis, epinoia, jnana, yeshe, rigpa*) not only via subjective meditation, but as well through “discursive meditation”—skillful conceptual *relative* means/method (*dianoia, sophia, namtok, valpana*). Thus do we realize the prior and present *one truth unity* of the primordial 'Two Truths' of this boundless whole of reality—dualistic Relative Truth, arising in nondual Ultimate Truth. One truth.

I have elsewhere referred to this great ontic prior *one truth unity* (*dzog*) of these none too tidy epistemic perennial Two Truths as the essential unifying *Principle of Ontological Interdependence*. Indeed, the esoteric and even nondual understanding of the primary wisdom traditions of our Great Wisdom Tradition view relative objective and subjective physical and mental entities as ultimately empty of inherent intrinsic existence (interdependent arising, *shunyata/emptiness, pratitya samutpada*). And we have seen that this does not deny them their reality status as objectively *real* objects in the realm of Relative Truth that is empirical, relative-conventional spacetime reality. [Ch. II, Buddhism]

This ancient principle of the Two Truths of appearing reality is key to understanding the emerging paradigm shift that is the resolution of the “explanatory gap” between mind and matter (the “mind-body problem”), and between Science and Spirit that is the “hard problem of consciousness” with its urgent need of an integral principle to unify quantitative third person methodologies of Western Science with qualitative first person modes of inquiry of noetic Vedic and Buddhist Contemplative Science. [Boaz 2024; 2023]

## Jesus and Paul: Outer, Inner, and Nondual Teaching

The obscurity and contradictions of the canonical *New Testament Gospels, Acts* and *Epistles* clearly show that they have been overwritten, rewritten, interpolated and revised with the anti-mystical Orthodox intent to demystify, de-spiritualize and conceptualize the innermost nondual spiritual teaching of Jesus the Christ. [Pagels, Koester, Robinson, Mack, Funk, Meyer] To further complicate matters, Jesus (and Paul), like all great spiritual adepts, transmitted the ancient nondual Gnosis of Light mystery teaching both exoterically, to those less well prepared to receive, and esoterically, to those whose karma and spiritual practice have prepared them for the "mysteries of the Kingdom."

I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. These things have I spoken unto you in parables: the time cometh when I shall tell you plainly of the Father. [John xvi 12, 25]

To the spiritually uninitiated and unprepared the mystery of the Gnosis of Light can be given only through allegory, metaphor and symbol. Whether layperson, priest, or scholar, the true Gnosis of Light can only be transmitted directly, through the mindstream of an adept master to the prepared mind of the disciple/devotee. Self-ego-I cannot purify itself without wise and skillful noetic intervention. The mind cannot come to know itself by itself alone. This is a vital truth of the metanarrative of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition, whatever the individual tradition narrative. We need Three Gems: master, teaching, sangha.

As to the great Gnosis of Light teaching as it arises in the metaphors and allegories of the canonical and non-canonical *Gospels, Acts* and *Epistles*, it is urgent to distinguish the outer materialistic exoteric from the inner esoteric (secret, innermost secret, nondual) connotations of the *Christ Presence, christos/logos*—Kosmic Christ. While the outer exoteric view of Jesus is as Hebrew God incarnate, for the inner esoteric understanding Jesus is the historical human who "overcame the world" to become Jesus the liberated Christ (*christos*, the initiate adept and anointed one), a fully realized human avatar who, like Enoch, Moses, Shankara, Buddha Gautama, Longchenpa, Padmasambhava, incarnated to fully realize the indwelling primordial wisdom, the Gnosis of Light that is pure Presence of the Ground of Being, and further, to demonstrate this great truth that the Kosmic Christ or Christ nature, or Buddha nature is the actual design of each human being.

Each human being is a *kosmic* being of light, potential Kosmic Christ or Buddha, and may, in due course and by grace, realize the potential of that primordial Christ/Buddha nature that abides always already at the subtle human spiritual Heart (*hridayam*).

[*'Kosmic'* here denotes the unbounded whole of the Pythagorean *kosmos* (physical, mental, causal, nondual spirit) that transcends yet embraces merely physical cosmos.]

"The only difference between a Buddha and an ordinary person is that one realizes it, the other does not." [Zen patriarch Hui Neng] Although the wisdom gnosis is fully awake and present at every moment, ego does not see it; we remain unawakened to that great original truth of reality, so the master reveals it through the mind states and life stages of the

spiritual path as disciple grows into that Gnosis of Light. This ostensible paradox I have elsewhere termed "the paradox of the path." For Paul, great initiate of the Gnosis of Light:

I came unto you not with the excellence of wisdom [Gnosis] proclaiming to you the mystery of God...Howbeit we speak wisdom among the full-grown...I fed you milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it. *The psychic* [mind] does not discern *pneumatic* [spiritual] things.

—Paul, *I Corinthians*

The Gnosis of Light—nondual wisdom, *epinoia*, *jnana*, *yeshe*—received by faith/*pistis* (ego surrender) is therefore the great mystery of the ages. The primordial Gnosis of Light is infinite unmanifest *Ein Sof* of the Hebrews; primordial Tao that cannot be named. It is nondual unity of luminous emptiness, awareness, and appearance of Buddhist *shunyata*. It is Hindu nondual Nirguna Brahman of nondual Advaita Vedanta.

*The Gnosis of Light is the direct mystical nondual yogic experience of the divine inner love-wisdom Presence (christos, vidya, rigpa) of the Kosmic Christ, incarnated from Abba, nondual God the Primordial Father, selfless base or formless ground or 'supreme source' in whom energy (spiritus, pneuma, ch'i, lung, prana) arises in space and time as light, mind, matter, breath, voice and all the manifest things of relative, conditional phenomenal existence (E=mc<sup>2</sup>). This great mystery cannot be told. It cannot be grasped by concept mind. It is profound. It utterly transcends discursive understanding. Yet, from such a ground, through the mind, upon the spirit breath, the Gnosis of Light arises, shines at the heart of all beings. Thus do we proceed.*

That is the "Gospel that has been given in all creation under heaven." [*Colossians*] That is the teaching that has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." [2 *Timothy*] This is the truth that "existed among the ancients, and never did not exist, from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh." [St. Augustine]

And yes, that great teaching refers not to the historical human person of Jesus, nor to Jesus as God, but to the *christos* Presence, Christ Mind, Gnosis of Light that he realized and demonstrated, not by his death but by his compassionate life. For Paul, as for the Gnostic authors of *John* and *Thomas*, that teaching is the esoteric "Gnosis of Light that passes all understanding." It is indeed the *christos*, the inner Christ Presence that is that very "light which lights every one that comes into the world." "The lamp of the body is the mind." [*Gnostic Dialog of the Savior*] "Enlighten your mind...light the lamp within you." [*Gnostic Teaching of Silvanus*]

Alas, even though this *christos* Presence dwells now, awake, at the heart within each human form, yet we know it not. Told Jesus, "It is spread upon the face of the world, but you do not see it." [Luke 17] Thus it abides alone in 'The Silence' (*Bathos*) awaiting ego surrender that is our selfless opening (*pistis*/faith) that is *pneuma*/holy spirit/breath teaching *sadhana* of all spiritual paths.

On the road to Damascus, "when it was the good pleasure of God ... to reveal his son in me" (not to me), Paul was initiated (*teleosis*, anointed) by the *christos* Presence of God, the "Christ that liveth in me," "the mind of Christ," not by the God Jesus, and not by the man Jesus (Paul never met Jesus in the flesh). "For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." [*Galatians*] In *Ephesians* Paul states, "How that

by revelation was made known unto me the mystery of the Christ." Pure mystical wisdom.

Clearly, Paul understood the distinction between the great manifestation of the *Logos* Presence of nondual non-theistic godhead in Jesus the Christ as the great human teacher, and Jesus the Christ as a holy man made into a singular God by men. Paul loved the great man Jesus for his demonstration of the realization of the Gnosis of Light. But Paul praised and attempted to realize in himself nondual divine *Logos*, the *christos* Presence realized by the mortal human Jesus in order to reveal to each one of us our own divine potential or capacity for this ultimate harmless happiness—*apolutrosis*, ultimate spiritual liberation/enlightenment.

Exoterically then, the great man Jesus of Nazareth has been molded by humans to be worshipped as "the one and only begotten Son of God," a separate transcendent god, a unique spiritual singularity in the history of the world. In a less parochial, esoteric view, Jesus was one of many historical and pre-historical avatars and Rishi-Christ-Buddhas, the indwelling, nonseparate *Logos* incarnated from the very Ground of Being that "All-That-Is", the "I Am Presence" to teach and to demonstrate to self-conscious beings that greatest truth: "No longer I, but Christ lives in me", and "Wonder of wonders, all beings are Buddha...Everything is Buddha from the beginning." It is through this great realization that "Christ shall shine within thee."

### **The Solar Logos: The Descent and Ascent of All-Embracing Spirit**

*Who Am I?* As far into antiquity as we may go, it is told of "that One that dwelleth in the sun." The various mythic sun gods are the logoic expressions for us of that Bright One who is very source or base or ground of everything that appears, whose luminous body is of pure clear light, and in whom an avataric "son" is incarnated into spacetime physical form. [*"Logos"* is a Greek translation of the Hebrew *dabar*, "that which lies prior".]

The *christos* or Kosmic Christ Presence that is primordially enfolded in all-embracing *ultimate* Spirit Ground of everything unfolds and descends into this dimension of *relative* space and time is avataric Solar Logos aspect or expression of nondual Primordial Father of all (*Abba* in Jesus' Aramaic tongue), our very 'supreme source' Ground of Being, perfectly subjective Spirit Itself. For Vedic tradition this nondual primordial awareness source of That-That-Is (*tathata*, *thatness*, *quiddity*) is *Kham Brahm*, "The Bright" that is ultimate nondual *Nirguna Brahman*, *Parabrahman* in whom Krishna and Shankara incarnate. For Taoists it is the ineffable empty stillness of the "Tao that cannot be told" which manifests as moral/spirit virtue or *Te*; in Egypt it is *Osiris* in whom appears divine son Horus; in Greece Spirit in form is *Apollo*; for mystical Christian Hermetic Kabbalah it is unspeakable *Ein Sof* (space like Infinite One Point); in Persia it is *Ahura-Mazda* (*Ormazd*); for Indo-Tibetan Buddhists it is 'primordial purity' of *kadag* ground, union of phenomenal appearance and clear light luminous emptiness/*shunyata* in whom everything arises and participates, embodied as *Samantabhadra* (Tib. *Kuntuzangpo*, Jap. *Fugen*), all-subsuming *dharmakaya* Adi Buddha. [*Ch. II*] For the Hebrews *Logos* is self-sprung from mystical infinite *Ein Sof*, unmanifest nondual God of Abraham and Moses—*El'elyôn*, the "I Am That I Am" radiant solar Presence in whom Yeshua, Jesus the Christ incarnates for the sake of we suffering human beings.



*Yahweh-Elohim* is outer, exoteric, creator aspect of Solar Logos, just as *Ishvara* and *Saguna Brahman* are the relative, creator aspects of *Nirguna Brahman*, nondual unqualified Absolute. "And God said unto Moses, 'I Am That I Am ('*eh yeh aser 'eh yeh*)': and he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, 'I Am' hath sent me unto you." [*Exodus*]

That "I Am" Presence is eternally present as the Solar Logos, *christos* Presence that lives as radiant potential to be realized via direct experience at spiritual heart of each human being. Thus Jesus spoke to the Pharisees: "Before Abraham was, I Am." From *El*, the perfectly subjective, utterly ineffable, primordial absolute ground, ultimate source, has come *Yahweh-Elohim*, mother-father-creator God in whom arises all phenomenal reality, and we sentient beings to experience and grow through it, and in whom incarnates all of the Christ-Buddhas and great avatars and mahasiddhas of the past, and of the present, and of the future.

According to the Great Wisdom Tradition of our kind, liberation of humanity from our descent into this samsaric "ocean of suffering" of the material world requires nothing less than the periodic manifestation and intervention of primordial Solar Logos into an avataric incarnation, as a human being, who then "overcomes the world" and realizes, then demonstrates the wisdom and compassion of the way and the path to return to nondual Spirit Ground. As if we were ever separated in the first place. "The Word [*logos/christos*] was made flesh and dwelt among us...full of grace and truth." [*Gospel of John*, a Gnostic Gospel]

According to our Great Wisdom Tradition the Solar Logos has manifested through many incarnations throughout human history: Jesus the Christ, Gautama Shakyamuni the Buddha (and all the Buddhas of prehistory), Garab Dorje, Padmasambhava, Longchen Rabjam, Bodhidharma, Dogen Zenji, Ramakrishna, Adi Shankara, Ramana Maharshi, Lao Tzu, and many others, all incarnated manifestations of nondual timeless, formless, selfless Spirit source ground of being, descended as divine archetype—avatars into human form, being here for us on this pretty blue planet abiding here among the stars.

From its vast primordial Spirit 'groundless ground' supreme source does our planetary *Logos* incarnate again and again into human form to realize, then transmit aboriginal Gnosis of Light, our indwelling Christ/Buddha Nature, in order to brighten, enlighten and liberate all who will listen, surrender self (*pistis*-faith) and follow That Way.

This "true Gnosis of Light" is the peace and equanimity of *apolutrosis*, *samadhi*, *moksha*, *satori/kensho*, realization of that numinous luminous intimate immediate Presence of the *logos-christos* (*vidya*, *rigpa*) that is our actual 'supreme identity' that is not other than, or separate from all-embracing great expanse of our supreme source itself: *Tao*, *Brahman*, *shunyata*, *dharmakaya*, *Abba* God nondual Primordial Father that is "I Am That I Am," of Enoch, Moses, and Jesus. Esoterically, the teaching is the same. Exoterically it appears a little different. Buddha emphasized wisdom and compassion. Jesus emphasized love and compassion. Esoterically understood, the truth of the Gnosis of Light has its wisdom aspect; it has its love aspect. Wisdom manifests as, and guides Love—kindness and compassionate conduct for benefit of beings. Love and Wisdom are an indivisible prior and present unity.

That eternal dialectic of the nondual primordial wisdom teaching of humankind appears differently in different times, for different peoples, through different metaphors and icons, but the nondual heart essence of the teaching is always the same. At the

pinnacle, where exoteric and esoteric differences merge into greater esoteric or innermost secret identity, all differences are unified in their nondual primordial awareness source ground, prior yet always present metaphysical ontic unity—spiritual union. Who Am I? That I Am! What is my mind? That is my mind! It has always been, and shall ever be thus.

Something lives within you that lives longer than the stars.  
It abides at the place in the heart...What that subtle being is,  
from which all that is arises, that is the Real, that is Spirit  
Presence, that thou art. *Tat Tvam Asi.*

—Chandogya Upanishad (*Samaveda*)

A billion stars spin through the night  
blazing high above your head.  
Deep within is the presence that will be  
when all the stars are dead.

—Rilke

That monumental yet very subtle always already present indwelling *christos* Spirit Presence of vast *kosmos* whole that is nondual godhead is who we are now—our 'supreme identity' that is 'supreme source ground'—*Abba*, primordial God the Father of Jesus the Christ. It is "That I Am" (*Tat Tvam Asi*) that is the great "I Am That I Am" Presence of Israel—of Enoch, of Moses, of Jesus, and of Christianity—and of all the buddhas and *mahasiddhas* of the past, and of the present, and of those yet to incarnate into this difficult dimension of space and time. Who am I? It is That 'innermost secret' Presence of all-embracing Great Love that binds together the worlds. That Gnosis of Light abides now at the heart of each human form, always upon this *prana/pneuma/spirit* living breath in the body. It is that compassion and love that we happily give through our action/conduct for the benefit of all living beings. It is That I Am Presence that arises spontaneously and effortlessly upon the spiritual path. Even when we forget. So we remember great truth of it. It is That that is the open secret of our own harmless human happiness. *Feel* That Presence now. Jesus the Christ incarnated from that vast original Ground of Being to teach we human beings that light. Great joy!

*The Education of Jesus of Nazareth.* Jesus' first teachers were his earthly mother Mary and his father Joseph of Nazareth; and later the love-wisdom master and aesthete John the Baptist who baptized him. Jesus was a disciple of this devout prophet prior to beginning his own ministry. Great spiritual masters after all require guides in the beginning. We often hear John's teaching reflected in the Gospels. Jesus learned the Jewish Law of the prophets from local Judean and Galilean rabbis, and later came to fulfill that Law. Jesus attracted his first disciples from John's disciples. Jesus spent his early years in schools in Galilee where he learned to read and write in the Aramaic Hebrew dialect. He knew some Hebrew as well. That the *New Testament* was written in Greek suggests Jesus may have learned Greek from the House of Rabbi Hillel and/or from the great local Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria.

## New Testament Mythmaking

That which is called the Christian religion existed among the  
Ancients, and never did not exist...

—St. Augustine

The *New Testament* is an extremely limited selection of texts produced from a large body of teaching that evolved among various Jewish/Christian communities during the first two hundred years following the death of Jesus of Nazareth (Yeshua in Hebrew).

The discovery of authentic *Gospels*, *Acts* and *Letters* in Nag Hammadi Egypt in 1945, the wondrous *Nag Hammadi Library*, then the *Dead Sea Scrolls* at Qumran in 1948, and the deconstruction of the canonical *New Testament* by postmodern Bible and religious historical scholarship reveals a picture of the formation, evolution and content of the true teaching of Jesus the Christ that greatly enhances present day Christianity.

According to the common conventional view of Christianity, the authors of the *New Testament* were all present, and directly witnessed the divine intervention of Jesus the Christ, the “only begotten son of God” into the world. Further, these writings were all for the sole purpose of implementing Jesus' intention to establish the Orthodox Christian Church. The conventional idea that the *New Testament* is “a singular collection of apostolic documents, all of which bear ‘witness’ to a single set of inaugural events, is misleading.” [Mack 1995]

Scholars and religious historians know that the canonical *New Testament* record is the evolutionary product of two centuries of Christian mythmaking, brilliantly constructed by the Orthodox Church leadership to establish its singular view of God's plan for his earthly kingdom, and the absolute authority of the Church over it. Over the centuries the image of Jesus has been molded to fit some earthly view or another. For example, there is near universal scholarly agreement that the gospels and other texts of the *New Testament*, with the possible exception of most of Paul's letters (*Colossians* and *Ephesians* are of questionable authenticity), were actually written anonymously or pseudonymously during the first century by the leaders of what was to become the Orthodox Catholic Church. [Duling 1979; Mack 1995; Butts 1987; Koester 1996]

Various Jesus communities began to develop in the 30's and 40's of the first century. Most scholars now believe that the earliest was the community that produced the *Gospel of Thomas*, followed by the *Sayings Gospel of "Q"* (30 to 70 CE). The *Gospel of Thomas* may well have been the source for “Q” and the *Synoptic Gospels*. The *Letters of Paul* are dated from the 50's, the *Gospel of Mark* from the 70's, the *Gospel of Matthew* from the 80's, the *Gospel of John* in the 90's, the *Gospel of Luke* at the end of the First Century, and the *Acts*, *Letters* and other texts during the first half of the Second Century. [Mack 1995; Butts 1987; Koester 1982; Pagels 1989] Each of the Jesus communities that produced the *Gospels* and other texts of the *New Testament* had a different view of Jesus' teaching. All believed their disciple and his view to be the correct view. Several of these Jesus groups had their own *Gospels*. [Cameron 1982] Some of the early

Jesus groups viewed Jesus as a great esoteric teacher or sage (early Q; *Gospel of Thomas*; *Gospels of Mark and Matthew*). Others viewed him exoterically and dualistically, as a singularly divine magically appearing God, essentially separate from humanity (late Q; *John*).

These various texts then came to be collected by a radical Christian community (the "Christ Cult") that evolved gradually during the second, third and fourth centuries to become the Orthodox Christian Church. [Mack 1995,1993; Koester 1996; Butts 1987] This particular view of Jesus and his teaching, along with its revision of Judaism, became the *de facto* religion of empire following the conversion of Constantine (313) who became sole emperor of the Roman Empire in 325. In 381 Emperor Theodosius declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. The Church edited the large body of Christian literature in accordance with its view (the "Christ Myth"); suppressed Gnostic dissent, (the penalty for heresy was death); revised and appropriated the *Old Testament* Hebrew epic in support of its view; created or revised the *Gospel of John* and added it to the *Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke* to complete the "four formed gospel"; attached this "New Testament" to selected and edited exoteric Jewish scriptures (the "*Old Testament*") at the Council of Nicaea (325); "fixed" this *New Testament* canon so that no other version of the Jesus teaching could be added or deleted (Council of Carthage 397, and again at the Council of Trent 1545-1563); and thereby created our contemporary Christian Bible, the official word of God for all Christians.

*What is Mythmaking?* The scholarly contention that the exoteric and esoteric history of Christianity is a process of 'mythmaking' should not be construed negatively. Nor is it news. All human cultures create a rational narrative, a complex of stories or 'myths' to explain and understand their particular place in the history of the *kosmos*. Historians call these "myths of origin" and they constitute both the preconscious and supraconscious deep cultural background 'global web of belief' (Quine 1969) of all cultures. Religion—whether the exoteric metaphysical assumptions of Local Realism that is Big Science Scientific Materialism, or the "highest" nondual teaching of our Primordial Wisdom Tradition—always arises in sociocultural space and time. These 'myths' are experienced exoterically or esoterically depending upon one's spiritual maturity. Here, the innermost esoteric understanding transcends and embraces the outer exoteric understanding, but not vice versa.

