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ADVAITA VEDANTA:
THE SUPREME SOURCE*
(Draft 2010)

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The Sanatana Dharma: The Vedas, Upanishads and Vedanta

What is that by being known, everything is known?
-Mundaka Upanishad

The *Upanishads* and their commentaries are the conclusion of the ancient *Vedas* and form the basis of *Vedanta* (*Veda Anta*, the pinnacle of the *Vedas*) religion and philosophy. This Vedic Tradition represents the immense contribution of the subtle Indian mind to the great Primordial Wisdom Tradition of humankind. This Primordial Awareness Wisdom teaching first arose in the ancient *Vedas* (from 1500 BCE). It is present at the highest nondual levels of our major traditions—Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Greek and Egyptian mystery religions.

The canonical *corpus* of *Vedanta* is comprised of the three *Prasthanas* or the *Prasthanatrava*, the “threefold source” of *Vedanta*: the *Upanishads*, the *Vedanta Sutra* (*Brahma Sutra*) and the *Bhagavad Gita*, which is the sixth book of the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. The conclusion of the ancient *Vedas* is revealed in the esoteric teaching of the *Upanishads* (600-400 BCE). The *Vedanta Sutra* (300 BCE) contains 555 sutras which explicate the *Upanishads*. Authorship of this vital text is attributed to Vyasa-Badarayana, the great Indian sage and compiler of the *Vedas*. The three primary commentators on these terse and difficult *sutras* developed the three schools or views of *Vedanta*. They are *Advaita Vedanta* (nondual *Vedanta*) whose primary commentator is Shankara (788-820); *Vishishtadvaita Vedanta* (qualified nondual *Vedanta*, Ramanuja, 11th century); and *Dvaita Vedanta* (dualistic *Vedanta*, Madhva, 1197-1276).

The *Upanishads* are the final and ultimate revealed scriptures (*shruti*) of the *Vedas*. All Hindu religions accept the authority of the *Vedas*. Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism do not. The primordial teaching of the *Vedas* appears in four collections or parts, each part evolving various schools (*shakha*): The *Rigveda* (poetry); the *Samaveda* (song); the *Yajurveda* (sacrificial rites) and *Atharvaveda* (the *Veda* of the great *rishi* Atharvan). The numinous *Vedic* teaching arose from the supreme, nondual (non-conceptual, no subject/object separation) primordial source of all phenomena as revealed to the ancient *rishis* (sages) through their liberation/enlightenment *samadhi/moksha*, thus they are referred to as *shruti* (revealed sacred sound), and are held to be of non-human, divine origin (*apauruseya*). *Vedanta* then is based, not on the teaching of a founder as is exoteric-conventional Buddhism and Christianity, but on the twelve principal or essential *Upanishads* as revealed in the above four parts of the *Vedas*, and on the primary commentaries on the *Vedanta* (*Brahma*) *Sutra*. The Twelve Principle *Upanishads* are: *Aitareya* and *Kuashitaki Upanishad* (*Rigveda*); *Chandogya* and *Kena Upanishad* (*Samaveda*); *Taittiriya*, *Katha*, *Shvetashvatara*, *Brihadaranyaka* and *Isha Upanishad* (*Yajurveda*); *Prashna*, *Mundaka* and *Mandukya Upanishad* (*Atharvaveda*).

Sanatana Dharma, The Hindu Religious Complex and Brahman: From the primordial teaching of the truths of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* came not only *Vedanta*, but the entire *Sanatana Dharma*, the “eternal religion” of Hinduism based in this revealed *shruti* of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. From this has sprung the *puranas*, the orthodox devotional scriptures of Brahmanism, Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism (*Tantrism*), that are the major religious traditions of Hinduism. The Vedic-Hindu tradition has in turn, been influenced by non-Hindu traditions, especially Buddhism (Buddha is seen as a Hindu *avatar*), but also Islam, Jainism, Sikhism and Christianity.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the “philosophical gospel” of Hinduism, Lord Krishna instructs his friend and devotee, Arjuna in the secret yogas of the path to the realization of the Ultimate Reality. These yogic disciplines comprise the spiritual practice of the *shad-darshana*, the views of the six orthodox Hindu philosophical schools: *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshika*, *Samkhya*, *Yoga* (especially the *Raja Yoga* of Patanjali), *Mimamsa* and *Vedanta*. The yogic practices are: *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Jnana Yoga* and *Raja Yoga* (respectively, selfless activity, devotion, discriminating wisdom and meditation). However, *yogic* (union) practice predates even the ancient *Vedas* with pre-historical pictorial evidence of *yogic asanas* (meditative postures) from the Indus Valley circa 2500 BCE.