The common scientific materialist notion that "history" is true, and "myth" is false is misleading, as if history is somehow written completely objectively, and myth is merely its trivial subjective corollary. Indeed, it has been well argued by some that objective reality is a reified concept-belief illusion fabricated by a separated, egocentric observer. This view is present in Mahayana Buddhist and most Hindu religious metaphysics; Eastern and Western philosophical and religious Metaphysical Idealism; and the recent 'nonlocal' quantum theory, itself an incipient Metaphysical Idealism. [Boaz 2023 *The Noetic Revolution*]

Postmodernism—the psychology of the unconscious, General Relativity, and Quantum Field Theory—has taught us the relativity of all conceptual explanation. The quest of Modernism, the quest for a single, certain, absolute system of rational conceptual explanation—a "theory of everything"—has given way to Postmodern "conceptual relativity," the understanding that there are multiple useful (pragmatically true)

explanations for any given phenomenon—the ontic “Principle of Conceptual Relativity”.

The common conventional view of history and myth is therefore that 'history' occurs in a "real time" objectively real reality dimension, and 'myth' occurs in some sort of diaphanous "mythtime", or surreal subjective reality. A synthetic, synchronic view is that these apparently different realities are both present in the metaphysical unity that is a flux or stream of the tantric continuum (a quantum discontinuum) of human preconscious, conscious and supraconscious experience of being here in spacetime reality. Now one view may be manifest in individual and collective experience; now another view. Our attachment to, or identification with a particular view may polarize or separate us from other related or opposing views (*wu li*). The antidote to such cognitive bias is *shoshin*, zen mind, openness of the 'beginners mind', understanding that all views (including syncretic views and sublimely elegant mathematical and physical theories) contain truth as facets of a greater whole; not attaching to any particular view. ["I hold no opinions" told Gautama the Buddha.]

This is more than mere dialectical thinking. This is liberation thinking. The relativity of all views—"conceptual relativity"—arises within an inclusive ultimate nondual view which transcends yet includes our conceptual views about it. This is not to say that "everything is relative." That is, the nondual Ultimate or Absolute—Tao, *shunyata*, *Brahman*, *Ein Sof*), essential *ultimate* Nature of Mind ("Big Mind")—utterly transcends yet embraces *relative* mind ("Small Mind") and all of the conditional, relative phenomena arising therein, including our conceptual theoretical speculations and our closely held beliefs about it.

'Mythmaking' then, is a necessary and inevitable socio-psychological behavior complex in the evolution of the historical identity of any culture. Meta-mythmaking occurs as the various narratives, the icons and epics of a self-conscious species begin to merge and transcend their apparently separate and different iconographies into a more inclusive truth of a prior metaphysical unity that is their perfectly subjective source Ground of Being.

According to greater esoteric, even nondual views of the Primordial Wisdom Tradition of our species, ultimately, all relative conceptual cultural differences abide in nondual primordial Ground of Being Itself, then arise as the mythopoetic creation dramas of each cultural historical arc. Indeed, that great unbiased realization is the perennial love-wisdom teaching that Jesus the Christ, and the buddhas and mahasiddhas of the three times have transmitted exoterically to the masses, and esoterically to their prepared disciples from the very beginning. That Primordial Wisdom teaching then, is the goodness, beauty and truth of reality carried forth through relative time and space within the deep background cultural storage vehicle of myths, metamyths, archetypes and metanarratives.

*Therefore, no culture stands cognitively in an objective relation to its own myths of origin.* This includes individual students, scholars, apologists and critics of the culture. Even those scholars of religious myths of a culture remain attached to, or live in subjective relation to certain of these myths, as evidenced by the astounding cognitive gymnastics—cognitive dissonance, both belief and denial—of religious scholars, historians, philosophers, and theologians throughout the history of humankind. [Present company excluded, of course.]

How then shall we understand such prodigious mythmaking in its relation to the early development and evolution of Christianity, and so to billions of later Christians?

## The “Christ Myth” and the “Christ Cult”

If we are to begin to understand our profound Primordial Wisdom teaching that is the esoteric “innermost secret” nondual teaching of Jesus, we must understand the nature and historical evolution of both the outer exoteric and inner esoteric aspects of Christian mythology and ideology. This in turn shall aid our understanding of the universal, trans-cultural truth of the descent of primordial “divine” Being, the *Logos* itself, our very ground, into an avataric, logocic human incarnation—e.g. Jesus the Christ, Gautama the Buddha—who “overcomes the world” by realizing, then demonstrating—through perfect compassionate activity, the perennial truth of the ascent and way of return to this ‘supreme source ground’. It is this primordial nondual teaching that is the inner truth of the outer appearance of the “Christ Myth”, and indeed, of all exoteric religious myths and traditions.

Gradually, over a quarter century of early Christian social experimentation, probably in Syria, one of the several Jesus communities began to shift its focus from the view of Jesus as a great teacher-sage, as it appears in the Synoptic Gospels of the *New Testament*, the *Sayings (logia) Gospel of Q* (early Q), and in the *Gospel of Thomas*, to a new focus on Jesus’ identity, the meaning of his death and related ideas of his death, resurrection and martyrdom. *Jesus the human teacher, sage and spiritual master who realized in his human life the logos/christos became transformed into Jesus the separate one and only begotten Son of God, a unique spiritual singularity in the history of humankind. Emphasis on the esoteric teaching (“The Kingdom of God is within you”) shifted to the exoteric worship of Jesus as God.* Moreover, belief in this story, the “Christ Myth” which became the Nicene Creed of 325, was the only way to salvation for all human beings, now and forever. Today, in the 21st century, this parochial early Orthodox Church soteriology and christology is still held by most Christians. The evidence for such a “Christ Cult” comes from Paul’s letters of the middle of the first century. Indeed, this is probably the group to which Paul converted. [Cameron, Duling, Mack]

As the Christ Cult spread, its christology became anchored in the mythology of martyrdom, the ancient multicultural archetype of the honorable death. The conventional, exoteric ‘Christ Myth’ that emerged is expressed in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15: 3-5), known now as the *kerygma* (proclamation): Jesus the Christ died for the sins of humankind; he was buried, and on the third day was resurrected from death of his physical body whereupon he appeared in the flesh to Peter, then later to other disciples. This “*kerygmatic* formula” that is root of the Christ Myth is exoterically, the death and resurrection of the actual physical body of Jesus the Christ, *one and only* Son of the Hebrew God. An exoteric reading of Paul’s *Letter to the Romans* (7:21-26) clarifies the formula: God regards Jesus’ death as expiation for the sins of the gentiles, thereby imploring human beings to commit to the Orthodox “one true faith” that was exemplified by Jesus himself.

The Christ Myth provided the emerging Christ Cult—early Orthodox Church—a material solution to two pressing problems: the forgiveness and inclusion of gentiles into the Christian Jewish community, and a miraculous sign from God (the Resurrection) that justified the group’s claim to be the children (chosen people) of the God of Israel, and the inheritors of God’s Kingdom on earth. [Mack 1993, 1995; Koester 1996; Funk 1995]

## The Apostle Paul: Orthodox or Gnostic?

It is important to note that during the period of Paul's *Letters* in the 50's, and indeed until the *Gospel of Mark* in the 70's, Christians regarded themselves as a part of the Jewish temple state in Jerusalem. The Christ Myth was an early mythological solution for a Christian Jewish community who was struggling to assimilate gentiles into its congregation (*ekklesia*) while maintaining its relationship with the Law and the Prophets of Israel (*synagogue*).

Paul understood that the Christ Myth had its exoteric and its esoteric dimensions, and as all great masters, he taught through both modalities. Paul's gospel proclamation of the *kerygma* in his *Letters* to the Corinthians and Romans proclaiming Jesus to be the Christ (*messiah, logos*) was the bedrock upon which the later Orthodox Church built its dualistic *exoteric* theology. This same proclamation is the very basis of the *esoteric* transcendental theology of the great tradition of our monistic nondual Primordial Wisdom teaching, of which Gnostic Thomas Christianity and Gnostic Valentinian Christianity is an example, and which we see in the Gnostic *Gospels of Thomas* and of *John*. The difference lies in the emphasis on Jesus as the one and only Christ or God; or Jesus as the great teacher and shower of the way to realization of the *logos/christos* that dwells within each and every human Heart.

The Valentinians revered Paul and viewed his *Letters*, along with the *Gospel of Thomas*, as Gnostic primary sources for their nondual transcendental theology. Indeed, they considered Paul a Gnostic initiate. [Pagels 1975] As noted, Valentinus received initiation into the Gnosis of Light by Theodus, the great disciple of Paul. It must also be noted that some of the theology attributed to the Valentinian school was standard Gnostic dualism. However, a close esoteric reading of the Nag Hammadi Valentinian Gnostic teaching in *The Gospel of Truth*, *The Tripartite Tractate*, *The Treatise on the Resurrection (Codex I)*, *The Interpretation of Knowledge*, and *A Valentinian Exposition (Codex XI)* reveals nondual essence—the pith of the teaching.

Yet Bishop Irenaeus, Tertullian, Justinian, and later Clement and his disciple Origen use Paul's theology in their Orthodox polemic against Gnostic, and particularly Valentinian Gnostic heresy. Indeed, Valentinus was expelled from the Church for heresy in 143 CE.

Well, was Paul a Gnostic or an antignostic? The nondual Gnostics claimed him. Orthodox heresiologists claimed him. Conventional scholarship views Paul as an antignostic. Yet clearly, there is Gnostic terminology and nondual Gnostic exegesis in the Pauline *Letters*. Elaine Pagels suggests that this Gnostic terminology in Paul's *Letters* "may be more plausibly explained as Pauline terminology in the Gnostic writings". [Pagels 1975]

The nascent nondual teaching in both the Pauline and the Valentinian corpuses are derived from the ancient pre-Christian, pre-Greek Orphic/Hermetic and even Vedic mystery teaching: from the "religion that existed among the Ancients, and never did not exist, from the beginning of the human race..." (St. Augustine, *Epis. Retrac.*). Paul, and the Valentinian Gnostics understood this ancient "Gnosis of Light" as the essence of Jesus' teaching and derived their esoteric and even nondual transcendental theology from it. For the Orthodox heresiologists this esoteric mystical Gnostic aspect of Paul's teaching was in direct opposition to their own dualistic exoteric view of the *kerygmatic* Christ Myth which

understood Jesus as the separate, singular one and only God-man. Their solution: Christian Orthodoxy suppressed and denied both the dualistic and the nondual Gnostic, esoteric aspect of Paul's (and thus Jesus') teaching. They utilized only Paul's exoteric materialist/physicalist aspect in their exegesis, and claimed that Paul was thereby antignostic.

That Paul (and Jesus) taught "in two ways at once", is clear not only from an esoteric reading of the Pauline corpus, but from his express statements in the authentic *Letters*: "The *psychic* does not discern *pneumatic* things". [1 Cor. 2:14] As we have seen, the *psychic* (mind) or *pistic* Christian is unprepared to receive the true Gnosis of Light directly, and is given only the exoteric teaching which emphasizes religious law, ritual, and morality. The *pneumatic* (spirit) Christian ("the elect") is prepared through advanced spiritual practice and insight for the direct, esoteric and even nondual transmission of the Gnosis of Light from an apostolic master. In our Primordial Wisdom Tradition every buddha, *mahasiddha*, saint and sage has transmitted the nondual love-wisdom teaching in this "two ways at once".

This exoteric/esoteric dialectic is useful because without it the teacher and his/her unique transmission of the primordial nondual teaching will usually be interpreted from conceptual exoteric pole only, thereby continuing the dualistic, polarized view at the expense of a more subtle, higher (deeper), more inclusive and comprehensive nondual understanding that is precursor to liberation—ultimate harmless happiness—through bright Gnosis of Light.

Unfortunately, this is precisely the present situation regarding most contemporary historical interpretation and belief of the teaching of Paul, and of Jesus—and of much Buddhist and Vedic teaching as well. Nondual spiritual experience reduced to concepts and beliefs.

Thus does Postmodern biblical exegesis remain rooted in second century exoteric Orthodox heresiology and its contemporary *apologia*. "From the Modernism you choose follows the Postmodernism you deserve." [David Antin]

### **From Nazareth to Nicaea: The Packaging of Jesus**

We have seen how the Christian Orthodox Church of the first two centuries gradually replaced the historical Jesus of Nazareth with the 'Christ Myth', Jesus as God or the "Christ of Faith," ultimately codified in the *Creed of Nicaea* (325), and declared the official religion of the Roman Empire in 381. And yes, the Roman penalty for heresy was death.

The nondual primordial wisdom teaching of Jesus—sage who became outer and inner *christos Presence* that emerges from an esoteric understanding of *The Gospel of Thomas*, early *Q*, the nondual Valentinian teaching and other Gnostic and Hermetic teaching including the esoteric aspect of *John*—was tragically transformed into the dualistic, materialist exoteric dogma of the *kerygma* formula and the later Christian Orthodoxy of the synoptic gospels.

Sadly, step-by-step, the Jesus of Paul and Valentinus and their mystical teaching of the Gnosis of Light that dwells within each human being was reduced to simple *belief* in a separate Jesus-as-God that we get from an exoteric reading of the *New Testament Gospels*.

Hence, contemporary Christianity did not originate with the historical Jesus and his actual teaching of the Gnosis of Light, but with the "creedal Christ" (Funk 1995), the "Christ



Myth" created, packaged and sold by the apologists of the early Orthodox Church, those "false Gnostics...who caused the Gnosis to be rejected and so alienated the Church from the supreme truths of transcendental theology. [That was] the great misfortune which befell Christianity." [Eliphas Levi] That has indeed become a Christian catastrophe.

The contemporary Neo-orthodox Protestant theology of Bultmann, Barth, Tillich and Niebuhr, along with contemporary Christian fundamentalism, and the Roman Catholic Church continue the dualism of this materialist, exoteric early Orthodox legacy. 'Myths of origin' evolve predictably. Their inevitable deconstruction and the excavation of more subtle truths abiding in their historical sources is often painful due to our inherited belief and identity in, and emotional attachment to the comfort zones provided by the enduring myth. The antidote? Yes. Post-conceptual direct contemplative yogic experience (*yogi pratyaksa*) expunges attachment to inauthentic conceptual and belief systems. Alas, easier said than done.

Therefore, our challenge and the task of Postmodern, post-critical, post-metaphysical Christianity is to rediscover, re-cognize, then realize the subjective, emotional/devotional experiential, participatory transcendental post-theistic theology of our Great Wisdom Tradition; to free the ancient, primordial nondual gospel teaching of Jesus from the *kerygmatic* grip of modernist, rational, "natural theology" exegesis of the canonical Gospels. "Men make gods and worship their creation." [*Gospel of Philip*, Gnostic]

*Our present task then, is to restore the great esoteric and the innermost secret nondual teaching of Jesus the Christ to Christianity, and to situate it and understand it in the context of the nondual love-wisdom mind teaching of the great Primordial Wisdom Tradition of our humankind.*

### **The Early Jesus Communities and the Early Gospels**

When examining events of the past it is urgent to remember the subjective, cultural, conceptual relativity of evolutionary explanation. History is interpretation. Hermeneutics and textual exegesis yield, at best, a temporary, fallible, relative view. Historical fact, truth and meaning abide in a continuum of pre-conscious, conscious, and noetic supraconscious deep background cultural/historical/spiritual flux, as we have so often seen in these pages.

Bible and religious historical scholarship has identified, through documentary evidence, at least six distinct Jesus communities that arose during the first fifty years after the death of Jesus. [Mack 1995; Duling 1979; Koester 1990] We have seen that one of them developed into the Orthodox Catholic Christian Church that emerged from what some scholars have termed the radical "Christ Cult" of early first century Christianity. [Mack 1995; Funk 1995] It was this Jesus group that created and enforced, during the first three centuries, a body of carefully selected and edited literature that was to become the epic 'myth of origin' of Christianity as it now appears in contemporary versions of the Christian Bible.

At least five other Jesus communities produced their own Christian texts. The earliest was probably the Gnostic Thomas community that produced the *Sayings Gospel of Thomas* which was similar to the *Gospel of Q*, also a sayings gospel. "Q" arises from *quelle* or "source" in German. Either *Thomas* or the mysterious *Q* was the primary source of the three Synoptic

Gospels, namely, *Mark*, *Matthew* and *Luke*. [Pagels; Mack 1993; Duling 1979; Koester 1996] Some scholars now believe that Thomas was the earliest (30-60 CE) and therefore the source of the lost *Q Gospel*, and of the later extant Synoptic Gospels. [Pagels, Koestler, Meyer]

Another early Jesus community was the "Jerusalem Pillars" (Peter, James and John) mentioned by Paul in his *Letter to the Galatians*. There was also the "Congregation of Israel" who created the pre-Markan miracle stories (stilling the storm, feeding the multitudes, walking on water, the blind man, the deaf mute, and the rest) that were incorporated into the early canonical *Gospel of Mark*. Finally there was the Jesus community that produced the pre-Markan "pronouncement stories." These were instructive anecdotal stories in the Greek *metis* (*chreiai*) tradition wherein the master dramatically demonstrates the *metis* aspect of his love-wisdom (exoteric discursive knowing, *i.e. sophia/prajna/sherab*) arising from the depth of his nondual wisdom (*gnosis/jnana/yeshe*) in a pithy rejoinder to a challenge. For example: "Can the rich enter the kingdom of heaven?" "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?" "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, give to God what is God's." When asked why he shared the table with the 'unclean' tax collectors, Jesus said in this pronouncement story, "Those who are well, do not need a physician."

The primordial stream of the Gnosis of Light that entered the Christian religion through the incarnation and esoteric nondual teaching of Jesus continued through some of the early Jesus communities to Paul, and to the communities that produced the Gnostic *Gospels of Thomas* and *John*, the Gnostic Valentinus then the later Christian mystics. Along the way the nondual Gnosis of Light teaching clashed with the dualistic exoteric apocalyptic trend of the emerging Orthodox Church (the Christ Cult), thereby contributing to the refining of the Orthodox view (the Christ Myth), and the eventual fixing of the *New Testament Canon*, to the exclusion of all Gnostic texts (except John) at the Council of Carthage in 397. That is the present limit of Jesus' teaching for most Christians.

Most of the early Jesus people, including the people of the Synoptic Gospels, the *Gospel of Thomas* and the people of early *Q*, viewed Jesus as a master teacher, prophet and sage. The Christ Cult made him God, divine and inherently separate from humankind. The esoteric and nondual Gnostic view is of Jesus as the great exemplar (*mimesis*, to become the pattern) of liberation into love-wisdom Gnosis of Light that is always already present within each human form. That (*christos, vidya, rigpa, tathata*) is the implicate, hidden or cloaked (*maya*) ultimate 'supreme identity' of all human beings. This mystical view was evident in the first century Gnostic communities that produced the *Gospels of Thomas* and the *Q Gospel* (*Q<sup>1</sup>*). That trans-conceptual esoteric view was further developed in the nondual teaching of the Valentinian and Hermetic literature of the second century, as we have seen above.

### **The Gospel of Thomas**

*The Gospel of Thomas* is a Coptic (Egyptian) translation of an authentic Greek text discovered in 1945 with the *Nag Hammadi Library* (*Codex II*, 2). Scholars date it from the 30's to the 70's of the first century and consider it a source for the *Matthew* and *Luke Gospels*, and

possibly the lost *Q Gospel* as well. It is considered by most scholars to be the “Fifth Gospel.” It is a Gnostic wisdom ‘sayings gospel’ (*logos/sophon*) transmitting 114 *Zen koan*-like instructions on awakening and ethically expressing the inner Gnosis of Light. It is of monumental importance for it is the only extant text authentically documenting that the Jesus communities produced ‘sayings gospels’ based solely upon the actual teaching of an historical Jesus. Because it is early, and very much like the hypothesized but undocumented *Sayings Gospel of Q*—possible “source” of the three Synoptic Gospels—it reveals much about the historical development of Jesus’ teaching from its early formulation in *Q*, through the mythmaking process of later *Q*, and the later synoptic *Gospels*, *Acts* and *Letters*.

Unlike the other Gospels—Gnostic or Synoptic—*Thomas* contains no *christos* Presence, no Jesus narrative, no dualism, no nihilism, no ontological speculation and no fantasque theology nor cosmogony. It is the voice of Jesus transmitting wisdom of the ages in its earliest, purest Christian formulation. *Thomas* is a Zen-like testament in that it is interpretive and performative. It does not preach. It does not condescend. It demands first person, present tense life world response from the hearer, here and now. It is radical in that, unlike the synoptic *Gospels*, *Acts* and *Letters*, its teaching is nondual, that is, no separation between God and humanity. The subtext: Presence of God is always present in everyone.

The Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* then, reveals authentic historical documentation of Jesus’ actual radical esoteric teaching of the Gnosis of Light, the primordial nondual wisdom mindstream that flowed from Jewish Kabbalistic mysticism through the Gnostic teaching of Paul, the *Gospel of John*, the Valentinian school and some of the Sethian literature, all the way to the Catholic and Protestant mystics of the Reformation. This is the inner, esoteric teaching that would begin a polemical battle between the Christian Gnostics and the Orthodox Church that would rage for three centuries. This is the great inner nondual teaching that would ultimately be lost to Christianity with the victory of the dualistic, exoteric separate theistic Creator God theology of the early Orthodox Church.

The inherently nondual view of the *Gospel of Thomas* transcends yet includes the *Q* people’s early view of Jesus as a prophet and sage who teaches law and morality (*Q*<sup>1</sup>). It transcends and includes the exoteric martyrology of late *Q* (*Q*<sup>3</sup>), and of the later “Christ Cult” that transforms Jesus into the separate transcendent God of the “Christ Myth,” the Christ who died and whose physical body was magically resurrected from the dead in *kerygmatic* expiation for the alleged ‘original sin’ of humankind. This later view served the early Christ Myth of the developing Orthodoxy by transferring the emphasis from Jesus’ heretical mystical esoteric teaching to the exoteric, fabulous event of his physical, bodily resurrection and ascension. As if by demonstration of miracles and magic his divinity were proven. The esoteric and even nondual view of both the Valentinian school and the *Gospel of Thomas* avoids such dualistic exoteric materialist proof strategies. [See also the *Greek Gospel of Thomas*, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, and the *Book of Thomas* NHC II, a question/answer dialogue [*erotapokriseis*] in which Jesus nondual teaching is expressed in terms of dualistic Platonic ontology and ethics.]

The Jesus people of the Gnostic *Thomas* and Valentinian communities, steeped in Jewish mysticism, could not believe, did not need to believe the outer exoteric *kerygma*

martyrology of the Orthodox Christ Myth. With the conviction of their inner, esoteric direct contemplative experience of Jesus' teaching with its emphasis on personal spiritual enlightenment of each human being, the notion of the necessity of Jesus' death as atonement for our inherent 'original sin', and of a magical, supernatural physical body resurrection was absurd. Indeed, even in the canonical *New Testament*, *Paul*, *Matthew*, *Luke* and even *John* made it clear that Jesus first appeared after the resurrection as a blinding luminous spiritual Presence, not in physical, bodily form. [Pagels 1989; Funk 1995; Robinson 1988]

As to Jesus' death as *kerygmatic* expiation of the sins of humankind, these early Gnostics told that an act of forgiveness begins with the individual. Forgiveness is seen as a compassionate (*hesed, charis, karuna*) act of love. We are forgiven our sins to the degree that we forgive ourselves, and others. This is the reciprocal nature of love. Forgiveness is accomplished—by grace—within the individual. No Church agent nor belief is necessary. What we give is what we get. What we sow is what we reap. Our Primordial Wisdom Tradition understands this truth as the Law of Cause and Effect—inexorable Law of Karma.

The framers of the Orthodox view—codified in *John*—needed the doctrines of the exoteric physical resurrection and its vicarious atonement in their materialist polemic against the deeper, subtler esoteric view of the Gnostics. For nondual Christian Gnostics the emphasis was on our original goodness—indwelling Gnosis of Light—not our original sin, our separation from God. What was important was our spiritual life, not our death. Jesus was "the living one," the "living Jesus" who mirrors "the light that is over all things," living Presence of the *christos*—"I am" Presence of God that dwells within each human form, and indeed in all phenomena. "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you..." "The Kingdom of God is within you, and it is outside you." "Become a disciple of your own mind." "Light the light within you." "There is light within a being of light, and it lights the whole world..." "Look to the [inner] living one as long as you live". Then not only in death (the Orthodox view), but in this very life may you return to the primordial Kingdom of the Gnosis of Light that is very Spirit Ground of Being of the world and all its beings.

Jesus transmits this love-wisdom in *Thomas* in saying 108: "Whoever drinks from my mouth will become as I Am, and I myself will become that person, and the mysteries shall be revealed to him." *Thomas* traces this always present wisdom seed Presence of the Gnosis of Light to *Genesis* where humanity (Adam) descends in the image of the first primordial light. Jesus speaks: "We came from the light, the place where the light came into being by itself...We [humanity] are its children, the chosen of the living Father." [*Thomas* 50]

As the "true disciple" initiate realizes, then demonstrates in the life world his/her actual identity as a spiritual 'being of light'—as the true Gnosis of Light—enlightenment (salvation, *apolutrosis*) arises and eventually, through this Christ Consciousness one may become as Jesus, a living Christ. Yes. One who receives (*paralambano*), then demonstrates in one's life world this Gnosis of Light "is no longer a Christian, but a Christ." [*Gospel of Philip*, Gnostic] With such an inward view the Gnostic Christians of the early Thomas community did not need the external magic and miracles that we see in the *Gospel of John* to establish objective credibility of their personal subjective spiritual experience—indwelling Presence of primordial Gnosis of Light.

## The Gospel of John

The Gnostic Jesus community that produced the *Gospel of John*, probably in the 90's of the first century, seems to have developed its view of Jesus and his teaching independently of the other Jesus communities, as polemic against gnostic heresy. [Pagels, Koester, Mack]

The *Gospel of John* became the locus of controversy between Irenaeus, the architect of the emerging Orthodox view of Jesus as God, and nondual Gnostic view of Valentinus and his disciples, of Jesus as our great teacher of the Gnosis of Light, that “luminous *epinoia*” that outshines from a “being of light and lights the whole world.” Irenaeus, and later, Athanasius warn Christians to avoid the direct penetrating insight (*vipashyana* in Buddhism) of paramystical *epinoia* and to experience God only through *dianoia*, Church approved doctrine and belief. Thus was Christianity gutted of its essential esoteric mystical core. This bias persists in Catholic and protestant Christianity today. [Pagels, Meyer, Layton, Koester]

The Johannine community developed, over time, both an exoteric and an esoteric view of Jesus' teaching that shows little resemblance to the three Synoptic Gospels. For the esoteric faction, the story of Jesus is the Hermetic/Hellenistic, Jewish Kabbalistic Gnostic story of the descent and ascent of the *christos*, the Kosmic Christ—unfathomable mystery of divine Presence of our transcendent supreme source, “Primordial Father” incarnated into human form to realize and demonstrate the great perennial truth that this same result is the potential destiny of each human being. There seems to be little interest here for either the exoteric or the esoteric factions of this community in producing a historical narrative of Jesus' life that we see in the Synoptic Gospels. The general concern of the Synoptic Gospels is the story of the appearance (descent) of the divine Presence as it evolves (ascends) and becomes manifest in Jesus the great human spiritual exemplar. There is no *kerygmatic* attempt here to identify Jesus with God, or to portray him as an immortal nonhuman God.

But in the dualistic exoteric reading of *John*, Jesus bursts forth into spacetime reality not as human, but as the fully formed Christ, incarnate *Logos* itself, immortal and singular Son of God. Here, Jesus is not only God's divine messenger, but God Himself in a human form. Although the Synoptic Gospels refer to Jesus as the “Son of God” and “Messiah,” these epithets referred to human functions and Jesus would have been considered a great sage, a man, and not, as in *John*, “Lord and God”. [Pagels, Koester] It bears repeating: “Men make Gods and worship their creation.” [*Gospel of Philip, Gnostic*]

Hence, the exoteric oriented members of the *John* community emphasized the miracle stories (the “signs source”) and his magical physical resurrection as proofs of the supernatural singular divinity of the God Christ, the one and “Only begotten Son of God.”

The members with esoteric understanding would have understood these stories as exoteric mythical signs outpicturing deeper esoteric and even nondual truth of the divine *Logos* working through Jesus in the world. That view aids limited mind of humankind toward the evolutionary purpose of revealing the true Gnosis of Light—that indwelling Christ Presence (*christos*) abiding within each human being that is the divine potential awaiting its innermost trans-conceptual, contemplative recognition and then realization.

The exoteric aspect of the *Gospel of John* clearly intends the seven miracles as signs "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Some scholars think that this outer exoteric material in *John* was added much later. The magical exoteric martyrology of the resurrection is to the same purpose. However, at the esoteric Gnostic core of the *Gospel of John* abides nondual primordial wisdom teaching of the descent and ascent of Spirit, God the Primordial Father—our supreme source—as incarnate *logos/christos*, divine Presence at spirit Heart of each one of us. Esoterically, as with the *Gospel of Thomas*, magical signs and martyrdom are not required. "I lay down my life to receive it back again. I lay it down of my own free will." On this view, Jesus did not intend to die in *kerygmatic* atonement for our sins. It is not his death, but the demonstration of his life that is the core of this Christian teaching.

The *Gospel of John* contradicts the Synoptic Gospels on several points. Why then did Irenaeus and the Christian Orthodoxy select the *Gospel of John* to complete the "four formed gospel" that became, in 397 CE—Council of Carthage—through the agency of Constantine and Athanasius, the woefully incomplete *Four Gospel Canon* of the *New Testament*?

An exoteric reading of the *Gospel of John* holds that *only* Jesus embodies God the Father and therefore, humanity can know God only through the agency of Jesus, and therefore the agency of the priestly Church hierarchy. This view clearly served the Church Orthodoxy.

However, the Thomas and Valentinian Gnostic Christians—drawing from the deep (*Bathos*) love-wisdom well of esoteric and nondual teaching of Jewish Kabbalah (and much earlier *hekalat*), and of Greek Hermetic mysticism—came to see Jesus' intervention in the world in a much different way. Here we recognize that within each human being abides the inherent imprint of the "image of God" as nondual *christos* Spirit Presence of the Gnosis of Light, divine seed of liberation hidden deep within each human spirit heart-mind.

Clearly, this christology of the *Gospel of John* did not serve the purposes of Irenaeus, Tertullian and the later Bishops and Popes of the Orthodox Christian Church in their ideological war against Jesus' radical nondual primordial love-wisdom teaching.

As the Johannine Jesus community evolved, the exoteric view and the esoteric view began, more and more, to differentiate. According to some scholars (Mack 1995, Duling 1979), around the beginning of the second century the exoteric faction of the *John* community split off to join with the emerging 'Christ Cult' that was the incipient Orthodox Church. The esoterically mystically oriented faction continued to develop in the Christian Gnostic tradition of Valentinus and his disciples.

That there is a protean exoteric/esoteric amalgam to the canonical *Gospel of John* is clear. How and when this came to be, what was added or deleted, and by whom will perhaps never be known. What is also clear is that in the *Gospel of John* there is a fully developed eschatology. The descent, resurrection and ascension of Jesus the Christ (whether in bodily or spiritual form) is fulfilled. Jesus final words are, "It is finished." The *eschaton* (end time) is always already present in the primordial Presence of Jesus the Christ, fully realized *christos*, and in a latent unawakened form as the *christos* Presence in every human being. That is the "good news" of our Primordial Wisdom teaching that is made manifest through the nondual teaching of Jesus the Christ as it is given through an innermost esoteric understanding of the *Gospel of John*.

## The Fulfillment

In the three Synoptic Gospels—*Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*—we await the *eschaton* (end time) and fulfillment of our final realization of primordial *parousia*—'groundless ground' *Bathos Deep* that is ultimate Ground of Being Itself. Through an esoteric love-wisdom understanding of the *Gospel of John* that mystery is revealed. The 'end time' is today—this 'eternal present' timeless moment now. And has always been. And shall always be. That is our moment-to-moment attention/awareness *choice* to enter in present empty lucid fullness of the Gnosis of Light.

For esoteric Christians, *christos* is indwelling lucent numinous spiritual Presence of timeless, formless, selfless nondual godhead—divine primordial awareness-consciousness ground or source of all arising appearing spacetime physical and mental phenomena. For 'the elect' *pneuma*/spirit esoteric Christian *That* (*tathata*, *thatness*, *suchness*, Presence) is nondual God the Father, spirit ground of everything that is. That is utterly above and beyond dualistic conceptual theistic Creator God separate from "His" creations. That lies beyond any concept or belief about it. That awakens luminous innermost Presence of the Gnosis of Light—by whatever holy name—that is our ever present unity of divine and human love and wisdom—abiding always here among the stars. We may *choose* to place our attention/awareness upon That in this timeless present moment now. Whatever lofty names we might bestow upon such spirit phenomena, that nameless, moment-to-moment conscious love-wisdom *choice* is the *practice* of the spiritual path that bespeaks our final fulfillment. It is each human being who chooses to recognize, then realize his/her innermost indwelling Christ Presence. Feel That. Be That. Doctrinaire concept-belief has very little to do with it.

Fulfillment of this holy promise occurs, not vicariously through mere belief in a sacred doctrine, or through the death of a singular, eternally transcendent sacred personage, and not through a future *paracletic* Second Coming, but here, now through each one's opening to receive—faith/*pistis* as self-ego-I surrender—this already present Spirit Presence of the Gnosis of Light that abides within the spiritual heart-mind of each and every human being, without a single exception. That bright Spirit Ground of Being is 'natural place of rest', far beyond our conceptual 'global web of belief' (Quine 1969). Our human happiness rests always in that spacious trans-conceptual, nondual primordial ground. Contemplative 'mindfulness of breathing' makes it so. That is the simple practice of the Gnosis of Light. Find a qualified spiritual mentor to guide the way. We cannot know ourselves only by ourselves.

Wonder of wonders, for we human beings "it is already accomplished from the very beginning", deep within us. [*Ch. II*] We need not seek it elsewhere, in material and spiritual seeking strategies. Yes. We awaken to both relative and ultimate happiness through yogic contemplative practice, upon the mindful spirit breath in our body, and through skillful, kind, compassionate action/conduct for the benefit of all living beings, for as long as we live.

It is this liberation/enlightenment that is—on the accord of the Primordial Wisdom Tradition of humankind—great fulfillment that ends our adventitious seeking and suffering. That is the open secret of the great happiness that cannot be lost—ultimate harmless human Happiness Itself. One precious life at a time. *Mahasukaho!* Praise Be!

## II The Buddhist View: Sutra, Tantra, Dzogchen

### The Buddhist Middle Way: A Very Brief History

The Vajrayana, Indo-Tibetan Buddhist exposition of noble Mahayana Vehicle, consists of Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug lineages. The later three are New Translation Tantra schools (*Sarma*) that developed from the translations of Rinchen Sangpo (958-1055), during the time of Atisha and Marpa. H.H. Dalai Lama has shown that the view and basic structure of these lineage schools are essentially the same as the Indian Middle Way Consequence School (Prasangika Madhyamaka) of Nagarjuna (2nd century), Chandrakirti (7th century), and Tsongkhapa (14th century), that is founded in 8th century 'ancient' Nyingma school nondual Dzogchen, the Great Completion. H.H. Dalai Lama has referred to this *Rangtong* Prasangika Middle Way 'conceptual foundation' of Dzogchen as "that perfect harmony between the teachings on emptiness (Madhyamaka), and the [*Shentong*] Yogachara [buddha nature] teachings on the clear light."

So Prasangika evolved from Nagarjuna's 2nd century CE Madhyamaka, the great *Mahayana* teaching of the Two Truths (relative and ultimate) that arose from *Pali Canon* at the time of the Third Council (1st century CE) when over four centuries of Indian Buddhist oral transmission was finally committed to writing. This teaching continued the ancient tradition of the Hindu *Sanatanadharma*—the hoary Vedas, Upanishads, Vedanta, and especially Adi Shankara's nondual Advaita Vedanta, great completion of ancient Vedic wisdom transmission.

That Buddhist Middle Way teaching then entered China with Bodhidharma (521 CE), the twenty-eighth patriarch of Indian Buddhism and the first patriarch of the Ch'an/Zen tradition lineage. In China, Indian Mahayana Buddhism blended with the Taoism of the *T'ang* and *Sung* periods to give rise to *Ch'an* and *T'ien T'ai* Buddhism in the 6th century.

In the late 12th century *Ch'an* entered Korea, then Japan with Eisai and Dōgen, founders of the Zen Rinzaï and Soto Zen schools, respectively. *T'ien T'ai* entered Japan (*Tendai*) with Saicho in the 8th century. This great Chinese tradition is codified in the *Chinese Canon* (983 CE).

Middle Way Madhyamaka teaching also entered Tibet from India in the 8th century with Shantarakshita, Kamalashila and in the Shambhala teaching of Padmasambhava, the "Second Buddha", where it assimilated the indigenous Bön religion. The Tibetan transmission reached its pinnacle through the translation and transmission of Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), founder of the Dalai Lama's Gelug School in the 14th century. This Indo-Tibetan tradition of the Buddha's teaching is voiced in the *Tibetan Canon* (1742). The 19th and 20th century Tibetan non-sectarian *rimé* movement (Ju Mipham) further developed and aligned the great Buddhist Middle Way teaching with the nondual views of the highest or innermost tantras of both the New Translation schools (Highest Yoga Tantra Mahamudra), and the earlier Nyingma school (Ati Dzogchen).

The basic thought of *Kagyu*, *Sakya* and *Gelug* is the same with respect to the philosophical views in that they are all of the Middle Way Consequence School.

—H.H. Dalai Lama [*Kindness, Clarity and Insight* 1984]



## Dharma in a Cold Climate: The Supreme Teaching

Buddhism has changed, and been changed by each culture that it has entered. Just so, Buddhism on Western ground has offered a subjective spiritual antidote to the radical objectivity of para-religious Scientific Local Realism, while softening its own doctrinaire conventions.

That said, what shall we make of the Secret Mantra translations of the earlier Tibetan wisdom dissemination, the 'Old Translation School' of Nyingma, with its supreme nondual teaching that is acausal Maha Ati Dzogchen, The Great Completion of the Mahayana Causal Vehicle? This ancient teaching dates back to its historical founder, Garab Dorje (Prahevajra) in 2nd century CE Uddiyana (Orgyan). From there it spread to Zhang Zhung, and in the 8th century to Tibet with the great translations of Vairochana, Shantarakshita and Padmasambhava.

According to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, certain Ati Dzogchen (Skt. *Mahasandi*) tantras reveal that the Dzogchen lineage includes the "Twelve Teachers of Dzogchen" (see Dodrupchen Nyima's primary text, *Tantric Doctrine According to the Nyingmapa School*), prehistoric masters some of whom pre-date even the ancient Bön Dzogchen master Shenrab Miwoche who taught in Olmo Lung ring circa 1600 BCE. Indeed, the *Grathal gyur tantra* states that the great nondual Dzogchen *Ati Yoga* teaching, by whatever name, has arisen in inhabited star systems for many *kalpas*, and will endure long after the earth and its sun have passed. In our star system the Ati Dzogchen innermost secret teaching—*manngag/upadesha*—is considered by many Buddhist masters to be the quintessential nondual teaching. On the accord of 20th century Nyingma Dzogchen master Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, the View and Result/Fruit of Kagyu Essence Mahamudra is the same as that of Ati Dzogchen, though the Path differs a bit.

On the accord of His Holiness Dalia Lama, who bases his analysis in part upon the definitive teaching of the aforementioned Nyingma Master, the Third Dodrupchen Jigme Tenpe Nyima (1865-1926), the tantric view of Dzogchen, and the Middle Way of sutra and the lower tantras are not essentially the same, although the practices of the path are similar and its Result or Fruit—Buddhahood—is the same. [H.H. Dalai Lama, 2000 *Dzogchen*] However, the view of the highest nondual teaching of both the New Translation Schools—*Anuttara Yogatantra* or Highest Yoga Tantra with its Essence Mahamudra practice—and the Old Translation school's Ati Dzogchen do indeed come to the same essential point.

The substance of all these paths comes down to the fundamental innate mind of clear light [*ösel*]. Even the sutras...have this same fundamental mind as the basis of their thought in their discussion of the buddha nature, although the full mode of its practice is not described as it is in the systems of Highest Yoga Tantra.

—H.H. Dalai Lama (1984)

How then do the highest tantric teachings of the ancient Nyingma lineage Dzogchen, and of the New Translation school's Essence Mahamudra differ from the sutra view of the Middle Way of Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti, and how are they the same? Is there an essential difference between Buddhist Sutra and Buddhist Tantra? Between Tantra and Dzogchen? For these answers we must first look to the Buddha's prodigious *Three Turnings of the Wheel of the Dharma*.

## The Triyana: Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma Are One Path

Shakyamuni (Siddhartha Gautama) the historical Buddha (circa 563-483 BCE) transmitted exoteric/outer, esoteric/inner, and nondual or greater esoteric ('innermost secret') teaching for followers and disciples of different levels of spiritual acumen. The mahasiddhas of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition have taught in this exoteric/esoteric "two ways at once."

The teaching of the Buddha is usually classified into *The Three Vehicles (yanas) of Enlightenment—The Triyana*, the Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma. They represent one Buddhadharma or one path with differing views, or differing emphases. We all need the appropriate level of teaching for our present life stage understanding. On the accord of the Mahayana, these Three Turnings of the *Dharmachakra*—broadly construed—represent the Buddha's three primary teaching Vehicles: 1) The Four Noble Truths of the *Shravakayana* (Hinayana), very foundation of all three of Buddha's 'three tenet systems'; 2) The Mahayana Causal Vehicle: *Prajnaparamita* emptiness (*shunyata*), and the Two Truths, relative and ultimate; 3) The Indo-Tibetan Vajrayana Vehicle—buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*)—Shantarakshita's unity of middle way Prasangika Madhyamaka (*rangtong* emptiness), and Middle Way "mind only" (*chittamatra*) Yogachara (*shentong* buddha nature) with its Three Natures or Three Emptinesses. [Boaz 2025 Ch. VI *The Open Secret of Human Happiness*] How shall we understand this?