The primary teaching of the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and *Vedanta* is the relationship of the essential divine *Atman*-Self of each individual to Brahman, the divine Absolute, the supreme source of everything. The nondual view, which is the view of Shankara’s *Advaita Vedanta*, but is also found in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, is that the supreme *Atman*-Self that we are, and Brahman, the divine source of the Self are identical. There is no essential separation. Henceforth, we shall consider only this nondual *Advaita Vedanta* view. This great view of nondual Ultimate Reality Itself and its “spiritual” realization by the yogi – aspirant arose as Hindu dialectical exegesis in a historical context within Hindu (*Nyaya*, *Samkhya*) and non-Hindu (*Buddhism*) philosophical systems. Thus, we will here emphasize ontological and epistemological analysis of Shankara’s scriptural exegesis, neglecting—with the notable exception of Ramana Maharshi—post-Shankara contributions to the great teaching. Shankara’s *Advaita Vedanta* view is generally considered definitive, and the *Viveka Chudamani* (Crest Jewel of Liberation) is his primary work.

Advaita (*advaya*, Skt.) means nondual. All dualities — subject/object, body/mind, mind/matter, matter/spirit, appearance/reality, existence/non-existence, finite/infinite are the result of ignorance (*avidya*). The *vidya*, (Tib. *rigpa*) of pure, naked awareness, the direct seeing of *Chan/Zen* (*kensho/satori*) reveals the prior, primordial unity and complementarity of all of these opposites. For those with eyes to see (*vidya*), Absolute Brahman is the transcendent yet immanent prior unity of the dualistic spacetime relative-conventional reality of appearance, with this nondual Absolute Reality. Just so, this is the unity of the finite and the infinite that transcends yet embraces it. As Brahman is the primordial sourceground or matrix base of all appearing phenomenal

reality, there cannot exist an **actual** duality or separation of the perceiving subject from Brahman, the ultimate subjectivity of the source. Yet, there is *Maya*, the **apparent** duality of “real” arising forms, that is, how they appear, and how they actually are. The essential nature of the individual then, is the perfectly divine, ultimately subjective *Atman*-Self that is identical to Brahman whose ultimate realization in human beings is *moksha*, liberation from the *samsara* of ignorance (*avidya*) that is the dwelling of the *jiva* (embodied ego) in *Maya* the relative-conventional phenomenal world of appearances (p.208).

Brahman and the Centrist View of Our Nondual Primordial Wisdom Tradition

Hegel stated correctly that all philosophical theories are reducible to some brand of idealism. From the view of relative-conventional truth, whether one examines the relationship between body and mind, mind and matter, matter and spirit, appearance and reality, the finite and the infinite, the goal of any conceptual, philosophical or comparative religious quest is the depth, the very source or ground, the base of the surface appearances. What we want is some permanent, ideal essence or Ultimate Reality beneath or beyond or prior to the arising phenomenal appearances. What is always infinite, eternal and changeless? What is *That* that remains as the very matrix of spacetime reality, at the root of attention, prior to our perceptual and conceptual seeking strategies. What is it that is always here, since before the very beginning? Even pure mechanistic materialism (physicalism) with its naive objectivist-realist denial of idealism is a gross form of idealism for it reduces all of appearing physical and mental reality to an **abstract idea** of concrete, purely physical substance. Material reality can be known only through sensation, perception and ideas, to wit, the mind. Who is it, one may ask, to whom, or in whom particular objective appearances of this “purely physical substance” appear? “In Whom does this all arise?” Material phenomena appear to a sensory, mental consciousness. Consciousness is necessarily prior. This is epistemological idealism.

In any case, at the root of our nondual Primordial Wisdom Tradition lies some brand of idealism, even—as in Buddhist *Madhyamaka* and *Advaita Vedanta*—when an objectively real relative-conventional reality is granted. **All of the diversity of our Great Tradition arises from the idea of a prior and fundamental transcendental unity or sourceground, or matrix base, by whatever name, that transcends yet embraces objectively appearing, physical reality.** According to this Great Wisdom Tradition, the essential nature of mind, the ultimate source of the relative mind through which phenomenal appearance arises is an utterly ineffable nondual metaphysical unity, an unbroken whole. (Nondual connotes no essential separation of subject and object, spirit and matter, appearance and Reality, etc.) It is this source that is the supreme identity of all beings and the basis of all reality, whether it is called

Eleutherios, Aperion, Brahman, Purusha, Dharmakaya, Tao, Samantabhadra, the immortal Father (Abba), or Ein Sof. The highest or most subtle nondual view of *Vedanta, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity*, indeed each of the traditions of our Great Wisdom Tradition share this same nondual Supreme Source or Absolute—godhead by whatever name—that abides, always present in sentient beings. The close similarity of Shankara’s conventionally “realistic” yet nondual idealism to the dialectical view of the *Mahayana’s Madhyamaka*, the Middle Way *Prasangika*, and the Vajrayana’s nondual Essence *Mahamudra* and *Dzogchen* further demonstrates this centrist idealist view of our nondual Primordial Wisdom Tradition. What makes these idealist views centrist? It is that they include a relative-conventional realism, an ontological middle way between eternalist monistic absolute realism (eg. scientific materialism) and nihilist monistic absolute idealism (eg. The denial of physical reality). However, we must remember that all-embracing Ultimate Spirit, infinite *cosmic Reality Itself*—by whatever name—transcends yet embraces all views and all realities. This reality is both origin and aim of all arising existence, and of all our seeking strategies. And, ultimately it utterly transcends any possible conceptual idea of it.

In the *Rigveda*, the oldest of the *Vedas* (circa 1500 to 1200 BCE) arises the first of humanity’s historical teachings on this Absolute nondual Supreme Source of Reality. Thus in the *Aitareya Upanishad*, according to Shankara, Brahman is the Supreme Source of what is when all subject-object dualism is transcended. Brahman is both the divine source or Base of what is, and as the *Atman*, the in-dwelling immediate presence (*vidya*) of that source in manifested reality and in the human bodymind, always at the spiritual heart (*hridayam*) of self-conscious beings. For Vedanta, the initial nondual realization of this great truth is *nirvikalpa samadhi*, then ultimately the seventh life stage *sahaj Samadhi* of the *mahasiddha*. Integration and actualization of this great realization into the yogi’s lifeworld is *moksha*, liberation from the forgetfulness and ignorance that is *avidya-Maya*, and always expressed as kindness and compassion (*ahimsa*).

There is a self-existent Reality that is the base of our awareness of our ego-I . . . that Reality is the primordial witness (*saksin*) that is our supreme self . . . liberated, luminous Spirit Itself . . . May this single statement transmit the secret essence of a thousand teachings: Brahman alone is real; the world is only appearance; the *Atman-Self* is always Brahman.

Shankara (1947)

Satchitananda

Truth is one; many are its names.

- *Rigveda*

For the spacetime bound ego (*jiva*) the form of nondual Brahman is *Satchitananda* (*sat/being, chit/consciousness, ananda/bliss*). *Satchitananda* is the relative-conventional name-form (*namarupa*) understanding of *That* that is utterly ineffable to the egoic, discursive concept-mind. Brahman is pure Being Itself (*Sat*), without qualities or attributes, including the attribute of being without attributes. Brahman is the prior unity of awareness-experience with the nondual source, the unbounded whole in whom it all arises. Consciousness (*chit*) is the pure primordial awareness that arises as light energy-motion forms—qualities and attributes—and animates individual awareness in sentient beings, including self-awareness in self-conscious beings. *Chit* is the potential of the consciousness or awareness of the changeless witness (*saksin*) presence, *Atman, Purusha*, our perfect, luminous, always present *vidya-rigpa* presence of nondual spirit that is Primordial Consciousness-Being Itself. This divine, unconditioned, non-egoic witness views all arising physical, emotional, and mental states as but the non-intentional play (*lila*) of our perfectly subjective source-condition, the Supreme Source that is but the random play of Brahman. From the relative view, the path of the yogi and yogini is the choice to recognize and enter into the *Atman* witness presence. Bliss (*ananda*) is the ecstatic affective or emotive component (*bhakti*) of such divine enlightenment experience (initial *moksha*). Is Brahman this pure ecstatic experience of *Satchitananda*? No. Brahman is not an experience. “There is no better description of Brahman than this—it is *neti, neti*; not this, not this”; “I am not this, I am not that” (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad II*). Thus any and all relative, conditional, conceptual attributes and qualities of Brahman are limitations (*upadhi*) or projections (*vikshepa*) on Brahman who abides prior to all of these conditional limiting attributes, beyond all conceptual predicates, imputations and designations.