These Three Vehicles include 1) the Foundational Vehicle or the Hinayana (*Sautrantika* and *Vaibhashika* sub-tenet systems) of the *Pali Canon* that flourishes today in Southeast Asia as the Theravada, and throughout the world in *Shojo* Zen of both the *Soto* and *Rinzai* schools; 2) the Mahayana or Great Vehicle (the Causal Vehicle of the Bodhisattvas or *Bodhisattvayana*) of India, China and Japan that includes *Daijo* and nondual *Saijojo* Zen, and includes both the *rangtong* emptiness of Prasangika, and the *shentong* buddha nature of the Yogachara (*chittamatra*/Mind Only) tenet systems; and 3) the Vajrayana or Diamond Vehicle, the Tibetan translation and transmission of the noble Mahayana Causal Vehicle. This is the Buddha's Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma and reveals inherent Gnosis wisdom seed of buddha nature Presence that abides at the spiritual heart of all human beings. Vajrayana Secret Mantra includes the subtlest tantric teachings of the Tibetan view—Maha Ati Dzogchen and Essence Mahamudra. However, the foundational *Shravakayana* vehicle that is now the Theravada path holds that there is only one true turning of the Dharma Wheel, the First Turning that is told in the noble *Pali Canon*.

The 8th century early Nyingma school classifies these Three Vehicles of the Buddhadharma into the *Nine Vehicles of Enlightenment*. The first three are the *Shravakayana* (listeners or disciples), the *Pratyekayana* or the vehicle of the *Pratyekabuddhas* (the Way of Solitary Awakening), and the Mahayana or Great Vehicle. These first three vehicles comprise the *Sutra Tradition* or the Outer Vehicle. The Inner Vehicle or *Tantric Tradition* is classified into three 'development stages', Outer Tantras (*Kriya* Tantra, *Carya* Tantra and *Yoga* Tantra), and the 'completion stages' of the three Inner Tantras (*Mahayoga*, *Anuyoga*, and the *Atiyoga* of Dzogchen). This ninth vehicle, Ati Dzogchen, the Great Completion or Great Perfection is, on the accord of the Nyingma school, the sublime acausal nondual perfection life stage wisdom teaching that completes the Mahayana Causal Vehicle Two Truths duality—relative and ultimate—and

transcends yet includes, embraces and subsumes all of the teachings of the previous vehicles. This then is the Nyingma school account of the Triyana, Buddha's three main teaching vehicles.

"There is a refinement of understanding that becomes progressively more subtle through the vehicles" [Tulku Urgyen], culminating in the highest nondual teaching of both Old and New Translation lineage schools—Dzogchen, and Highest Yoga Tantra (Essence Mahamudra) respectively. These two views are a one truth unity as to the Fruition/Result—buddhahood.

It is sometimes told that the Buddha taught many contradictory doctrines. But it is not so. Although hermeneutical views will differ, we must remember that through all the teaching vehicles the skillful means (*upaya*) and wisdom (*prajna* and *jnana/yeshe*) of the Buddha's teaching varies in subtlety and depth according to the capacity of his listeners. "In order to lead living beings to understanding I taught all the different *yanas*..." [Lankavatara Sutra]

*The Buddha's Four Noble Truths.* In the First Turning of the *Dharmachakra*, in the little Deer Park at Sarnath, Buddha taught his Four Noble Truths of our human happiness being here in form. Here he taught the great truth of "noself" (*anatman*, *rangtong* emptiness of self), gentle deconstruction of self-ego-I that is the foundation of all that was to come. It is this great truth of selfless *anatman* that gradually surrenders our mindless attachment to the sense of self, and to its impermanent (*anitya*) world of phenomena that are the causes of human suffering.

All the evil, fear and suffering of this world is the  
result of attachment to the self. All the happiness of  
this world is the result of selfless service to others.

—Shantideva

Siddhartha Gautama, the awakened one, taught his Four Noble Truths (*Dhammacakkapavattana sutra*) in order to lead human beings to ultimate harmless happiness that abides within and throughout the unavoidable adversity and suffering of life. The First Noble Truth, the all too real relative *Reality of Human Suffering*, and the Second Noble Truth that *Suffering Has a Cause*, naturally require the Third and Fourth Noble Truths. The pain and suffering of "birth, old age, sickness, and death" is indivisible from this precious mortal life we've been given. It's part of the deal of our incarnation into spacetime form. So we accept it.

The Buddha's Third Noble Truth—*The Cessation of Suffering*—asks us not to retreat from the inevitable adversity of human life into retro-romantic cupidity of desire-mind attachment to pleasurable material experience, but to skillfully and compassionately *engage* our suffering and dissatisfaction with the love and wisdom of his Fourth Noble Truth, *The Noble Eightfold Path* to liberation from the primal ignorance (*marigpa*, *avidya*) that is the Cause of Suffering, then *ultimate* full *bodhi* enlightenment—harmless *buddic* happiness that cannot be lost. Assiduously engaging that relative causal Path bears ultimate fruit of that acausal ultimate happiness. *Mahasukaho!*

*Four Truths, One Path.* So yes. We must begin with an understanding that Buddha's Eightfold Path was not intended by him to offer a naïve *escape* from human suffering thereby bestowing an idealized hope for a nonexistent *future* perfect happiness. Rather, we discover our

gradual *liberation* from suffering through wisely and skillfully *engaging* adversity through his contemplative "mindfulness of breathing". Adversity and suffering are an inescapable condition of human happiness being here in relative space and time. In our desire to be happy and to avoid suffering we shall learn to surrender the foolish dualistic false dichotomy of *either* suffering *or* happiness. Suffering and happiness, like birth and death are a prior and present unity. "Birth, old age, sickness, and death" are included in this diverse, wondrous package that is our great gift of a human life on this little blue planet abiding here among the stars. Adversity happens. And its actual nature is luminous basic space (*chöying*) of primordial *dharmakaya* Ground of Being in whom (Samantabhadra) this all arises, participates, and is instantiated.

*A Brief Summary.* Buddha's Four Noble Truths: 1) *Life is filled with suffering (dukkha)*. We don't get the happiness we desire (*sukha*), and we too often get the adversity we don't want. *Dukkha* and *sukha* arise together. 2) *Suffering has a cause* (primal ignorance, *avidya*, *marigpa*) which causes *Attachment* as random grasping desire, greed and pride; and *Aversion* as fear-anger, hostility, hatred. We grasp and attach to self-ego-I, to permanence, and to a separate self independence as if they were intrinsically real/existent). 3) *Suffering has a cure*, the cessation of primal ignorance (*avidya*, *marigpa*) with its attachment and aversion. 4) *The Eightfold Path* is the cure—wise and skillful means to engage our inevitable adversity and suffering, and the way to realize genuine selfless harmless happiness—beyond any adversity/happiness duality—in this rare and precious life we've been given. That liberating Eightfold Path consists of engaging and practicing the eight yogic disciplines of 'right' or authentic view, right intention, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort/discipline, right mindfulness meditation, and right wisdom—the two voices of wisdom—*prajna* and *jnana*. [Boaz 2020 *The Teaching of The Buddha*]

Five hundred years later, in the Second Turning of the Wheel, at Rajgir on Vulture Peak, the 'Cosmic Buddha' in his spirit form taught the Great Vehicle, the Causal Vehicle that is the Mahayana; the subtler truth of the Great Emptiness (*Mahashunyata*); the Great Compassion (*Mahakaruna*), *Ultimate Bodhicitta* and the relative *bodhicitta* that flows from it; and the Three Buddha Bodies that are the unity of nondual *Trikaya of the Base* (*nirmanakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, *dharmakaya*). It is this development of *Relative Bodhicitta*—aspiration, then engaged action that furthers the liberation from suffering for all living beings—and thus their ultimate happiness (*mahasuka*). It is this noble intention that is the defining motivation of the great Mahayana Path.

Now all of this love and wisdom is embodied in the *Prajnaparamita Sutra of Transcendent Wisdom*—perfection of nondual wisdom that is ultimate realization of emptiness (*shunyata*); realization of 'no-self' (*anatman*); the wisdom of impermanence (*anitya*); and final cessation of *duhkha* or suffering. Here we discover prior unity of the "Two Truths" (*denpa nyis*)—ultimate and relative—Middle Way *Madhyamaka* view between the two metaphysical extremes of absolute existence (solidity, essentialism, materialism), and absolute nonexistence (solipsism, nihilism). Thus, in his very brief seminal *Heart Sutra* we hear: "Form is empty (*shunya*, *stong pa*); emptiness (*shunyata*, *stong pa nyi*) is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is not other than emptiness." It is this great transcendental wisdom that is "the mother of the four noble beings"—the *Arhats* of the *Shravakayana*; the *Pratyekabuddha Arhats*; the *Bodhisattvas* of the

Mahayana/Bodhisattvayana; and the perfect buddhas of the three times—past, present, future.

The Indo-Tibetan Vajrayana, final and subtlest teaching is the Third Turning of the *Dharmachakra*. Here the Buddha revealed that all living beings are inherently endowed with “buddha nature” (*tathagatagarbha*), the indwelling, innate capacity for ultimate awakening, realization and enlightenment (full *bodhi*); heart-seed of liberation from primal ignorance (*avidya*, *marigpa*, *ajnana*) that is the cause of human suffering. And that is, astoundingly, this primordial love-wisdom Presence always already present at the spiritual Heart of each human form, and indeed of all sentient beings. As “it is already present and accomplished from the very beginning” we need not seek it elsewhere. It is always present within us! Yet, we require the Eightfold Path to remove the ignorance that cloaks our clear light (*ösel*) blissful awakening to it.

Thus, it is not that we need to *seek* Buddha nature, or that we *have* Buddha nature, but that we already *are* Buddha nature. That heart-seed, bright buddha mind Presence (*vidya*, *rigpa*, *christos*) of spacious unbounded whole (*dharmakaya/OM*), subtle wisdom (*gzhi rigpa*) of perfectly subjective “groundless ground” of Being abides always at spiritual Heart (*hridayam*, *nyingpo*) of every human being. It is that perfect ‘primordial purity’ (*kadag*), utterly undefiled by thinking that is our natural, original state of buddhahood, the fundamental clear light wisdom Nature of Mind, our inherent indwelling buddha mind. And from nonconceptual direct experience of this numinous lucid clear light (*ösel*) awareness flows his supreme teaching that emptiness is not merely a nihilistic negation of phenomenal reality, but that the “nature of mind is clear light.”

Yes, that is the ‘Third Turning’ Indo-Tibetan Vajrayana Secret Mantra Fruitional Vehicle—path to ultimate realization and fruition of prior unity of the Two Truths and the Three Buddha Bodies of highest Indian and Tibetan tantras of the Buddha’s Mahayana Great Vehicle.

Therefore, our ultimate Buddha Nature of Mind is not mere negative nihilistic emptiness, a “non-affirming negative”, but “the nature of mind is clear light (*ösel*, *prabhasvara*) affirming unity of awareness and emptiness.” This prior and present unity is vast whole of undifferentiated, lucid ultimate primordial awareness love-wisdom (*jnana*, *rigpa*, gnosis), bright boundless whole of lucid clear light—very Gnosis of Light—completely free of any cognitively fabricated object, thought, or emotion; utterly beyond our habitual concepts and beliefs about it.

Just so, as the vast expanse of sky cannot be obstructed by storm clouds, so our always already present space-like stainless primordial buddha nature cannot be tainted by adventitious concept-belief, nor by any negative afflictive phenomena (adversity, suffering) whatsoever.

But don’t *believe* this heady Buddhist doctrine. It is far beyond belief and concepts. Yet we may *experience* Presence directly (*yogi pratyaksa*) through Buddha’s “mindfulness of breathing”.

*A Note on ‘Religion’.* The English term ‘religion’ is etymologically, semiotically derived from the ancient Sanskrit term ‘yoga’—*union* of *relative* phenomenal appearance with its nondual *ultimate* primordial emptiness Ground of Being—prior and present unity of ultimate truth and relative truth. Because Relative Truth arises in Ultimate Truth the Two Truths of cause and effect Mahayana may be seen as an ultimate acausal *one truth unity* (*dzog*), invariant through all relative conventional human cognitive reference frames. Thus Sanskrit ‘yoga’ is the root of the Latin term ‘*religio*’ from which emerges that protean diaphanous English term ‘religion’.

Hence, 'religion' may be construed as a moment to moment love-wisdom yogic spirit path that realizes, both conceptually and nonconceptually, this always already present Presence of our bright indwelling noetic nondual (body, mind, spirit, subject-object unity) formless, timeless, selfless primordial source/ground in whom we and everything else arises, plays, and is instantiated for all of us being here upon our precious little blue planet earth. Our wildly busy relative 'Small Mind' is always embraced by luminous Presence of ultimate 'Big Mind'. And yes, that love-wisdom may be experienced via trans-conceptual contemplative yogic practice.

You may readily accomplish the clear light (*ösel*) clarity and 'yogi's bliss' of this wondrous love-wisdom yoga *connection* via frequent, almost continuous simple 'placement of attention/awareness' upon your indwelling love-wisdom mind, Buddha mind, Christ mind gnosis. That is numinous primordial *dharmakaya* Presence that rides the life force *prana* spirit wind (*lungdang*) that is the natural breath at the *hara/dō* chakra/center in the gut, then rises to the heart, the throat, the 'third eye' forebrain just behind the forehead, and the crown of the head. These are 'central channel' (*avadhuti*) seats of your clarity, peace and harmless human happiness.

Therefore, here and now effortlessly enter in that timeless 'natural place of rest' in trans-conceptual, nondual primordial timeless awareness—very *dharmakaya* Buddha Nature of Mind (*rigdang*). You begin by simple placement of your attention upon That (*tathata*), then breathe normally. That is the Buddha's "mindfulness of breathing". [*Appendix A* below]

So many big words for That so simple and direct. But it's not so easy, as we shall soon see.

*The Ultimate View.* Please now consider the utterly profound Fruition/Result of such assiduous yogic practice. In the rather uncomfortable (to our concepts about a ground), utterly nondual view of 14th century Dzogchen master Longchenpa, 'the omniscient one' [2001 p. 340]:

There is only timeless awareness...There is no orderly process, there are no phenomena, no identifiable frame of reference. The ground collapses, the path collapses, any sense of fruition collapses...the division between samsara and nirvana collapses—not even basic space exists innately...Since these are absent you turn away from any view in which a contrived ground [is] fabricated.

In nondual Dzogchen Perfection Stage our wondrous Buddhist doctrine with its wisdom of emptiness and buddha nature do not *ultimately* exist! *Parasamgate*. What remains? *Bodhi Svaha*.

That perfect happiness we seek "is already present and accomplished from the very beginning." [Garab Dorje] But self does not see it. We require assiduous *relative* dualistic Development, Completion and Perfection Stage practice to *realize* that perfect nonconceptual, nondual truth of Buddha's lucid *mahashunyata*. Perplexing perfect paradox of the path.

Missing the point. Seeing the point. All of it the point. None of it the point. Ideation and all judgment fall away. What remains? Empty ultimate bright *bodhi* Presence upon embodied mindful breath—already being here now in Einstein's spooky relative illusory space and time.

Now knowing That—*tathata*, *tattva*, thatness, *quidditas*, *Wu-Wei*—we wisely "continue in error" (Jap. *Uji: shoshaku jushaku*) as self frees itself of duplicitous conceptual impedimenta—thinking, judgment, effort—all the way to the end of it. *Emaho! Mahasukaho!*

## Emptiness: One Ground, Two Truths

Emptiness of mind is not a state of mind, but the original essence of mind...  
our original mind that includes everything within itself.

—Suzuki Roshi

What shall we do with this precious life we've been given? The main point of all the Vehicles of the one Buddhist Path is implicit or express wisdom teaching of prior and present unity of Great Emptiness (*mahashunyata*); Great Compassion (*mahakaruna*); and our innate Buddha Nature of Mind. We have seen that the essential nature of all interdependently arisen (*pratitya samutpada*) phenomenal physical and mental appearance is infinitely spacious (*chöying*) vast expanse of boundless emptiness—primordial *dharmakaya* 'groundless ground' of all arising spacetime phenomena. That emptiness is not in any way separate from *ultimate bodhicitta*.

Therefore, from that great love-wisdom understanding and experience of the fullness of the Buddha's *ultimate* emptiness/*shunyata* spontaneously arises everyday life world *relative bodhicitta* (*karuna*, compassion) for all suffering beings, and devotion to the master, but also to all enlightened beings (*vidyadhara*, *rigzin*) of the three times—past, present, future. Thus does compassion and Guru devotion enhance our realization of luminous emptiness. The *practice* of the spiritual path awakens both this wisdom of *ultimate* emptiness ground, and as well the purifying intention and motivation of *relative* compassion-devotion that arises therein.

Our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition knows this unity of 'basic space' (*chöying*) and compassion as the wisdom of kindness—*bodhicitta*, *karuna*, *ahimsa*, *hesed*, *charis*. All the masters and mahasiddhas of the three times have taught it. Without this view and action/conduct, spiritual practice becomes some species of self-ego-I 'spiritual materialism'. Through our ultimate and relative *bodhicitta* lies the *cause* of both ultimate and relative human happiness.

*Bodhicitta* is the "mind of enlightenment"—loving, kind, compassionate thought, prayer, intention, and action to benefit living beings. That is the protean encounter with great "mind of light" of a buddha. "The practice of union of emptiness and compassion is the basis of the path." [Jamgön Kongtrül, *Lamrim Yeshe Nyingpo*] "The true path of the buddhas is the unity of skillful means/method [*upaya*] and wisdom [both relative *prajna/sherab* and ultimate *jnana/yeshe*]." [Tulku Urgyen, *Repeating the Words of the Buddha*, 1996] That is what we do with our precious lives.

Liberation from primal ignorance, then enlightenment—our ultimate happiness—rests in breath by breath compassionate activity (*Apramana*, The Four Immeasurables or Four Boundless States), the relative-conventional means/method that is expression in action of spontaneous lived wisdom, *prajna/sherab*, that realizes *jnana/yeshe*, nondual 'wisdom of emptiness'. And this emptiness is the buddha nature of *Yogachara*. On the accord of H.H. Dalai Lama, there is no *essential* difference between these "two wisdoms"—between *rangtong* emptiness/*shunyata*, and *shentong* buddha nature. "Realizing emptiness we realize our buddha nature; realizing our innate buddha nature, we realize emptiness." The great teaching of no-self (*anatman*), impermanence (*anitya*), and interdependent arising (*pratitya samutpada*) are grounded in these two wisdoms. Such is the prior and present one truth unity of primordial awareness Ground of Being Itself.

## A Tale of Two Truths

Our perceptually imputed and conceptually-emotionally designated *provisional meaning* of Buddha's Relative Truth (*samvriti satya*) of dynamic phenomenal spacetime reality arise from *definitive meaning*—emptiness that is Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*)—primordial "groundless ground" or 'supreme source', but are not *ultimately* findable under *relative* scientific, philosophical or even noetic (subject-object unity) epistemological and ontological conceptual analysis. Rather, Ultimate Truth is revealed via assiduous nondual yogic practice (*yogi pratyaksa*).

Therefore, such spacetime reality is necessarily empty (*shunya*) of *ultimate* inherent intrinsic existence or self-nature, even though local arising phenomena are undeniably "real" by our inter-subjective and inter-objective *relative* conventional semiotic linguistic agreement.

Indeed, twenty-five hundred years of inter-theoretical, metaphysical and scientific analytic scrutiny—in both West and East—has revealed not a whit of innate, permanent, independently existing phenomenal particulars or *things*; no enduring or eternal concrete purely objectively physical or mental objects, selves, or souls. Postmodern, postclassical scientific theory—Relativistic Quantum Field Theory—is in essential agreement with this view. [Boaz 2023] Yeshe Tsogyal, the great female Buddha of the Tibetan Vajrayana expresses it definitively:

Since life is conditioned by time, it has no permanence.  
Since objects of the senses are but relative perceptions,  
they have no ultimate existence.  
Since the spiritual path is filled with delusion,  
it has no essential reality.  
Since the ground of everything is ultimately nondual,  
it has no essential solidity.  
Since mind is only thinking, it has no basis or ground.  
Therefore, I find no thing that ultimately exists.

—Yeshe Tsogyal

If "no thing" ultimately exists, and if all objective and subjective phenomena are "ultimately nondual" we must now ask, how is it that they *appear* to exist. H.H. Dalai Lama on Middle Way Madhyamaka Interdependent Arising (*pratitya samutpada*):

The question is not *whether* they exist but *how* they exist. They exist, but not in the manner in which we perceive them. They lack any discrete, *intrinsic* reality. This absence, or emptiness of inherent existence is their ultimate nature...It is critical to understand that Madhyamika does not say that things are absent of inherent existence mainly because they cannot be found when sought through critical analysis. This is not the full argument. Things and events are said to be absent of inherent or intrinsic existence because *they exist only in dependence on other factors*...In other words, anything that depends on other factors is devoid of its own independent nature, and this absence of an independent nature is emptiness...Nagarjuna says that things and events, which are dependently



originated, are empty, and thus are also dependently designated...[He] concludes there is nothing that is not empty, for there is nothing that is not dependently originated. Here we see the equation between dependent origination and emptiness...the path of the Middle Way, which transcends the extremes of absolutism and nihilism.