To apply a predicate (quality, attribute) to something is to impose a limitation upon it; for, logically, something is being excluded from the subject.

Eliot Deutsch (1969)

The cognitive, conceptual operations involved in naming necessarily separate us from that “other” named, thereby limiting or subtracting from it. And Brahman is that absolutely perfectly subjective limitless Being, without attributes, without an “other,” in whom everything arises, dwells and passes away. “It is that who pervades all.” And that is our actual identity. We are not separate from That. *Tat tvam asi*. “That thou art.”

The ego or separate soul self is a concept. God, the world, the mind, desires, action, sorrow and all other things are all concepts. . . There is nothing whatsoever except concepts . . . The mind is unreal, a magic show, absolutely non-existent . . . Abiding without concepts is the undifferentiated state . . .the Reality of the Supreme Absolute Being.

Sri Ramana Maharshi (1970)

Brahman, Atman and the Four Views

Atman is subtler than the subtlest and cannot be known through thought.

-*Katha Upanishad*

We have seen that the essential nature of the mind of the individual egoic self is that divine presence of the *Atman*-Self—beyond the **concept** of *Atman-Brahman*—that lives awake, although cloaked by *Maya*, and in a relationship of identity to Brahman, nondual Absolute Reality Itself. Remember that in the “*neti neti*” consideration we found that the *Atman*-Self was “not this, not that.” Indeed it is not a permanent ego or soul “self” at all. It is empty and devoid of any quality, attribute or self-nature, a “selfless Self.” What then is the nature of this primordial relationship of identity of *Atman*-Brahman?

We have surveyed the four views or responses to this divine presence—outer exoteric, inner esoteric, secret greater esoteric, and innermost secret nondual—whether we call the presence *Atman*, *vidya*, *rigpa*, *logos*, *te*, *saksin* or *shekhina*. During the first three life stages (Appendix A) the view is that of material acquisition and exoteric conventional religious concept and belief. But for those who enter the spiritual path, the obstructed personality dimensions begin to open to the light (*vidya*) of their always present *Atman*-presence. This is the beginning of the inner or “lesser esoteric view.” As insight and growth continue, the student aspirant accomplishes, then demonstrates the “secret” or “greater esoteric,” then “innermost secret” or nondual view that is the “wisdom of kindness,” compassionate lifeworld conduct/behavior.

In the relative-conventional, exoteric view or response, and in the lesser esoteric response, the soul or *Atman* presence is seen to be within, yet separate from the objective, egoic bodymind (*ahamkara*). Thus the view is dualistic. Here the soul is seen as independent, survives the bodymind, and may even transmigrate. Further, Brahman, the Absolute is seen to live within the soul or *Atman* of the bodymind. The nondual, greater esoteric view however, is the reverse. Here the bodymind and the *Atman*-self or soul presence at the spiritual heart is understood to arise from and continuously dwell in Brahman who transcends, yet always embraces it. It’s not, “Brahman is in me.” It’s “I am Brahman” (*Kham Brahm*). *Atman* and *Brahman* are the same. There is no essential separation, no separate self. Thus the view is nondual.

Whatever the path—material or spiritual—the dualistic lesser views evolve gradualist egoic seeking strategies for some future fulfillment and happiness of the conditional ego-I of the bodymind, and for avoidance of the discomfort and suffering that result from these strategies. Alas, we then become the apologists and advocates of these present lifestage developmental limits. Here the view is dualistic and problem centered, seeking an antidote, seeking reunion, always seeking something. We exhaust our brief lives justifying our seeking strategies for the happiness that is already here, abiding within at the spiritual heart (*hridayam*). The freedom centered nondual view however, realizes that seeking happiness to relive suffering is a form of suffering. “You cannot **become** happy; you can only **be** happy” (Adi Da Samraj). We cannot **become** God. There is **only** God. There is no ontological reunion or change in essence upon the realization that “I am Brahman,” because there was never a separation. This is the great nondual, non-conceptual realization.