—H.H. Dalai Lama, *Buddhadharma*, Winter 2004, p. 20

The true and ultimate nature and source of all relative empirical appearance therefore, is pregnant luminous emptiness (not void, empty nothingness), Ultimate or Absolute Truth (*paramartha satya*), the *definitive meaning* that is the “ultimate mode of existing of everything” — *tathata*, thatness, suchness. Astonishingly, this lucid emptiness is intrinsically aware! And therein abides the formless, timeless primordial awareness-consciousness being ground in whom all sentient beings arise, participate, and are instantiated, whether or not any of them realize it. This 'fact' is our immediate potential for enlightenment—indwelling Presence of our already present Buddha nature, Christ nature (*christos*), Tao that cannot be named, Zen, *Atman* that is nondual *Nirguna Brahman*, infinite *Ein Sof*—inherent within all living beings. *Tat Tvam Asi*. That I Am!

Moreover, we may utilize causal *Sutrayana* discriminating wisdom (*sherab/prajna/sophia*) of empirical Relative Truth as skillful means/method (*upaya*) to recognize, then realize *Tantrayana* Dzogchen acausal nondual Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*yeshe/jnana/gnosis*) that is Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*). *Upaya* is embodied Ultimate Truth *acting* wisely, skillfully and compassionately in the everyday world of spacetime conventional Relative Truth (*samvriti satya*). This Middle Way is ever-present one truth unity of Buddha's Two Truths—relative form and ultimate emptiness—that extends through all Vehicles of the Buddha's Wheel of Becoming.

But, according to His Holiness Dalai Lama, these teaching Vehicles (*yanas*) differ as to the subtlety or depth of their views and their meditation on emptiness, on the *ösel* clear light, and on the altruistic intention and conduct of *bodhicitta*. So the views of emptiness in sutra and tantra are the same, and they are different. How is this ostensible contradiction resolved?

### Emptiness: Objective and Subjective

Let us now consider the tantric distinction between objective and subjective emptiness.

So from the point of view of objective emptiness we can say that there is no difference between sutra and tantra with regard to the view of emptiness. However, from the view of subjective experience there is a difference in the understanding or view of emptiness between sutra and tantra.

—H.H. Dalai Lama (*Dzogchen* 2000)

His Holiness teaches that the contemplative view and practice of meditation on the intrinsic emptiness of existence of appearing phenomena is essentially the same in the first six of the nine Nyingma vehicles, that is, the three sutra vehicles and the first three or outer tantric vehicles. These are the six vehicles that are founded upon the Middle Way of Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti, as we have seen.

Just so, in the final three tantric vehicles—the inner tantras of *Nyingma* school, including Dzogchen with its *Ati Yoga*, and of *Anuttara yoga*/Highest Yoga Tantra (Essence Mahamudra) of *Kagyu* lineage and of the new translation (*Sarma*) tantra lineages—the levels of subtlety or depth regarding emptiness as the intentional object of meditation are again the same. This is the view of “objective emptiness”, the objective clear light clarity (“objective luminosity”), “the emptiness which is the *object* of a wisdom consciousness.” Here emptiness is viewed as an absolute negation of phenomenal existence (*prasanga*), and therefore of an ontologically independent perceiving self that experiences it. Objective emptiness is thus a “non-affirming negative phenomenon,” that is not augmented with anything positive, affirming, more inclusive or transcendent. That is essentially the *rangtong* Prasangika Madhyamaka view of emptiness.

However, from the view of “subjective emptiness” (*nay lug*), the direct subjective yogic experience of clear light mind (*ösel*)—“subjective luminosity”—which is perhaps the more subtle wisdom consciousness of primordial, basal buddha mind itself, there is a difference in view between these highest tantras—Ati Dzogchen and Essence Mahamudra on the one hand—and the less subtle 'provisional' Indian tantra and sutra vehicles on the other.

Therefore, *Mahashunyata*, the Buddha's Great Emptiness is not *ultimately* a non-affirming negative. In the more inclusive highest or subtlest view, the Prasangika negated phenomena appearing to a self as relative-conventional phenomenal reality is enhanced by the *affirming* luminosity of direct yogic experience (*yogi pratyaksa*) of 'clear light' ('*od gsal*, *ösel*, *özer*, *prabhasvara*)—selfless, egoless positive pure bright clarity of the intrinsic dynamical emptiness of form—*shentong* Yogachara buddha nature. “Form is empty; emptiness is form.” [From Buddha's *Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*] Indeed, in the ultimate view there is no enduring *permanent* reality or self to negate! Not even our buddha nature! Yet there appear these perceptual and conceptual imputed and designated relative-conventional *samvriti* “concealer truths” of arising phenomenal appearance. For Prasangika Madhyamaka our innate Yogachara buddha nature is one of them. Here, our ultimate buddha nature does not ultimately exist! Confusing? Let us proceed.

The scholastic critical dialectical debate between Prasangika *rangtong* absolute 'objective emptiness', and Yogachara *shentong* subjective 'buddha nature' has raged in one form or another for a thousand years. I have dedicated a chapter to resolve this conceptual dialectic in my recent book *The Open Secret of Human Happiness*, 3rd Edition Boaz 2025 Ch. VI.

Hence, from negative 'objective emptiness' emerges a subtle, outshining clear light luminosity as ultimate emptiness/*shunyata* manifests as relative spacetime form ( $E=mc^2$ ) from its formless, timeless, selfless primordial purity (*kadag*) of the 'base' (*gzhi*), basal nonobjective “groundless ground” as mere appearance of arising physical and mental forms. That 'form' is our apparent, relative-conventionally perceived and imputed spacetime phenomenal reality. That reality of our often all too real appearing *relative* spacetime stuff is utterly absent any iota of intrinsic *ultimate* existence! This brightness or radiance is then, the ultimate nature of reality itself (*chö nyid*), the clear light (*ösel*) wisdom Nature of Mind (*sems nyid*) in whom all minds arise and play. It is that lucid 'basic space' (*chöying*, *dharmadhatu*) perfectly subjective primordial Presence of *dharmakaya* Ground of Being that is our 'natural place of rest', quiescent peace of mind and yogi's love-wisdom bliss that cannot be lost. In order to be happy we learn to rest in That now.

However, we are cautioned throughout the teaching that this essential selfless mind nature is not a self-ego-I, nor is it an *atman* “higher self”, eternal soul nor logocentric theistic Creator God. Nor is luminous continuity of mind essence a separate objective *thing*—something “other.” *Dharmakaya* ground of all is not a *thing*. It is perfectly subjective ground of everything. Such relative-conventional dualism—attachment to appearing phenomena, attachment to our beliefs and concepts about mind-created God or gods, and attachment to our separate egocentric self-sense—belies Ultimate Truth of prior and present *one truth unity* of the Two Truths that is singular 'oneness' of mind nature. So the Two Truths, relative and ultimate, are in actuality this selfless (*anatman*) nondual one great truth, invariant through all impermanent (*anitya*) modes of human cognition—objective exoteric, subjective esoteric, and 'innermost secret' nondual.

So yes. Paradoxically (to concept-mind), this Ultimate Truth, ultimate emptiness, *dharmakaya*, unbounded *mahabindu* whole, is not itself an independently existing objective entity or *thing*. According to H.H. Dalai Lama, all relative conventional phenomenal things are subject to the prior causes and conditions of previous universes and *kalpas*. They are subject to the causal natural law of scientific and karmic cause and effect Interdependent Arising (*pratitya samutpada*). That is to say, from the view of conceptual Relative Truth, we have the ultimate paradox of the groundless 'emptiness of emptiness' (*shunyata shunyata*). Yet from the nondual view of Ultimate Truth there is no dilemma, no problem, indeed, no conceptual thinking or belief whatsoever.

Do you understand the two minds: Big Mind which includes everything, and Small Mind that is related to something?

—Suzuki Roshi

Hence, there is a profound difference between the direct and immediate actuality of spontaneously arising, perfectly subjective love-wisdom Presence (*vidya, rigpa, christos*) of the trans-conceptual, vast boundless emptiness whole, and indirect perceptual-conceptual 'objective emptiness'. So here the nondual view of 'subjective emptiness' of the subtlest or highest tantras of both old and new tantra schools—the Middle Way of the Madhyamikas of the *Svatantrika* Yogachara, but also of Prasangika—yields to the deeper, subtler more direct acausal contemplative direct yogic experience that dialectically transcends, yet includes and pervades it.

Therefore, in highest 'Perfection Stage' innermost secret nondual Dzogchen *Ati Yoga*, 'meditation on emptiness' is an “affirming negative” in which the *actuality*—not an indirect concept but the direct experience of clear light (*ösel*) wisdom mind nature appears directly to the yogin, yet is “known to be empty of intrinsic existence.” This urgent distinction between objective and subjective emptiness is the difference that makes a difference between the Madhyamaka of sutra and lower/outer tantra *vis-à-vis* the highest innermost nondual tantras with regard to the view of emptiness, and of our indwelling buddha nature which expresses it.

As to Dzogchen view of Buddha's first noble truth—the Truth of Suffering—fear of suffering is itself a kind of suffering. So we need not exhaust our lives in a continuous effort to escape naturally arising adversity by seeking pleasurable experiences. *We discover profound liberation from our inexorable human suffering by actively engaging it with skillful love and wisdom.*

## Relationship: Big Mind, Small Mind, and the Light Bridge

Can this direct, greater esoteric or nondual (*advaya*, *gnyis med*, “not one, not two”, “two in One”) teaching of the innermost secret, highest tantras be reduced to the understanding of the less direct, lesser esoteric or even exoteric causal view and practice of the less subtle teaching of ‘provincial’ sutra or lower tantra, as Evans-Wentz, Carl Jung and too many other non-practitioner scholars have done? No. In Vajrayana Buddhism, and indeed throughout the great wisdom traditions of humankind exoteric outer and lesser esoteric inner views cannot accomplish the greater esoteric, innermost, acausal, monistic nondual realization—despite protests of pathologically pluralistic, independent, facile, uber-egalitarian Postmodern self-ego-I.

*Under sway of the primal ignorance (avidya, marigpa) of this pseudo-scholarly separate ego self-sense we become the fearful, hopeful advocates of the preconscious developmental limits of our present life stage with its conceptual uncomfortable “comfort zones”, arguing and defending the painful result.*

As we have seen, cross-cultural psycho-spiritual development (spiritual evolution), our relative-conventional growth through culturally universal sequential life stages and mind states of the body-mind-spirit (gross, subtle, causal and nondual) continuum of consciousness, is invariant and state-specific. ‘Life stages’ comprised of their defining ‘mind states’ presuppose earlier, less subtle emotional, phenomenological states and stages of consciousness development.

Although life stages overlap, and unfinished psycho-emotional trauma must be revisited unpacked and healed, life stages cannot be skipped. While the wisdom understanding of the subtler, deeper or “higher” life stages subsumes, includes and transcends the earlier, less subtle life stages, the understanding of the lower cannot grasp, accomplish or realize the higher. The parent’s understanding transcends yet embraces the child’s understanding. Of course there are surface differences—relative-conventional perception, concept and belief—in the structural constitution of developmental life stages across socio-cultural space and time. But the deeper, subtler mental/emotional/spiritual mind state/life stage structures are the same. And mere conceptual surface understanding cannot comprehend selfless formless primordial depth.

Let’s unpack this a bit. In the prevailing East/West ‘stage model’ of our cognitive continuum of psycho-emotional-spiritual evolutionary development, deep background, pre-conscious, culturally conditioned, semiotic (logical syntax, semantics/meaning, pragmatics), relative-conventional symbols (language) emerge just before concepts, which emerge before rules and morality, which usually precede exoteric (outer) religious belief, and so esoteric (inner), and finally greater esoteric (nondual or innermost/secret) subtle spiritual mind states and life stages. Surface conceptual and belief systems and deity icons differ within the numinous Deep (*Bathos*), *kosmic* primordial womb that is their singular matrix and basal ontological structure—nondual Ground of Being in whom this wondrous process arises for all of us.

Just so, this nondual perfectly subjective, luminous clear light wisdom Nature of Mind (*purusha/cittata/sem nyid*), Suzuki Roshi’s “Big Mind,” our ultimate supreme source subsumes, pervades, embraces, yet transcends all dualities of conditional existence, relative conceptual limits of physical/mental experience that are the interdependently arisen subjective content and objective production of dualistic “Small Mind” (*prakriti/citta/sems*). Objective conceptual Small

Mind cannot grasp or realize the perfect subjectivity of nondual Spirit, great emptiness that is Big Mind, although paradoxically, the “pure presence” of it is always, already present at the spiritual Heart of each human being. It is That (*tathata, rigpa*) to which we finally awaken through confusion of the spiritual path. That *sambhogakaya* Presence is *light bridge* to *dharmakaya* resolution of this paradox, and ultimately to realization of this great relational truth. “Just as the steps of a staircase, you should train step-by-step, steadily to the end.” [Shakyamuni Buddha]

His Holiness Dalai Lama teaches that the interdependent arising or dependent origination (*pratitya samutpada*) of physical and mental form—relative-conventional reality—is the “natural law” that all arising phenomena are “dependent upon their causes in connection with their particular conditions.” Without this natural, uncreated interrelationship—this contextual, interdependent and coincident aggregation of causes and conditions—such appearing physical and mental phenomena could not, logically or empirically, arise and exist in the first place.

If we can understand that all perception and all seeing is the great truth of dependent arising, then we can understand emptiness...the true nature of reality. Why? Because dependent arising *is* reality itself...Emptiness and compassion must be unified...So develop both compassion and the wisdom of emptiness.

—Adzom Paylo Rinpoche (*Upaya Zen Center Retreat*, Santa Fe, NM, 2002)

In the *Prasannapada*, Chandrakirti’s great commentary on Nagarjuna’s first century *Exposition of the Middle Way*, we learn of this natural interrelationship of emptiness and dependent arising in relation to the Buddha’s *Four Noble Truths*. Chandrakirti reasons that, if we will first postulate the interrelated prior unity of emptiness and its arising interdependent phenomenal appearances (“Form is empty; emptiness is form.”), we can then postulate the causal connection, the cause and effect relationship between the first two noble truths—the Truth of Suffering and the Truth of the Origin/Cause of Suffering. This causal connection is the natural law of karma—thought, intention, action and effect (positive and negative imprints). Karma is an example, in behavioral terms (conduct or ethics), of the general scientific Law of Causality that governs the objective conceptual realm of relative-conventional spacetime reality.

Thus, from primal ignorance (*avidya, marigpa, hamartia*) arises concept mind (*manovijnana*), the egocentric negative afflictive emotions—fear-anger, hatred, desire, greed, pride—and desire-mind cupidity/attachment to self-ego-I (*klesha-mind/klishtamanovijnana*) that results in the mental and emotional imbalances that produce our destructive behavior that causes human and animal suffering. The positive emotions of tantric Buddhism’s Four Boundless States (The Four Immeasurables), our wisdom tradition’s Great Love—arising as kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity—result in mental and emotional balance that produces the kind altruistic behavior that is the open secret of human happiness. It’s so very natural and logical; so lawful. We reap what we sow. What we give is what we get. What goes around, comes around. “What you are is what you have been; what you will be is what you do now”. [Shakyamuni, the Buddha]

Thus, according to Chandrakirti, from an understanding of these First and Second Noble Truths, we may consider that there may be a possible way to the final cessation of suffering—of its cause or origin—a path or light bridge to freedom from this primal ignorance and imbalance

(*avidya/marigpa/ajnana/hamartia*-sin) that is root cause of the suffering of living beings. Thus follows the Third Noble Truth, the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.

And if this cessation is possible—and by demonstration of the exemplary lives of all the buddhas, *mahasiddhas*, sages and saints of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition it clearly is possible—we can then postulate the Fourth Noble Truth, yogic Eightfold Path that is the precise Contemplative Science mind training path that transforms habitual negative mental, emotional and attentional imbalances into our natural inherent indwelling transcendent wisdom, the *Prajnaparamita*, Great Mother of all the buddhas of the Three Times. That is the great truth that realizes and actualizes in human form our primordial source or ground state, 'basic space' (*chöying*, *dharmadhatu*) of *dharmakaya* ground, ultimate perfection of buddha mind, perfectly awakened state and activity of being in form that is, paradoxically, always present within each one of us from the very beginning. "The child knows the mother". We are both at once.

*Refuge is the Bridge.* How then does an ordinary human being become a buddha? Who is a buddha? A buddha is awake: realized one truth unity of the Two Truths. What do we have? We are our indwelling buddha nature; the Four Noble Truths with the Eightfold Path that leads, step-by-step, breath by breath to wise skillful engagement with human suffering. We take Refuge in the Three Jewels—Buddha, Dharma, Sangha—that are the Three Roots (Guru, Deva, Dakini), and in the Trikaya of the Base (*gzhi*) or three *kayas* or Buddha bodies. In short, we are—here and now—our innermost buddha nature, mirrored by the Vajra Master. Then we have the great teaching of the *Buddhadharma* and the archetypal intervention of mantra and the deities; and we have the *Sangha*, crucible of spiritual community that also includes our spiritual lineage and all the enlightened ones—the *vidyadhara/rigzin* of the three times—past, present and future.

Hence, we have always this primordial refuge *relationship* that is the light bridge and path of all the buddhas continuously revealing the prior and ever present unity of these precious three refuge sources. Who is a buddha? We are all always already buddha. *Emaho!*

So we take refuge in the Three Jewels, the Three Roots, and the Trikaya of the Base, and begin to develop the great thought, intention, and engaged action/conduct of compassionate heartmind that is *bodhicitta*—for the benefit of all living beings. In Indo-Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism we accomplish this through *shamatha* or 'mindfulness of breathing' practice with its *vipashyana* or penetrating insight, perhaps with the foundational practices (*ngöndro*) that are the prelude to Perfection Stage Ati Dzogchen, or to Essence Mahamudra view and practice.

The point of practice of this Middle Way Mahayana foundational path is recognition, then realization of the prior and present ultimate unity of the wisdom of emptiness and our buddha nature with relative compassionate *bodhicitta*. That is gradually integrated into our everyday life world of relative-conventional thought, intention and action. And that is the integration of View and Conduct, integration of Ultimate Truth with Relative Truth, integration of the Ground with the Fruit or Result, integration of *nirvana* with *samsara*—step-by-step. Meanwhile, the fearless warrior-yogin of "uncontrived wisdom conduct" knows such an integration has never left the unity of the perfect sphere of spacious *dharmakaya*. Herein arises a most unusual paradox of those very subtle Buddhist paths that are nondual Ati Dzogchen, and Essence Mahamudra.

## The Paradox of the Path: Integrating View and Conduct

Thus, gradually, through assiduous practice of the path, the veils of primal ignorance (*avidya*, *marigpa*, *maya*) to this great post-conceptual, nondual truth of reality are lifted and the understanding of the unity of the wisdom of emptiness and the wisdom of compassion is revealed. Then, wonder of wonders, upon the breath arises mindful and aware equanimity, evenness, direct yogic recognition that is our timeless, always present Presence—*vidya/rigpa* primordial “pure presence”—naked, unborn, uncreated ineffable peace and 'yogi's joy bliss'.

Here, the prior unity of compassionate method/means (*upaya*, function) and wisdom (*prajna*, *yeshe*, structure) of all development and completion life stages (*Mahayoga*, *Anuyoga* and *Atiyoga*), mind states, *yanas* and wisdoms are, just for this eternal timeless moment *now* (*turiya*), nakedly seen and known as 'basic space' (*chöying*) of perfectly subjective *dharmakaya* Ground of Being, utterly free of fear and hope, free of the duality of all emotional affliction and conceptual elaboration. “Who are you in the space between two thoughts?” In this quiescent nondual “state of presence” ego-attachment, grasping clinging desire, fear and anger “self liberate” (*rang grol*) at the very instant of their arising. Like a bird in the vast empty sky, thought and action leave “no trace.” Thoughts and appearances—happy and sad—rise up from the great primal ocean of luminous clarity, then return again to that supreme source with no change in identity or essence.

When one realizes that the actual nature of our thinking and emotion is this bright luminous clarity (*ösel*) there is no need to suppress or repress thoughts and emotions. There is no need to believe that which we think, nor to defend that which we believe. No need at all to seek happiness. It's already present as our innate, indwelling buddha mind Presence. “The Nature of Mind is Buddha from the beginning.” That is the refreshing paradox of the spiritual path. But it's just very ordinary—“nothing special” (*wushin*). It's merely the actual nature of our all too human spacetime existence. It appears special and dramatic only from the view of a subject/self-ego-I in a seemingly separate objective reality. “No problem at all”, when you understand.

Hence, it is ascending Development Stage of the path—refuge, devotion to the master, ordinary compassionate living, and the surrender (*Wu-Wei*) or “letting go” that is repetitive 'renunciate' practice—that transforms such extraordinary, special but temporary *samadhi* “states” into the permanent ordinary “altered traits” of meditative stabilization; of Ati Dzogchen Perfection Stage realization, with its compassionate life world *bodhicitta* conduct. Then, in due course and by grace, there manifests the later *bhumis*, then ultimate perfection of buddhahood. “Descend with the View while ascending with the Conduct. It is most essential to practice these two as a unity.” [Padmasambhava] And yes, “It is already present and accomplished here now.”

We must then engage this “paradox of the path” that is the paradox of seeking—the causal effortful foundational practices of the Buddha's teaching—while standing firmly in effortless View and Conduct of the highest nondual tantras. That is the Buddha's great teaching in “two ways at once.” Thus, through skillful diligence (*upaya*), while “letting it be as it is” we gradually exhaust our apocryphal seeking strategies of the adventitious 'great search' and awaken to our already present happiness, buddha nature Presence at spirit Heart within us.

The great nondual truth of the descent and ascent of Spirit through form is told again and

again throughout the subtlest “innermost secret” teaching of our primordial wisdom traditions. This is “the light of the Tao that is beyond heaven and earth,” very “Gnosis of Light that lights every one that comes into the world.” This is *Kham Brahm*—“All is *Brahman*”—“The Bright” of the hoary *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *Vedanta*. In *Sutrayana* this view is Ultimate Truth, the final third truth of T’eiin T’ai’ nondual “Middle Way Buddha Nature” (Chih-i), beyond the dualistic false dichotomy of the ‘metaphysical extremes’ of permanent, substantial, eternal absolute existence of form, and the nihilistic absolute nonexistence of form. The Truth abides in *Uma*, the Middle Way.

In *Dzogchen* this practice is “swooping down from above (with the ideal of the View) while climbing up from below (through the exertion of the Conduct).” *Padmasambhava* advises, “Keep your view as high as the sky, and your deeds as fine as barley flower.” Yet here, *Guru Rinpoche* cautions us not to “lose the view in the conduct,” and not to “lose the conduct in the view.” We must not lose the acausal nondual View of Ultimate Truth—Great Emptiness—in the dualistic ignorance of hope and fear of causal conceptual relative-conventional truths and the ethical conundrums of right and wrong conduct. Just so, we must not lose the relative truths of compassionate *bodhicitta* ethical conduct—valuation, choosing kindness while rejecting unkindness—for an idealized, but unrealized view of the Great Completion of Ultimate Truth.

If you lose the view in the conduct, you will never have the opportunity to be free.  
If you lose the conduct in the view, then you ignore the difference between good  
and evil...you stray into black diffusion.

—Tulku Urgyen, *At It Is*, 2000)

In brief, we must continue the compassionate altruistic ethical conduct of our relative-conventional spiritual practice in midst of the afflictive continuous error (*shushaku jushaku*) of our all too human hope and fear, of negative judgment, of accepting and rejecting. Meanwhile we remain mindful and aware (*shamatha* and *vipashyana*) of our innate indwelling Presence of buddhahood which is utterly free of such dualistic bias—perfectly free of the emotional poisons arising from primal ignorance (*ajnana*, *marigpa*, *hamartia*/sin) that manifest as desire/attachment and fear/anger—mindless “black diffusion” of losing our *bodhicitta* conduct.

*Such a marvelous paradox! In order to integrate the View and the Conduct we must distinguish the duality of their relative difference—so that we don’t lose one in the other—while yet abiding effortlessly in this selfless continuity of nondual ultimate formless, timeless primordial awareness love-wisdom mind nature that is their essential ontic prior yet always present phenomenal unity. Emaho!*

This then is the skillful yet imperfect practice of the integration of view and conduct, of wisdom and merit, prior one truth unity of the Two Truths—ultimate and relative—that is both origin and aim of the activity/conduct of the ascending and the descending aspects of refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddhist Path. And indeed, of all the “greater esoteric” or nondual ‘innermost secret’ spiritual paths of the entire great love-wisdom tradition of humankind. This unity is “already accomplished from the very beginning”, nothing special, ever present and never absent from our inherent always present Presence that is harmless human happiness—not in a glorious future mind state, but right here now. Wondrous paradox indeed! *Mahasukaho!*



## The View is the Ground: Big Picture and The Middle Way

According to His Holiness Dalai Lama, the innate clear light wisdom Nature of Mind, infinite, ineffable singularity of primordial "groundless ground" or luminous base (*gzhi 'i 'od gsal, ösel*)—our indwelling buddha nature—may be viewed from two levels of subtlety of understanding, namely, sutra and tantra. *Sutrayana* understanding is, as we have seen, the "objective clear light." *Tantrayana*, especially *Anuttara Yogatantra* (Highest Yoga Tantra) and highest Ati Dzogchen understanding is, according to His Holiness, subjective *experience* of clear light (*nay lug*) that is nondual primordial awareness ground, essential clarity of mind nature (*sems nyid*), our basic clear light (*ösel*) love-wisdom mind. This 'naked awareness' (*rigpa jenpa*) of "fundamental innate clear light mind" is the essential, "ultimate root of consciousness," the Ultimate Truth of reality itself. This "affirming negative" of the luminosity of clear light mind is the basis and essential or ultimate way of abiding for the Buddhist practitioner. Here we have an ultimate solution to that *really* "hard problem" of the essential nature of consciousness itself, the realization and actualization in conduct of our ultimate mind nature that is Happiness Itself.

As we have seen, in *actuality* this primordial transcendent wisdom dialectically subsumes and transcends not only the exoteric objective understanding of the less subtle teaching on emptiness, but even its esoteric direct subjective yogic experience, for such wisdom is utterly nondual ("not two, not one," "two in One," *neti, neti*—not this, not that). This resplendent clear light awareness is, for the yogin "essential rigpa" (*paravidya*)—prior unity of appearance and emptiness, of clarity/luminosity and emptiness, of bliss and emptiness, of awareness and emptiness (the four *wangs* or empowerments) of development, completion and perfection life stages of the path. *Rigpa* then, is not a mere concept (thought) or an experience (*nyams*), but the *apriori* bright naked Presence of the transcendent Primordial Awareness Wisdom (gnosis, *yeshe, jnana, epinoia*) itself, Gnosis of Light, *Prajnaparamita*—Wisdom Mother of all the buddhas—Now.

Yes. The transcendental unity of clear light mind nature (*ösel*) has its objective and subjective voices. The former is "object emptiness" (*lhundrub*/presence) that is always already united with the latter, subjective voice of luminous clear light (*kadag*/purity), spacious *dharmakaya* (*chö ku*), Ultimate Reality (*chö nyid*). That reality is the Ultimate Truth (*don dam denpa, paramartha*) that is "all empty" nondual primordial *dharmakaya* ground, emanation base (*gzhi rigpa*) of all phenomena of our great Wisdom Mother (*Yeshe*), primordial womb of all descending subtle and gross appearing phenomena of the relative truths of *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya* dimensions. Told the Buddha, "Form is empty; emptiness is form." There is no emptiness other than its presence as form. There is no form that is not an emptiness. Form *is* emptiness.

Form and its emptiness Ground of Being are not separate conceptual objects or "things," as we have seen. They are utterly interdependent, interconnected and interpenetrating, prior and present perfectly subjective *one truth unity* (*dzog*). "This is the Buddha's great truth of 'interdependent arising'—final view that is free of duality of extremes of absolute existence, or the nihilism of absolute nonexistence" (*medpa*). [Adzom Paylo Rinpoche 2002 Retreat]

*The future is entirely causally dependent upon what is occurring now. "What you are is what you have been. What you will be is what you do now."* [Shakyamuni Buddha] This great truth is the basis

of our great wisdom tradition's natural law of cause and effect—inexorable law of karma—our behavior and conduct, the way we must live to be happy in this mad, mad world.

Phenomena have never departed their formless, timeless, selfless, perfectly subjective primordial *dharmakaya* 'groundless ground'. That is clear light *ultimate* 'Big Mind'. Conventional spacetime phenomena—obstructed *relative* 'Small Mind'—appear dualistically, as subject and object, pure or impure, but their *energy essence* and basis or source, their actual nature, is always luminous numinous nondual *shunyata*/emptiness, ever free of perceptual imputation, conceptual designation, and emotional hope and fear. "There is nothing other than that."

That (*tathata*) then is the natural, post-critical, post-metaphysical, centrist Middle Way balance between materialist permanent existence and idealist nihilist nonexistence. That is the prodigious nondual view of prior ontic one truth unity of Buddha's Two Truths—relative form and its ultimate emptiness *dharmakaya* 'groundless ground'. Groundless because it too is absent any jot of innate intrinsic existence. That View transcends yet embraces the endless false dichotomies of our conceptual judgment—beyond crazy or sane, beyond good and evil, utterly “gone beyond” (*parasamgate*) all concept, belief, deity, icon or archetype. So The View is nondual.

Still, we must evaluate—polarize/dichotomize—to live in the realm of empirical, relative-conventional spacetime reality. As we have seen, ethical conduct requires that we discriminate between good and evil, between unifying pure view, and destructive false views, between kind intention and action, and harmful thought and action. Yet, there is this great primordial unifying View—the big picture “as high as the sky”—abiding in love-wisdom of the nondual middle (*madhya*), always in timeless fourth time (*turiya*), deep at the Heart of this timeless moment now. That is Siddhartha Gautama the Buddha's all-subsuming Middle Way. That is the 'correct' View.

### **Mantra: OM AH HUM is our Triune Wisdom Nature**

In the classical tantric metaphor basal formless perfectly subjective *dharmakaya* ground, source, or base (*gzhi*) is like an infinite expanse of sky. *Rigpa* is like the sun, the sky's vast capacity for *knowing* the perfect clarity of awareness. The descending light/energy/motion/form ( $E=mc^2$ ) of this infinite awareness continuum is like the sun's rays (*'od gsal, ösel*), prior yet present Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*yeshe, jnana, gnosis*) penetrating and illuminating dark clouds of ignorance (*avidya/marigpa, maya*) that obscure our aboriginal clear light wisdom Nature of Mind.

These three manifest as the five rays or five colors of the great mandala of Five Buddha Families, interdependently arisen phenomena emerging as five aggregates (*skandhas*) of relative empirical spacetime reality. These three—sky, sun and rays—are respectively, *dharmakaya, sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*; the Three Vajras of Body, Voice, and Mind; respectively, OM ÂH HUM. The nondual unity of these three buddha bodies of light are inseparable, unborn, stainless *Trikaya of the Base, Absolute Bodhicitta, Svabhavakaya*—The Fourth Body—prior and present unity of vast expanse of this boundless whole, infinite awareness-consciousness continuum that is our unborn primordial mind nature itself (*sems nyid*). That powerful mantra is OM AH HUM.

This unified *Trikaya* of the Base is the perfectly subjective deep background continuum that is unobstructed *pure alaya (amala vijñana)*, the ninth consciousness revealed in the highest

tantras. Its luminous Presence is buddha nature heart seed present in all the *tathagatas*, the Buddhas of the three times—past, present and future—transcending yet pervading our waking, dreaming and deep sleep mind states through this timeless moment now, primordial abode of the fourth time (*turiya*). “The three times are one...Now is the time to enter into it”. [Garab Dorje]

Therefore, from the view of relative-conventional truth, these three *kayas* or buddha bodies are the three faces of love-wisdom truth of our non-separate participation and growth through relative *exoteric* (gross/outer/waking state), *esoteric* (subtle/inner/dream state), and ultimate *greater esoteric* (very subtle innermost secret deep sleep state) development life stages—all the way to the end of it—nondual yet luminous buddha mind of perfect buddhahood.

However, from this nondual view of Ultimate Truth—the view of a buddha—all of these heady concepts are merely playful display of the prior *one truth unity* of spacious, empty, trans-conceptual *dharmakaya*, utterly “gone beyond” sentient perception, concept, belief, archetype and all negative and positive emotion. The stages of the path and the transcendent wisdom revealed and grounded herein is perfectly expressed in sutra in the great *Prajnaparamita Mantra: Om Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha* (Buddha's Heart Sutra); in tantra as the Great Mantra of Avalokiteshvara: *Om Mani Peme Hum* (*Hung*); and in Vajra Sattva Mantra: *Om Benza Satto Hung*.

An equally profound Tibetan Buddhist mantra for practitioners on this often confusing Buddhist path is Vajra Guru Mantra: *Om Ah Hum Benza Guru Pema Siddhi Hung*. It is told that the twelve syllables of this foundational Guru Yoga mantra bestow the complete blessing of Buddha's twelve kinds of teaching that purifies—breath by mindful breath—negative emotional obstructions of the twelve links of dependent arising on the *Dharmachakra*, Buddha's cyclic Wheel of Becoming. It furthers one to recite and practice these powerful mantras.

Such a Promethean participatory epistemology and ontology has been called, in the gloss of our emerging Noetic (body-mind-spirit union) Revolution, the “wholeness principle”—*telos*, *agape*, the 'movement that connects' (growth) to always present luminous Spirit Presence of our indwelling buddha nature buddha mind—open secret of harmless human happiness.

This is the path that is the inter-theoretical, meditative-contemplative and practical antidote to *thanatos* (death), the destructive “separation principle” embodied as the afflictive emotional poisons: primal *avidya*/ignorance that is *Attraction* (attachment, pride, greed), and *Aversion* (fear-anger, hostility, hatred). Within unbroken wholeness of the spacious *dharmakaya* ground—ultimate Nature of Mind—arises these twelve links of mind-generated positive and negative thought and emotion. Hence, primal ignorance of the essential 'basic goodness' of this formless ground is *avidya* or *marigpa*, and deathly *thanatos*—human evil that manifests in our collective conduct as human suffering (*dukkha*)—alienation, genocide, endless war and despair.

Thus all limbs of the Buddha's teaching have this one purpose—to bring us to the nondual Transcendent Wisdom. It participates in and pervades all views and paths for one who is capable of accessing it...All things flow from emptiness, and return again to emptiness, like space, the sun, and its rays. This is interdependent arising...the dynamic display of the mind. That is the ultimate nature of all arising phenomena—very nature of reality itself.

—Adzom Paylo Rinpoche (2002)

## The Threefold Space

According to recent Dzogchen master Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, the two innermost principles of Ati Dzogchen view and practice are Space (*ying*, *dhatu*) and Awareness (*rigpa*, *vidya*). Timeless, selfless 'basic space' (*chöying*, *dharmadhatu*) of *dharmakaya* ground is pregnant luminous emptiness, unity of emptiness and nondual wisdom of the radiant clear light (*ösel*).

In Ati Dzogchen view and practice that basic space is often seen as a threefold unity. 1) Outer *ying* is like clear vast empty sky, the Great Emptiness (*Mahashunyata*) in which, or in whom arises all relative spacetime phenomena. That is *Akashadhatu*. 2) Inner *ying* is essential mind essence, very Nature of Mind (*citatta*, *sems nyid*). That is *Vajradhatu*. 3) Innermost Secret *ying* is 'essential *rigpa*', luminous clarity of nondual recognition, then realization, bright knowing awareness of the prior and always present primordial unity of these three. That is *Jnanadhatu*, radiant *rigdang*. That unity is 'threefold space' of highest Dzogchen *Ati Yoga*. *That we are now*.

In Dzogchen, this nondual 'innermost secret' *rigpa* realization of space, of the infinite "Vast Expanse" is *klong* (long): beyond all reified concept, belief, judgment and bias; beyond good and evil; beyond even the subtlest subject-object duality; beyond objective and subjective emptiness; beyond ground and path luminosity. Utterly gone beyond. *Parasamgate. Bodhi Svaha*.

As space pervades, so awareness pervades...like space, *rigpa* is all encompassing...Just as beings are all pervaded by space, *rigpa* pervades the minds of beings...Basic space [*chöying*] is the absence of mental constructs, while awareness [*rigpa*] is the knowing of this absence of constructs, recognizing the complete emptiness of mind essence....The ultimate dharma is the realization of the indivisibility of basic space and awareness [that is] *dharmakaya* Samantabhadra.

—Tulku Urgyen *As It Is* Vol. I 1999; *Rainbow Painting* 1995

Here is neither samsara nor nirvana, neither self nor other, neither buddhas nor sentient beings. This [nondual] state is known as primordial purity [*kadag*] because it is not stained or obscured by any hint of confusion or dualistic thought; it is the original, pure nature of all existence...

—Francesca Fremantle *Luminous Emptiness* 2001

"The *dharmakaya* arises unnecessarily out of infinite basic space." [Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche] And the great natural beauty of it? "It is already present and accomplished from the very beginning" (Garab Dorje; Nagarjuna)—here, now, for each one of us as our indwelling, always present intrinsic Buddha Nature of Mind—bright indwelling Presence of very Ground of Being Itself. It is That (*tathata*, *sattva*, thatness) to which we awaken, breath by mindful breath via the happy conceptual confusion of this relative spiritual Path. Pure direct 'naked awareness' of this great timeless truth facilitates the compassionate *bodhicitta* conduct that lifts and heals the suffering of living beings and generates both relative happiness (human flourishing, *eudiamonia*, *felicitas*), and ultimate harmless Happiness Itself (*mahasukha*, *paramananda*, *beatitudo*).

## Primordial Awareness: Sutra, Tantra, Dzogchen

We may now review the three essential awareness *yanas* of the Buddhist path—Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen. According to the Third Dodrupchen, and His Holiness Dalai Lama, the Inner Tantras of both *Anuttarayoga tantra* or Highest Yoga Tantra (nondual Essence Mahamudra), and of Ati Dzogchen (*semde, longde, manngag/upadesha* teaching cycles) are essentially nondual tantras, while the less subtle, less direct Outer Tantras and sutras of the *Triyana* remain the fundamental and foundational vehicles of the Buddha's transmission to us. And all these vehicles of the Path provide the same Fruit/Result—*Prajnaparamita*—great nondual already indwelling Primordial Transcendent Awareness Wisdom (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*)—love-wisdom truth of all the buddhas of the three times—past, present, future. And it's present now!

H.H. Dalai Lama reminds us that without this early foundation of the Path; indeed, without all three Turnings of Buddha's *Dharmachakra* that comprise the Buddha's speech (*Buddhavaccana*), the wisdom temple cannot be built. Thus, for Indo-Tibetan Vajrayana the preliminaries or foundational practices (*ngöndro*) are actually the most profound. They introduce the very highest nondual teaching of both the *Sutrayana* and *Tantrayana* (*Mantrayana*) vehicles. They continue to be fundamental through development, completion and Dzogchen perfection stages of all the Vajrayana lineage paths. Let us then forsake the traditional hubris inherent in the lesser/greater, *hina/maha*, provisional/definitive (*neyartha/nitartha*) dualistic scholastic dialectics and honor Buddha's speech/voice in a nonsectarian *rimé* spirit of mind.

The Indo-Tibetan Vajrayana or Secret Mantra Mantrayana then, contains both *Sutrayana* and *Tantrayana* teaching vehicles: the *renunciation* practices of the Sutras, the *transformation* practices of the Outer and Inner Tantras, and the *fruition* view of nondual highest Essence Mahamudra, and the “spontaneously self-perfected” (*lhundrub*) state of Ati Dzogchen, nondual Great Completion of cause and effect duality of the Two Truths of the Mahayana Causal Vehicle.

*The profound and spooky paradox of the Dzogchen fruition view is that in this ultimate nondual view there 'exists' no afflicted consciousness nor negative emotions to be renounced, purified or transformed! Indeed, there is no ultimate phenomenal spacetime reality to negate; and so no beings to negate; and so no wondrous ultimate ontological ground to be fabricated! There is only this basal primordial pure awareness. "Awareness is the timeless, nondual integration of emptiness and lucidity—naturally lucid and unobstructed awareness in all its nakedness, within the context of originally pure basic space that is free of [conceptual] elaboration." [Longchenpa] That is the ultimate View.*

Ontic nihilist extremism? Well then, what is it that *seems* to appear from that mysterious 'basic space'? And *how* does it appear? What arises and appears from nondual formless timeless awareness is all too real diaphanous domain of spacetime ( $E=mc^2$ ) Relative Truth—all of it utterly absent and empty any whit of *ultimate* or absolute intrinsic existence! Still, there 'exists' perceptually and conceptually imputed *relative* appearances, and our sensory experience of them. Thus our rather ambiguous epithet "groundless ground" for the non-logocentric, ultimately absent emptiness source/base (*gzhi*) of all this relatively arising illusory phenomena.

On the acausal nondual Dzogchen view the primordial nature of *ultimate* reality itself, its very heart-essence, is “perfect from the very beginning”; is “buddha from the very beginning”.

This prior indivisible unity of emptiness, luminosity/lucidity, and awareness is blissful "primordially pure" Presence of androgynous Samantabhadra, primordial *dharmakaya* Adi Buddha. That is our 'supreme identity' of the 'supreme source'—always present within and throughout embodied mind, ascending and descending upon gentle breath of mindfulness, indestructible *thigle* essence at spiritual Heart of each human being—without a single exception.

This indwelling, timeless, intrinsic primordial awareness buddha nature of ours—bright Presence of That (*tathata*)—is the essence of Buddha's Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma. Again we understand, this our bright "innermost secret" Presence (*rigpa*, *vidya*) is our continuous interdependent participation in ultimate nature of reality itself (*chö nyid*), *dharmakaya* (*chö ku*), just as it is (*thamel gyi shepa*). It utterly transcends any thought, concept or spiritual experience (*nyams*) of it. *Tat Tvam Asi*. That I Am—selfless supreme identity, always present here and now.

When we forget ourselves we are actually the true activity of the existence of Big Mind, reality itself. When we realize this fact, there is no problem whatsoever in this world...Our practice is to be aware of this fact...It may be too perfect for us, just now, because we are so much attached to our own feeling, to our individual existence...When you can sit with your whole body and mind, and with the oneness of your mind and body under the control of the universal mind, you can easily attain this kind of right understanding...When we reach this understanding we find the true meaning of our life...How very glad the river must be to return to its original ocean!