Thus, in the “innermost secret” nondual view of *Advaita Vedanta*, there is no soul-self or “higher self” or *Atman* presence existing within, the individual bodymind. Rather, the bodymind, and the *Atman* soul-self, and indeed all of phenomenal reality is in, or is a manifestation or modification of nondual, perfectly subjective Absolute Spirit, Brahman, the Supreme Source. “If the view is dualistic, there can be no enlightenment.” Therefore, regarding the relative-conventional dualism of these two apparent entities, our *Atman* presence and sublime Brahman, there is no separation. No difference. *Atman* is the indwelling spiritual awareness of presence of the absolute subjectivity that is nondual Brahman. *Atman* and Brahman are an ontologically interdependent prior unity. The relationship of *Atman* to Brahman is that of identity.

Being Here: The Four Bodies of Spirit, The Four Faces of God

Atman, smaller than small, greater than great is hidden in the hearts of all living beings.

- *Katha Upanishad*

We have seen that Brahman is the nondual, divine, unqualified, unconditioned Absolute Reality Itself that transcends yet enfolds, pervades and embraces all of its relative conditional, spacetime emanations or manifestations. And this unqualified Absolute Reality is known to Shankara as *Nirguna* Brahman. Its arising spacetime manifestations - the dualistic world of subject and object - are *Saguna* Brahman, *Satchitananda*, Brahman with qualities or attributes. *Om* is the sign of *Nirguna* Brahman. And *Om* is the sign and support of *Saguna* Brahman (p.206). Eliot Deutsch points out that the epithet “nondual” is preferred to “monistic” to describe the ultimate subjectivity of Shankara’s Brahman, the Absolute, for monism usually refers to a unity or “oneness” of the cosmos of objectively appearing reality, but not beyond

to the *kosmos* of the great expanse of perfectly subjective ultimate reality that transcends and includes mere physical spacetime cosmos. Monism requires multiplicity, whole and parts. *Advaita Vedanta* reveals the ultimate non-existence of all dimensions – physical objective, spiritual subjective – of everything that arises from the primordial source, including the source itself (Deutsch, 1969).

Saguna Brahman is the Great Love, the “Lord of Love,” the “Refuge of Love,” our “Father in *Brahmaloka*” (heaven) who guides us to “the other side of *Maya*” (*avidya*-ignorance, *hamartia*-sin). This divine expression or modification of innermost secret Absolute Brahman has been, and always will be worshipped throughout relative earthtime by human beings as Ishvara, Brahma, Shiva, Shakti, Allah, Yahweh, *Abba* The Father, and all of the many names and forms of the myriad creator- sustainer-destroyer Gods worshipped by all of the self-conscious beings, whether physical, mental or causal, in all of the star systems throughout the infinite *kosmos*. **The divine ground or base of these dualistic gods is nondual Brahman—by whatever name—that pervades and embraces all things and all sentient beings, everywhere, the very unseparate, heart essence-presence of them, whether or not they are aware of it. It is this Brahman—the organizing, harmonizing, and unifying power of the Great Love—that binds together the worlds. And it is our intrinsic, indwelling, Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*) that recognizes, then realizes this great truth.**

Nondual *Nirguna* Brahman, perfectly subjective Primordial Awareness Itself manifests into the objective empirical world of becoming as the three conditional *upadhis*, the limits or dimensions or states that are the exoteric **Gross Body** (waking state), the esoteric **Subtle Body** (dream state) and the greater esoteric secret **Causal Body** (deep sleep state). *Turiya*, the nondual innermost secret and unobstructed fourth state is primordial absolute subjectivity, Ultimate Spirit, the nondual always present *Atman* presence that is identical to Brahman. That presence is the supreme identity of each individual. *Atman*-Brahman, as manifest in the three *upadis* is given three functional names. As the **Gross Body** it functions as *Virat*. As the **Subtle Body** it functions as *Prajapati* or *Hiranyagarbha*. As the **Causal Body** it functions as *Prana* or *Sutratman* (“thread-self”) the subtle threads of *Turiya* the Great Love that is Brahman, in whom arises all relative-conventional spacetime reality. This great process—these four faces of God—are the interdependent dialectic of the “Two Truths” – Absolute and Relative—of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition (App. A).

The *Atman* is that by which the universe is pervaded, but which nothing pervades. . .
The wise man understands that the essence of Brahman and of *Atman* is Pure
Consciousness, and who realizes their absolute identity.

Shankara (Johnston 1946)

The light of that great being is the actual identity of each individual existence, each sentient being. *Tat tvam ami*—That I am—without a single exception.

Shankara's Advaita Vedanta

The *Purusha*, the inner Self, dwells always at the Heart. That One is the Bright, the luminous immortal Self.

Katha Upanishad

Shankara's teaching on the *Upanishads*, *Vedanta (Brahma) Sutra* and *Bhagavad Gita* is the very nondual essence of *Vedanta*, and a sublime contribution to the world's spiritual literature, and to our nondual Great Wisdom Tradition teaching. Shankara (788-820) was the supreme adept-realizer of the Hindu *Upanishadic* tradition. In his thirty two years this great master and scholar re-established the authority of the *Vedas* against the prevailing Buddhist ideology of the time.

For Shankara's *Advaita Vedanta* the supreme truth of the three Hindu canons (the *Upanishads*, *Vedanta Sutra* and *Bhagavad Gita*) is the nondual nature of Brahman, Absolute Spirit that is Reality Itself. For the *Advaita Vedanta* of Shankara, Brahman is the nondual primordial awareness that is Absolute or Ultimate Consciousness Being Itself, "One, without a second," without limit, empty of all predicates, attributes and qualities, beyond concept and belief, or any subject-object dualism whatsoever. As we have seen, Shankara refers to this prior unity as *Nirguna* Brahman, the Absolute. *Satchitananda* however, is usually understood as *Saguna* Brahman, Brahman with relative qualities, the Great Love that is being (*sat*), consciousness (*chit*) and bliss (*ananda*). Ishvara (usually as the *Trimurti*) the primordial creator-God or creative principle of Brahman is also *Saguna* Brahman, the spacetime limited creator God, the cause of the conditional state of *ananda*/bliss and the object of the spiritual devotion of the devotee. *Nirguna* Brahman is pure nondual Being Itself; *Saguna* Brahman is pure Being in the various states and stages of becoming in spacetime reality. These two Brahman are not separate entities. These two aspects of the one great Reality, are the ontologically prior union of the dualism of being and becoming, of emptiness and form, of the Two Truths that are one absolute reality with its arising, unfolding relative phenomenal appearances. "The One is. The One is not" (Plato, *Parmenides*).

For Shankara then, *Nirguna* Brahman is the non-experiential, non-conceptual, uncreated nondual Base in whom arises the always present enlightened, pure luminous witness presence, the bright *vidya* of the *Atman*-Self that is only Brahman abiding at the heart of all beings. *Saguna* Brahman is the yogi's great bliss, *bhakti*, the joyous experiential state of devotion and compassion to God/Ishvara. If *Saguna* Brahman is the bliss of conditional *savikalpa samadhi*, then *Nirguna* Brahman is the pure, unelaborated, unconditional Primordial Awareness Itself. This pristine non-conceptual, nondual awareness realization of the *vidya-Atman* presence of that Absolute Reality is *nirvikalpa Samadhi*. Then, finally *sahaj samadhi*, *paravidya*, the yogi's perfect direct realization, the nondual Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*jnana/gnosis*) that 'I am Brahman,' *Tat tvam ami*, That I am! This state is the ontologically prior,

essential unity of the nondual supreme source and its bright *vidya* presence in beings, and Brahman is its ground. As *savikalpa*, *nirvikalpa* and *sahaj samadhi* is stabilized in the lifeworld through the spiritual path of the continuous practice of *jnana* yoga and the other yogas, the ignorance (*avidya*) that binds us to the wheel of *samsara* is replaced with *vidya*, the enlightenment of liberation from this suffering of *karma*, then the permanent realization — *moksha* (*mukta*) — expressed as compassionate conduct in the everyday lifeworld. *Moksha* liberation is the transcendental consciousness of *turiya*, the nondual “fourth state” (after waking, dreaming and deep sleep states) that is the prior primordial unity of *Nirguna* Brahman and *Saguna* Brahman.