—Suzuki Roshi, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* 1970, 2020

In this way then, through great lucid clarity of nondual *direct* understanding, the two seemingly contradictory theses of views on emptiness in Sutra and Tantra—objective and subjective, ascending and descending—are dialectically transcended, yet included and embraced in the higher or deeper synthesis of the supreme view and practice of subtlest Ati Dzogchen tantras, without reducing the great nondual teaching to explanatory experiences and conceptual expressions of our unconscious deep background cultural "global web of belief". [Quine 1969]

Ultimately nondual awareness of emptiness of Madhyamaka is the emptiness of Ati Dzogchen and of Essence Mahamudra, although the relative-conventional view and practices differ slightly. And the result or fruition of all three is identical—primordial buddhahood.

And yes, that is Shakamuni Buddha's perfect teaching in "two ways at once," prior "natural unity of one identity with two aspects." One ground, two truths, three buddha bodies are a present union that is a prior *a priori* unity of this Buddhist Two Truths trope—Ultimate Truth and Relative Truth—subsumed in an ineffable nondual awareness *one truth unity* that is invariant through all of our cognitive states—objective, subjective, contemplative, and nondual. Indeed, a most amazing paradox! But only to conceptual mind. There is always only awareness.

Each and every one of us has the potential to realize fruition. It is you yourself who make the decision...Open the door...follow the path right to the end.

—H.H. Dalai Lama

## Ground, Path, Fruition/Result

The fruition is no different at the pinnacle of enlightenment than it is at the primordial base.

—Adzom Paylo Rinpoche

### Integrating the Ground and the Fruit Through the Path

In *Dzogchen* View the Fruition—liberation, enlightenment, then buddhahood—is always already present in the very nature of our 'supreme identity' with the essential base or ground (*dharmakaya*: emptiness and buddha nature), but it is not yet realized and actualized through the Body, Voice and Mind of this basal nature. We fully awaken to That upon the spiritual Path.

The essence of enlightenment—very heart-seed of buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*) “is a continuity that extends throughout our journey along the stages of ground, path and fruition.” [Kenchen Thrangu Rinpoche] The precious *samaya* or covenant between Vajra Master and disciple facilitates, after development (creation) and completion stages of the path, Ati Dzogchen perfection stage. That is necessary to awaken and integrate the prior already present unity of Ground and Fruition in the confusion context of our everyday life world, and of the spiritual Path. If this process is to bear the fruit of liberation, the student must continuously dedicate the merit and benefit of these profound practices, not to self, but to the benefit and ultimate happiness of all beings, great and small, everywhere. What then, is the Ati Dzogchen method of clarifying the confusion of the Path? It is the union of View, Meditation, and Action/Conduct.

In Dzogchen, on the basis of the clear light itself, the way in which the clear light abides is made vivid and certain by the aspect of *rigpa* or knowing. That is free from any overlay of delusion and from any corrupting effect due to conceptual thoughts, that will inhibit the experience of clear light...It is not accomplished as something new, as a result of circumstances and conditions, but is present from the very outset...an awareness that can clearly perceive the way in which basic space and wisdom are present. On the basis of that key point, the realization of clear light radiates in splendor, becoming clearer and clearer, like a hundred million suns...Here the aware aspect of clear light or effulgent *rigpa* [which arises from nondual essential *rigpa*] is stripped bare and you penetrate further into the depths of clear light...even as objects seem to arise... It is on this basis that you train.

—Third Dodrupchen Jigme Tenpe Nyima (in H.H. Dalai Lama, *Dzogchen* 2000.)

### *Rigpa*: The Main Point

Nyingma head Dodrupchen teaches that “The main point is that the *rigpa* taught in the Dzogchen approach and the wisdom of clear light [*Anuttarayoga tantra*] are one and the same.” Twentieth Century *rimé* master Tulku Urgyen agrees. Regarding Buddhist “three great views”:

The view of Mahamudra, Dzogchen and Madhyamaka is identical in essence. Although it is said, 'the ground is Mahamudra, the path is the Middle Way, and the fruition is the Great Perfection,' in the view itself there is no difference whatsoever...The awakened state of Mahamudra doesn't differ from the awakened state of Dzogchen or Madhyamaka. Buddhahood is the final fruition of all these regardless of which of these paths you follow.

—Tulku Urgyen *Rainbow Painting* 1999

Thus, the awakened state of Presence—*rigpa*—does not differ in Dzogchen, or the Essence Mahamudra of Highest Yoga Tantra, or the highest *Madhyamaka of the Definitive Meaning*. However, His Holiness Dalai Lama cautions us not to confuse this highest, greater esoteric or innermost secret nondual teaching with the lesser esoteric *Mahamudra* and *Madhyamaka* of Sutra and lower Tantra. This difference in subtlety is the essential difference between the "definitive" nondual teaching, and the teaching of the "provisional" lower sutras and tantras.

Dodrupchen's "effulgent *rigpa*" (*lungdang*) of the clear light is the aspect of *rigpa* that is "directly experienced" (*yogi pratyaksa*) when conceptual thoughts (*vikalpa*) of the less subtle mind states are still present—"rigpa that arises from the ground, and is the appearance of the ground." "Essential *rigpa*" [*rigdang*] of Secret Mantra is the indwelling, pure direct 'experience' in the yogin—free of even the slightest conceptual elaboration—the experience of nondual ultimate fundamental innate mind of clear light." Moreover, this essential clear light mind (*ösel*) is about the same as the Sutrayana nondual "transcendental wisdom" of nondual *Prajnaparamita Sutra*, beyond or prior to subject and object, self and other, and all the dualistic false dichotomies of conditional spacetime dimensions of the world of objective empirical relative-conventional truth.

So there is 'effulgent *rigpa*' of the *appearances* of the ground or base, and 'essential *rigpa*' of the formless, timeless, selfless *nondual* primordial *dharmakaya* 'groundless ground' itself.

Thickening the plot, Dodrupchen also identifies *rigpa* that is both, and *rigpa* that is neither. In the former there is *rigpa* union of the conceptual appearances arising from the base, effulgent *rigpa* with nondual essential *rigpa*. And the latter, in "rigpa attaining its full measure" the yogi has taken a "firm stance within the essence of the base" that is neither 'essential *rigpa*', nor 'effulgent *rigpa*'. That *rigpa* abides as empty basic space beyond any concept about *rigpa*.

In this rather prolix conceptual exposition then, we have both relative effulgent and ultimate essential qualities and experiences of primordial wisdom gnosis that is *jnana/yeshe*. Direct feeling-knowing awareness of Presence of That is nondual *rigpa/vidya*, beyond our concepts and beliefs. As to Drodrupchen's fourth alternative—*rigpa* that is neither effulgent nor essential *rigpa*—that is utterly nonconceptual nondual "*rigpa* of all-embracing spontaneous presence (*lhundrub*), spacious *dharmakaya* wisdom of ultimate fruition...ultimate state of freedom...exhaustion of phenomena beyond [conceptual] mind". [H.H. Dalai Lama, 2000]

Longchen Rabjam (1308-1364), great synthesizer of the *Dzogchen* transmission teaches:

Timeless self-arising wisdom is *rigpa* that is empty, clear and free from all elaboration, like an immaculate sphere of crystal...it does not analyze objects...By simply identifying that nonconceptual, pristine, naked *rigpa*, you realize there is



nothing other than this nature...This is nondual self-arising wisdom...Like a reflection in a mirror [*melôn*], when objects and perceptions manifest to rigpa, that pristine and naked awareness which does not proliferate into thought is called the 'inner power' (*tsal*), the responsiveness that is the ground for all the arising of things...For a yogin who realizes the naked meaning of *Dzogpachenpo*, rigpa is fresh, pure and naked, and objects may manifest and appear within rigpa, but it does not lose itself externally to those objects.

—Longchen Rabjam, *The Treasury of the Dharmadhatu*, (Commentary), Adzom Chögar edition, quoted in H.H. Dalai Lama, *Dzogchen* 2000

Hence, atavistic self-arising clear light wisdom *rigpa* awareness is primordially pure, and in Longchenpa's words, "empty and clear"—the unity of emptiness and clarity that is lucid, clear light *ösel* luminosity. That is the prior "natural unity of one identity with two aspects." *Shunya* literally means empty, *ta* is awareness; *shunyata* then is empty luminous awareness—utter absence of perceiving knowing subject, and its known objects, the odious subject-object split. That timeless, formless, selfless nondual supreme source ground or primordial base (*gzhi*) of the chaos of dynamical appearing energy forms arising therein is both empty and aware—the unity of emptiness with its interdependent energy appearances arising upon the *prana* spirit wind of awareness. Its *essence is emptiness*, *primordial purity/kadag* (*trekchö* practice)—subjective "inner lucidity," nondual wisdom, basic space (*chöying*) *dharmakaya* Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*). Its *nature is timeless awareness*, spontaneous presence (*lhundrub*) of emptiness in every spacetime form (*tögal* practice). That 'vision' arises as "outer lucidity," *upaya*/skillful means, the "responsiveness" of compassionate loving kindness in *rupakaya*, the dimension of relative truth.

The nondual ontic prior and phenomenal always present unity of these Two Truths is Perfect Sphere of Dzogchen, natural Great Perfection or Great Completion of the Two Truths wisdom of both Mahayana Sutra and Tibetan Vajrayana Tantra, realized through practice of Nyingma ninth stage *Ati Yoga*, utterly liberated and free of the twofold ignorance—forgetting and thinking—grasping at a self and grasping at phenomenal reality. This grasping and attachment results from the impure view that is the reifying conceptual elaboration (*namtok*) of relative-conventional phenomena and states of experience of self-ego-I, dualistic mind (*sems*), conceptual, semiotic "global web of belief" abiding in the three times—past, present and future.

The relative antidote? "Without past, present, future; empty, awake mind." [Ju Mipham] As we have seen, this primordial awakened mind is the nondual unelaborated spontaneity of the eternal fourth time (*turiya*, the fifth state *turiyatita*) that abides within this relative-conventional moment in an ultimately illusory space and time, exactly as it is here and now.

According to Tulku Urgyen this luminous inner union of emptiness and form is personified in the tantric deity Vajrayogini (Yeshe Tsogyal/Vajra Varahi). "Knowing one, liberates all." *Rimé* master Ju Mipham on the Dzogchen view of these Two Truths of the Buddha—that final one truth of always present unity of ultimate emptiness and relative form:

Within the essence, original wakefulness which is primordially pure [*kadag*], manifests the nature, a radiance which is spontaneously present [*lhundrub*].

—Ju Mipham Gyatso

## Choosing Your Reality

Once again, what shall we do with this rare and precious life we've been given? According to the great living Buddhist Dzogchen and Mahamudra master Adzom Paylo Rinpoche: "*Peace and happiness arise from your present mind state. To be happy you must train your mind to be free of negative afflicting emotions. This places you at ease so that you can act to benefit the world.*" And that is the open secret of our human happiness. "It is only by training the mind that one reaches peace of mind." [H.H. Dalai Lama] Thus do we choose our realities.

"The Meditation" of the Path is the practice of training the mind in equanimity (*upeksha*, *shanti*, *peace*); recognizing—"brief moments many times"—the "one taste" of this bright nondual *one truth unity* of mind essence, ever present *state of pure Presence*, marvelous nondual transcendent Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*yeshe*, *jnana*, gnosis), 'pointed out' and mirrored (*semtri/darshan/denbo*) by the Vajra Master in intimate context of your heartfelt devotion.

Through such 'meditative stabilization' we learn: "Without changing anything, let it be as it is." [Wu-Wei] "Make of yourselves a light," the Buddha's last words to his disciples. Then let it shine. That is the difference in view and conduct between the dualistic deluded, negative Scientific Materialism of narcissistic consumerist mass-mind that has colonized the Western mind—and primordial wakefulness (*rangjung yeshe*). This, our beautiful original face is *yeshe* wisdom, unborn buddha heart buddha mind that is "single sphere of *dharmakaya*." Indwelling bright Presence of That (*tathata*). Thus do we choose our individual and so collective destiny.

Remaining naturally [in primordial state of *rigpa*] is the meditation. The nature of mind is buddha from the beginning...Realizing the purity essence of all things, to remain here, without seeking, that is the meditation.

—Garab Dorje (from *The Three Vajra Verses*)

Regarding knowing subject and its object of meditation, this perfectly subjective, empty, transcendent wisdom consciousness—ineffable supreme source that is androgynous, primordial *dharmakaya* Adi Buddha Samantabhadra—Longchenpa reveals that this formless, timeless, selfless, *ultimate* fundamental awareness ground in whom all *relative* appearing phenomena arise and participate is without beginning and without end, unborn, uncreated and unceasing, ontologically prior yet phenomenally present to us in vast luminous relative-conventional 'interdependent arising' causal matrix of this great gift of our appearing spacetime realities.

What never existed, cannot cease to exist. Therefore, arising objective phenomenal particulars, universals, and beings of the perfectly subjective 'supreme source' ground who abide in a spacetime transcendent relation of essential identity with this basal ground can have no Creator for they are originally and primordially inseparable and always already embraced and pervaded by that primordial ground "from the very beginning". Miracle of being here. *Emaho!*

Dynamical phenomena, beings and human self-ego-I are, in actuality, a perfectly subjective unity, beyond belief, beyond concepts, prior to all apparent, interdependent spacetime arising. The painful perennial duality of creator/creation, of self and other—our conceptual

uncomfortable comfort zones—is thereby transcended in its ultimate infinite nondual source condition, Ultimate Truth of reality being itself (*chö nyid*), very Ground of Being. In the perfect words of 14th century Tibetan Dzogchen master Longchenpa, the 'omniscient one':

Original purity in its essence has never existed as anything; rather its nature, like that of space, is primordially pure so that anything whatsoever can manifest. The origin of all samsara and nirvana is atemporal, with no beginning or end...The unique vast expanse...spontaneous presence...is [selfless], not created by anyone. All things that emerge from it—all possible phenomena without exception—are one within the fundamental ground from which they emerge, since causality is negated...The ultimate heart essence, which transcends existence and nonexistence...is truly beyond all conventional expression and description...From the standpoint of enlightenment, the heart essence from which everything arises, there is no duality...Buddhas, beings, and the universe of appearances and possibilities are evident, yet do not waver from the single nature of phenomena, just as it is...Leave everything as it is...Primordial buddhahood, the ground of fully evident enlightenment, unchanging, spontaneously present, the basic space of the vajra heart essence—the nature of mind is natural great perfection.

—Longchen Rabjam, *The Precious Treasury of the Way of Abiding* (Autocommentary), Padma Edition 1998

This same heart essence of innate clear light mind, this “essential *rigpa*” that is joyous blessing gift (*jīnlob*) of the state of primordially pure Presence of the compassionate buddha nature dwelling within us was earlier transmitted directly through the Buddha’s Second Turning of the Wheel of Dharma, revealed and elaborated, as we have seen, in the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* (*The Great Sutra of Transcendent Wisdom*), heart essence of which is expressed in the Buddha’s sublime, very brief *Heart Sutra*. This transcendent one truth unity of cause and effect of the Two Truths of Madhyamaka—the Perfection of Wisdom of Sutrayana and Tantrayana—and the acausal nondual View of the prior and ever present unity of the Ground, Path and Fruition of Highest Yoga Tantra and of Ati Dzogchen are expressed in Buddha’s nondual *Heart Sutra*:

Form is empty; emptiness is form. Form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form...The nature of mind is the unity of awareness and emptiness...The mind is devoid of mind, for the nature of mind is clear light...Leave everything as it is and rest your weary mind, all things are perfect exactly as they are...And all the *Tathagatas* [buddhas] will rejoice.

—Shakyamuni Buddha from his *Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*

Now there is nothing left to seek. Nothing left to do. *Wu-Wei*. So all that we do is selfless, authentic and kind. That is compassionate human happiness. Buddha’s last words, “Make of yourselves a light.” Now shall you be a light to all living beings for as long as you live. *Emaho!*

## Who Am I?

In whom does this all arise?

The primary *Dzogchen* tantra, *The Kunjed Gyalpo (The Supreme Source)*, must surely be considered one of humankind's great spiritual treasures. According to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, that supreme nondual teaching has been transmitted from master to disciple directly, heartmind to heartmind, for thousands of years. Its current Tibetan Vajrayana version dates from the 8th century CE, and is a fundamental tantra of the *Dzogchen semde* (mind) teaching series. This version of the great nondual primordial teaching is derived from Buddhist sutra and tantra understanding of the Nature of Mind, yet its truth essence runs, like a golden thread, through the grand tapestry of humankind's Primordial Wisdom Tradition. *Kunjed Gyalpo, The Wise and Glorious King* is Samantabhadra/Samantabhadri in inseparable *yabyum* embrace—androgynous primordial Adi Buddha—state of pure presence, clarity and emptiness that is none other than our original buddha nature, supreme source, primordial womb of everything. Samantabhadra, formless, timeless *dharmakaya* Adi Buddha speaks to Vajrasattva, logic *sambhogakaya* Buddha:

The essence of all the buddhas exists prior to samsara and nirvana...It transcends the four conceptual limits and is intrinsically pure; this original condition is the uncreated nature of existence that always existed, the ultimate nature of all phenomena...It is utterly free of the defects of dualistic thought which is only capable of referring to an object other than itself...It is the base of primordial purity...Similar to space it pervades all beings...The inseparability of the two truths, absolute and relative is called 'primordial Buddha'...If at the moment the energy of the base manifests, one does not consider it something other than oneself...it self-liberates...Understanding the essence...one finds oneself always in this state...dwelling in the fourth time, beyond past, present and future...the infinite space of self-perfection...pure dharmakaya, essence of the vajra of clear light.

—Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Supreme Source* 1999

Thus do the sutras and the tantras of Buddha's teaching, with the dependently arisen dualities of the path—objective and subjective, self and other, self and buddha mind, observer and data, true and false, good and bad, right and wrong, relative and ultimate—abide in prior yet present *one truth unity* of all-embracing Perfect Sphere of Dzogchen, supreme source, our supreme identity, primordial 'groundless ground' of reality itself, luminous indwelling clear light love-wisdom Presence that is always already this bright unity of awareness and emptiness.

Who am I? All the masters of the three times have told it. Yes. This infinite vast expanse (*longchen*) of Primordial Awareness Wisdom continuum is who we actually are. Great *vidya/rigpa/christos* Presence of That, abiding always at the spiritual Heart. *Tat Tvam Asi!* That I Am! That (*tathata*) is our supreme identity, great completion, our always present buddha nature, buddha mind—deep heart-seed of relative and ultimate happiness that is both origin and aim of all our fruitless happiness seeking strategies. Indwelling bright Presence of That. *Mahasukaho!*

## Colophon

### Being Is Love

Before the beginning is vast formless, timeless, selfless primordial awareness-consciousness ground—Great Love that binds together the worlds. That is all-embracing, all-pervading, nondual perfectly subjective Spirit Itself. That always is, in deep silent night, abiding as timeless, empty 'basic space', very foundation of physical space and time. That Great Love is singular ultimate source ground of everything that arises therein.

This perfectly subjective Spirit Ground continuously arises as its own self-reflexive, self-aware luminosity—ultimate Ground of Being that enters into relative space and time, 'descends' as form, objective light-energy-matter-motion. [ $E=mc^2$ ] That boundless whole quite naturally evolves in time to become the life, mind, and voice of all living beings.

In due course and by grace some of these fortunate beings consciously evolve to become human beings. Some of these have awakened to their always already present luminous Presence of indwelling love and wisdom to incarnate into spacetime form as 'full *bodhi*'—a living Christ or Buddha being. Thus does vast empty *Logos*, primordial wisdom Gnosis of Light descend from empty 'basic space' to be Spirit fullness in form.

Now that light shines always at the heart of the darkness. Yet in darkness living beings perceive it not. Our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition knows this as 'primal ignorance'.

Thus it is, from time to time bright primordial Spirit manifests itself, awake—utterly beyond our contrived, reifying concepts and beliefs about it—into human form to light the way home. Such a one outshines as nondual timeless primordial Spirit Itself, becomes way of kind compassionate return to our very 'supreme source', 'groundless ground' *kosmic* whole—basic space in whom this all so naturally arises and plays. *Emaho!* How wonderful!

As this Great Love spirit light fills the world, there arises human love. That Way of Love is guided by spontaneous compassionate wisdom—harmless engaged activity for benefit of living beings. That love-wisdom mind is the open secret of our human happiness.

Therefore, Spirit being form effortlessly manifests as love. Beings in form have never departed that love. That love is who we actually are—our supreme identity of spacious supreme source ground in whom this all arises. And into love it all returns. Great gravity of Love. That Great Love loves us for as long as we all shall live—through all of our lifetimes.

The perfect words of Jesus the Christ: "Love one another as I have loved you." The perfect words of Gautama the Buddha: "Make of yourselves a light....Wonder of wonders, all beings are Buddha." We need not seek that innate indwelling happiness elsewhere. "It is already present, accomplished from the very beginning". Here now present bright Presence of Great Love, naturally abides deep within each living being—without a single exception. We human beings may realize that ultimate harmless happiness—in midst of unrelenting adversity—through assiduous mindful meditation practice on *prana* spirit breath, guided always by the spiritual master in this lovely fiery crucible of the spiritual community.

Some sunny day we shall all together awaken, arise and outshine as our inherently perfect, timeless love-wisdom mind. And that day is always today. Great Joy! Great Love.

## Appendix A: Guided Meditation

### The Open Secret of Human Happiness

Whether or not you have contemplatively discovered, beyond your concepts and beliefs about it, the always already present Presence of timeless *primordial intrinsic awareness itself* that is your innate indwelling buddha nature—let us do so for this brief eternal moment now. Buddha nature peace and happiness is always present now as a conscious mindful *choice* of your 'placement of attention' upon that selfless bright Presence that rides the *prana/lung* spirit breath.

1) *Give Thanks* for great blessing of your rare and precious life exactly as it is now—adversity and all. Pray that all living beings may experience happiness and the causes of happiness; and that they avoid suffering and the causes of suffering. Be always in thanksgiving.

2) *Placement of Attention*. Expel the stale breath nine times. Place your conscious attention/awareness upon the life force *prana/lung* spirit breath in your belly (*lungdang*). Breathe normally. *Feel* your innermost bright Spirit Presence—without thinking about it.

3) *Mantra*. Now begin your mantra prayer: *OM AH HUM*, or other mantra. Unify with Guru's mindstream thus: *AH AH AH*. *Feel* luminous Presence of that in your *sambhogakaya* 'upper room' three feet above your crown chakra at the crown of your head. Feel your crown center open as *thigle* deity essence enters in and pervades your entire body-mind. From that life force spirit *prana* in your belly experience selfless bright purity of your subtle central channel.

4) *Light Up Your Chakras*. From the *hara* or *dō* center in your belly place your attention briefly upon the White *AH* at your *hridayam/nyingpo* heart chakra. Now your throat center (voice, speech, *vishuddha*). Now your 'third eye' *ajna* center, medial prefrontal cortex behind your forehead. Now your crown center. 'Let there be light'. *Rest* here for a few moments.

*Now close your eyes and raise your eyebrows*. This 'posture' instantly produces peaceful alpha, 'waking theta', and a bit of gamma brain rhythm. That is the 'neuroscience of meditation'. *Feel* this subtle stirring, lifting, and peace in your forebrain. Now throughout your entire body and mind, right down to the subatomic level of your physical being, and the subtle and causal levels of your spirit being. Now relax all such concepts and beliefs. No need to *believe* any of it. It's far beyond belief, and our concepts about it. Simply *feel* that quiescent bright Presence now.

*Open your eyes*. Move your awareness to your "great bliss crown wheel". Effortlessly *feel* your crown center open. Now *yidam* deity, your spiritual master, the Buddha, and your own Buddha nature Presence dissolves and enters in your crown chakra and streams downward throughout your head and neck, chest, upper and lower back, gut, pelvic area, arms and hands, feet, indeed throughout your entire body and mind, all the way down into our Mother Earth. Feel your fearless stability deep in Earth. The Buddha told, "Earth is my witness." That is your *full body scan*. Rest effortlessly and profoundly in the *dharmakaya* 'basic space' of that luminous numinous buddha mind Presence that you always already are here and now. "The basic space of all phenomena is naturally occurring timeless awareness—awakened mind". [Longchenpa]

5) *Energy Focus and Release*. With eyes open sharply focus your *prana* spirit breath energy wherever you feel a physical or emotional obstruction to life energy flow: tension, pain, anxiety, anger, grasping desire, pride, drowsiness. *PHAT!* Blockage released! Surrender it all on the out-breath. *Now rest*. Enjoy clear, lucid, blissful peace throughout your entire body-mind. Easy. Easy.

6) *Nonmeditation*. Simply relax and rest your busy mind just as it is here and now, without following your thoughts and feelings into a past or a future; without trying to block thinking and feeling; without *trying* to meditate; without *doing* anything at all. Past is but a present memory. Future is but a present anticipation. Simply *be present* here now. You are not here *seeking* peace, clarity, or happy experience (*nyams*). You seek nothing at all. For this timeless moment now you have no goal whatsoever. Let your luminous mind *be* exactly as it is, adversity and all. Buddha told so long ago, "Rest your weary mind and let it be as it is; all things are perfect exactly as they are." *Wu-Wei*. "Meditative absorption; meditative stabilization". *Rigdag*. Feel That!

Now let your deity mantra support be in awareness background. Just *be*, without doing, fixing, judging. Thoughts, feelings naturally arise. Well and good. No need to stop them. No need to follow them. They come and they go. They are absent and empty any substance or power that 'self' does not choose to bestow upon them. Simply allow whatever arises in the busy mind to 'self-liberate' of its own accord leaving no trace. Patience. It all shall pass. Rest now in "bare awareness in its pristine nakedness...pure expanse of space"—formless, timeless, selfless, spacious primordial awareness Ground of Being Itself. Who am I? That I Am!

7) *Return to Your Breath*. Be awareness of quiescent *prana* spirit breath in the belly. Breathe normally. In this quiet space abides peace beyond all understanding. *Feel* living Heart Essence of *AH*. Your essential nature is *nirmanakaya HUM*—'supreme identity' of *dharmakaya OM*. *OM AH HUM*. Again place that mantra in awareness background. Rest in pure Presence of the Ground.

8) *Your Buddha Nature*. Now you are aware, without thinking about it, that you are resting in selfless, open, empty, numinous lucidity of pure awareness itself—Buddha Nature of Mind. Peace and bliss of That (*tathata*, thatness). *You are now aware of the vast timeless, selfless, boundless space of your awareness*. Self-centered self reference ('selfing') is absent. Feel clear light luminous knowing-feeling *certainty* of this Presence of 'original wakefulness'. That is primordial awareness itself. Whatever arises, "let it be as it is". No need to judge. Jigme Lingpa: "Simply observe....Intrinsic awareness itself is absolute Guru." That knowing-feeling love-wisdom awareness is always present—awareness background or foreground. Be That Now. Rest. Enjoy.

Now rest quietly for as long as you like in this sweet love-wisdom Presence that you always are now. That is the profound mindful connection to your very own essential buddha nature. Practice it day and night—"brief moments many times". Now get up and do some good.

Engage this essential mindfulness practice from 60 seconds to 60 minutes. Make it your own. Adapt it. That Presence you are now. No need to push the river. Easy. Relax. Rest. Enjoy.

Christians: replace 'buddha nature' with *christos*: inner 'Christ Nature', 'Presence of Christ'.

This clear, bright, selfless, active 'nonmeditation' we shall further explore in *The Open Secret of Human Happiness* 3rd Ed. (Boaz 2025). The "Brief Course" appears there in *Ch. VIII*.

## Appendix B

### Being Happy Now

For no small matter is at stake here. The question concerns  
the very way that human life is to be lived.

—Plato, *The Republic Book I*

*"Come and See."* What is the essential truth of human happiness? It is this: *both happiness and unhappiness arise from your present mindstate*. So now gently place your attention/awareness upon selfless life force *prana* spirit wind that rides the natural breath in the body. "Train your mind!"

Our happiness lies not in the future; nor in the past. Past is gone. Future has not yet arisen. Everything happens only *now*, in this timeless present moment. We cannot *become* happy later. But we can *be* happy now—this eternal present moment here and now.

Please consider this great primordial wisdom teaching: within vast empty 'basic space' of our incessant stream of thoughts and feelings abides blissful clarity and perfect peace. Upon each breath in this luminous natural space of mind-nature abides authentic happiness. It accumulates with each mindful breath—not toward some grand future happiness mind state, but your happiness here and now. It's always already present within, this *ultimate* happiness that subsumes our *relative* conventional happiness and human flourishing. It's present even when we forget. Remembering this great truth, moment to moment, is our awakening to Happiness Itself—selfless, harmless happiness that cannot be lost. Intimate bright Presence of That! But don't *believe* it. It's utterly beyond belief. Buddha told, "*Ehi Passika: Come and see for yourself*".

Therefore, the essential question of human happiness is this: if happiness is the selfless, present natural state of your mind, how shall we accomplish a continuity of such positive mind state moments while simultaneously surrendering the worrisome negative mind states?

Clearly, the "wild horse of the mind"—our self-ego-I—requires a bit of training in order that we may *choose* positive states and surrender negative states. After all, human emotional pathology is pathology of a self. No self, no problem. How then shall we accomplish this selfless cognitive state of pure primordial Presence—Hamlet's "consummation devoutly to be wished"?

How indeed. We gently train the mind in its selfless natural peace. We learn a bit of basic mindfulness—Buddha's "mindfulness of breathing". For 15,000 years, in both the West and the East, human beings have learned to rest in this already present indwelling bright Presence, our essential wakefulness. All of the wisdom masters of the three times—past, present, future—have taught this open secret of selfless human happiness. *Thus is human happiness inherently an awareness management skill set!* Far too simple to believe—until we actually practice it.

Perhaps the most ludicrous fiction of human self-ego-I is the certainty that the cause of our ever-present dissatisfaction with our arising and appearing realities is always some external person, out-group or outer condition. Surely the causes of our suffering cannot be within us! The cause of our adversity is always outside, in someone or something else; never the result of our own egoic thought, intention and action (karma). That bad habit is known as 'primal ignorance'.

The 'true demon' of our continuous dissatisfaction with the inevitable adversity of being here in space and time is the demon of ego-created 'failure of recognition' of our indwelling *bodhicitta*—our always enlightened heart-mind love-wisdom mind that is thought,



prayer, intention and action for benefit of living beings. Understanding this primal ignorance (*avidya*, *marigpa*, *hamartia*-sin) we take full responsibility, each moment, for our present mind state, ego projections and the inexorable “karma” —both good and bad—that it bestows upon us.

We accomplish such an enlightened mind state by: 1) inner subjective mindful breathing, and 2) outer objective 'healthy skepticism' as to our well defended web of concepts and beliefs.

We cannot control the past, nor the future, nor the actions of others, nor the near continuous adversity that besets us being here in time. But we *can* control our *reactions and responses* to what happens to us, and within us now. We may, with a bit of mindfulness practice control the reactionary, impulsive 'wild horse of the mind'. We can train our obsessive 'monkey mind' to *choose* selfless, kind, compassionate thought, intention and action for the benefit of beings, which of course benefits ourselves. Thus do we take control of our karma. What we manifest is what we receive. Clearly, such mindfulness has everything to do with our happiness.

Have we not by now, at long last learned that we cannot trust the bogus, reactionary negative thoughts and ego-projections of our frantic mind? Unless it's kind compassionate action for the benefit of beings—*bodhicitta*, the primary cause of human happiness—it's likely just narcissistic ego self-stimulation. So we make ego an ally. Compassion is the antidote to hatred!

All the happiness in this world comes through  
compassionate service for the benefit of others;  
and all the suffering comes from serving oneself.

—Shantideva

Thus do the wise aspire to help human, and other beings. And, wonder of wonders, such conduct makes us happy! We accomplish our own happiness, not so much through acquiring material things and relationship benefits for ourselves, but by helping to lessen the suffering of others—family, strangers, animals—and to help to bring others to their own happiness; even those who, in our self-centered judgment, will not help themselves; or may even harm us or others. We all require love. So we learn to give it. No big news here. We already know this.

It is this aspiration, then engaged action/conduct that is the primary cause of a happy mind state. Mindful breathing makes it present to us right here and now, and motivates such selfless kind compassionate feeling, intention, then engaged action. “Mindfulness of breathing is the foundation of peace and all higher knowledge.” [Gautama Shakyamuni, the Buddha]

Even if for the moment you cannot actually help  
a sentient being in an external way, meditate on  
love and compassion until compassion is knit  
inseparably into the very fabric of your mind.

—Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

Buddha's *Mindfulness Sutra*, “The Practice of Full Awareness of Breathing” with its four “foundations of mindfulness”—body, feeling, mind, and phenomena appearing to mind—gives us capacity to “let it be as it is”, prior to self. Such self-surrender, letting go of narcissistic self-ego-I leads to “complete unsurpassed enlightenment”—liberation from suffering—harmless Happiness Itself. That is “full *bodhi*” realization of our indwelling love-wisdom mind. Begin now with simple placement of your attention/awareness upon mindful breath in the belly.

## Unity of Science and Spirit: Our Noetic Wisdom Imperative

Our titular concern: with the quantum nonlocal collapse of hitherto objective spacetime 'local reality', what remains of this our beautiful world of objectively real stuff? What now is really real? And 'who am I' being here in Albert Einstein's haunting "illusory time"? What hath relativistic quantum physics wrought upon our comfy Local Scientific Realism/Materialism?

Our venerable *quantitative* physics Standard Model of particles and forces with its two incommensurate and incomplete epistemic pillars—Quantum Field Theory and General Relativity Theory—is in process of a profound but quite "spooky" (Einstein's *spukhaft*) *qualitative* 'post-empirical', post-metaphysical Kuhnian human 'knowledge paradigm shift'.

We have of late learned to understand this inchoate scientific and cultural revolution in our habitual "global web of belief" (Quine 1969) by the lights of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Middle Way *Prasangika*, and acausal, nonlocal, nondual *Ati Dzogchen* ontology, epistemology and psychology. [Boaz 2023 *The Noetic Revolution: Toward an Integral Science of Matter, Mind and Spirit*]

At the end of the 19th century Rudyard Kipling told, "Oh East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." Now on the cusp of our 21st century global Noetic Revolution, the subjective Wisdom of the East has *ever* so gently encountered the objective Science of the West. Yet Western culture Big Science still clings to its bygone Local Realism. And that is the rub.

Does not this Promethean cultural drama point out a providential coming to meet of the subjectivity of the wisdom of Pre-modern East and the scientific objectivity of the Modern West through the emerging 21<sup>st</sup> century epistemic colloquy of ancient wisdom of centrist Buddhist Middle Way philosophy with recent nonlocal quantum physics and cosmology? Through that prior unity arises a gradual rapprochement of conceptual objective Science and perfectly subjective, all-embracing, nonconceptual, nondual Spirit Ground in whom Science arises and is instantiated. [Boaz 2023 *The Prior Unity of Science and Spirit: Toward a Noetic Quantum Ontology*]

Indeed, is not that natural confluence of our human *noetic cognitive doublet*—objective conceptual and subjective contemplative—Hamlet's very "consummation devoutly to be wished" for conscious human life? In short, this bright indwelling twofold Presence of our 'already present' ontic prior and phenomenally present *one truth unity* resolves the destructive false dichotomy of naïve pretense to a purely objective Science, and separate subjective Spirit. Objective conceptual; subjective contemplative. Our 'awareness management' requires skillful use of both of these our innate human cognitive modalities. Now the third factor is the unifying nondual wisdom gnosis clarity that embraces these two. *All human dilemma, all relative questions are wisely approached through ultimate union of all three of these our indwelling love-wisdom voices.*

A unified objective/subjective view and praxis—with its emerging Contemplative Neuroscience of Consciousness, and its post-ideological post-formal numinous soteriology—presents a propitious opening for an Integral Noetic Science that is both origin and aim of our emerging 21st century Noetic Revolution in matter, mind, and spirit. That (*tathata*) is compassionate healing wisdom—indwelling Presence of our love-wisdom mind, by whatever grand name—that abides always already at the human spiritual Heart (*hridayam, nyingpo*). That happy awakening is our Heart's desire. It's like coming home. Let it be so.

## The Christian Refuge

We all take refuge in something. Too often this refuge is hedonic and materialistic. The *engaged* Christian spiritual practitioner takes refuge in something far more powerful. There are here *three refuge sources*: 1) Jesus the Christ as *Supreme Master* who mirrors bright innermost Christ Presence (*christos*) dwelling always at the human spiritual heart; 2) *The Teaching* of the living Jesus contained in the *New Testament* canon, the *Nag Hammadi Library* Christian Gnostic texts, and the *Dead Sea Scrolls*; and 3) *The Church*, the spiritual community that includes *all* Christians, *all* the apostles, the early nondual Gnostic masters, and the holy saints.

These three refuge sources are like three precious gems. Each gem has three levels of meaning or understanding: 1) outer, exoteric, objective meaning (prayer, scripture study, concept-belief); 2) inner, esoteric, subjective meaning (mindfulness meditation, non-petitionary deep contemplative prayer); and 3) ultimate, innermost esoteric or nondual meaning—nonconceptual subject-object, matter-spirit unity. These three dimensions of meaning are in no way separate. Indeed, they are a prior and always present knowing-feeling heart mind unity.

'Taking Refuge in the Three Gems'—body, voice and mind of the Christ—taps the inner peace and fearless wisdom energy that nourishes, holds and protects the engaged practitioner on this joyous, difficult path. Taking refuge stabilizes our understanding which motivates the courage and commitment to this path that the Master has asked each one of us to engage. Such an understanding is called the *View*. A penetrating understanding of the View, with the engaged practice of the *Path* yields the *Result/Fruition* that is great peace of liberation from adventitious ignorance and suffering. That primordial wisdom is ultimate Happiness Itself (*beatitudo*, *paramananda*), the Great Love that unifies the worlds, naturally expressed as human love—kind, compassionate intention and engaged action/conduct for benefit of human and animal beings.

That awakened happiness lies not in the future. We cannot *become* happy later; we can only *be* happy now. The past is gone, but a present memory. The future has not yet arisen, but a present anticipation. Everything happens in this present moment now. Therefore, our *goal* cannot be some heavenly future happiness state. Our goal is this mindful loving-kindness practice of the Path itself, this present moment here and now. Thus do we “make the goal the path”. Thus do we awaken now—breath by mindful breath—to our already present innermost Christ Nature—indwelling luminous Christ Presence (*christos*) that abides within each human form. It arises upon this contemplative mindful breath in the body. Deep contemplative prayer.

So we assiduously *practice* such 'awareness management'—being mindfully present to the holy spirit (*pneuma*) breath as it rises and falls in this lovely rare gift of our human body. "Now is the time to enter in to it." "Awaken thou that sleep, and Christ shall shine within thee." "That which you seek is already present..." "The Kingdom of God is within you now."

Our happy, selfless indwelling Christ Nature—luminous *christos*, divine Presence of nondual God the Primordial Father, always present—already knows this great inner truth. So we enter in this wondrous love-wisdom awareness, radiant mind-stream of Jesus the Christ with each conscious breath—*beyond belief*. That is after all, who we actually are, our 'supreme identity'—without a single exception. In *That* we take refuge. It's like coming home. Let it be so.

## The Buddhist Refuge

Human beings all take refuge in something. Often such refuge is hedonic and materialistic. The *engaged* Buddhist practitioner takes refuge in something far more powerful. The Buddhist Three Refuge Sources are the precious Three Jewels: 1) the living Guru as The Buddha; 2) The Dharma, teaching of the Buddha; 3) the Sangha, lovely crucible of the spiritual community that includes the luminous *rigzin sangha*, the *vidyadhara* lineage of all the buddhas and mahasiddhas of all the Buddhist vehicles of the three times—past, present, future.

These precious Three Jewels have four refuges, each with its own understanding or meaning dimension: 1) an exoteric “outer” refuge (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha); 2) an esoteric “inner” refuge (The Three Roots); 3) a “secret refuge” (*nadi, prana, bindu*); and 4) an “innermost secret” nondual refuge (Essence/OM/*Dharmakaya*, Nature/AH/*Sambhogakaya*, Energy-compassion/HUM/*Nirmanakaya*)—all together *Svabhavakaya*, the *Trikaya* of the Base. These four refuges are in no way separate, but comprise a prior and present blissful knowing/feeling unity.

Taking refuge generates the *la*/energy that nourishes and protects the practitioner on this joyous difficult spirit path. That stabilizes understanding, or *The View*, which then motivates the commitment to *The Path* (The Meditation), resulting in *The Action/Conduct* that bears *The Fruit* of enlightenment, compassionate ultimate harmless Happiness Itself (*mahasuka, paramananda*).

Such clarity, bliss, and happiness lies not in a glorious future mind state. Nor does it exist in the past. Past and future are 'gone beyond'. *Parasamgate*. What remains? *Bodhi Svaha*: present nondual wisdom. So we cannot *become* happy in the future; we can only *be* happy now. Thus do we 'make the goal the path'. Our selfless, indwelling, awake buddha mind already knows this. And *That (tathata)* is who we actually are, our 'supreme identity'—without a single exception.

On the accord of His Holiness Dalai Lama, all states of consciousness—negative or positive—indeed all phenomena are pervaded by luminous clear light love-wisdom of emptiness, 'basic space' of *dharmakaya*, innermost “wish fulfilling jewel”, self-reflexive primordial awareness wisdom (gnosis/*jnana/yeshe*) that is our 'supreme source' of reality being itself. From emptiness this all arises, abides, and into emptiness it all returns, with no essential separation. The dynamic intrinsic awareness love-wisdom (*gzhi rigpa*) Presence (*vidya*) of that primordial Ground of Being Itself is always present buddha heart-mind—our very Buddha Nature of Mind.

The two limbs of the Buddha's teaching [love and wisdom] have this one purpose—to lead us to the nondual primordial wisdom—buddha mind. This love and wisdom participates in and pervades all views and paths for one who is capable of accessing it.

—Adzom Paylo Rinpoche

Let us then remember, moment to moment, the great truth that this always already present indwelling love-wisdom Presence is the very heart essence of the Buddhist Refuge, our 'supreme identity' arising upon each mindful breath. Who am I? *Tat Tvam Asi!* That I Am! In that authentic truth we take refuge. It's like coming home. Now that you know, arise and do some good. Mindfulness in action. That is the open secret of our human happiness. Let it be so.

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