Kham Brahm, The Bright

Brahman is the Self, Brahman is the world. “All is Brahman... the Self is Brahman... I am Brahman... Brahman is the world.” Such piths from the *Upanishads* reveal the vital relationship between Brahman, the nondual monadic Absolute Reality, and the dualistic relative-conventional reality of the phenomenal world arising therein, including sensing, perceiving, thinking beings to ponder it all.

Truly, Thou art that, the Self that is nondual Brahman . . . the truth apart from which nothing is . . . thou art that because this whole world emanates from Brahman, which alone is, and is Brahman Itself. . . It can be comprehended only by the eye of wisdom and the experienced heart of the yogi. . . It is the substratum of the illusory world (*Maya*, *avidya*, *vikshepa*) that seems to be superimposed on it. It is the cause of the emanation, preservation, and re-absorption of the world. It is the supreme cause, whole, itself has no causes; all the worlds of name and form are its effects, yet it is distinct from cause and effect. It is neither existence nor non-existence . . . It is without attributes . . . The gross mind cannot reach it. It can be experienced only through *nirvikalpa samadhi*. It is Being-Knowledge- Bliss. It is single in essence . . . That Brahman which is all this, “That thou art” (*Tat tvam asi*).

- Sri Ramana Maharshi (1970)

For Shankara, Brahman, as the utterly unconditional Absolute, is the essence or *Atman*-Self at the spiritual heart of all sentient beings. Moreover, this self-nature of all beings, indeed all phenomenal existence arises as and is one with, or identical to Brahman. The ultimate “goal” of the path of human existence is the removal of the veil of ignorance (*avidya*, *Maya*) and the recognition (*paravidya*, *gnosis*) by the individual of this primordial relationship of identity with Brahman. From this realization one attains liberation (*moksha*) from the cycle of suffering, death and rebirth. This realization that our actual identity — our supreme identity — is Brahman is the fruition

of our heart's desire. This realization is *paramananda* (*Buddhist mahasuka*) ultimate "Happiness Itself."

Beneath the dualism and the theism of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* then, at the very root of attention, we find an absolute, nondual spiritual unity of matter and spirit that was to be developed by Adi Shankara into a rigorous, non-objective yet conventionally realistic, absolute nondual monistic transcendental idealism. Although there are dualistic, pantheistic and theistic trends in the *Vedas*, *Advaita Vedanta* cannot be said to be theistic for the highest God Ishvara, with its *Trimurti*, the one whole with three forms—Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma—arises within, and is ontologically identical to the unconditional monadic nondual Absolute, beyond all relative experience, concept and belief. Shankara's nondual *Advaita Vedanta* view of the *Upanishads* was criticized, unconvincingly, by Ramanuja (Qualified Nondual *Vedanta*, and Madhva (Dualistic *Vedanta*) for this reason. It is exceedingly difficult for the conventional exoteric and esoteric religious consciousness to transcend theistic concept and belief to the utterly ineffable supreme nondual Base/source in whom this all arises. It is far easier to remain in our uncomfortable comfort zones of conceptual belief in a separate theistic creator God.

Advaita Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism

The nature of mind is the unity of awareness and emptiness.

- Shakyamuni Buddha (*Prajnaparamita Sutra*)

Gautama Shakyamuni (c.566-486 BCE), the historical Buddha was acquainted with the theistic dualism of various *Vedic* and *Upanishadic* orthodox schools, and as Buddhism developed in India the apparent creator monotheism of the *Upanishads* with its exoteric, dualistic presumption of a permanent yet separate self *Atman* was rejected. (Dualistic theism may be a step toward nondual understanding.) However, the *Vedic/Upanishadic* doctrines of *Maya*, cause and effect *karma*, and *vidya-moksha* liberation from the suffering of *karma* were integrated into *Hinayana* and later *Mahayana* and *Vajrayana* Buddhism. Yet, from the innermost secret nondual view of Shankara's *Advaita Vedanta* there is no contradiction in the *Atman-Self* doctrine and the Buddhist doctrine of *anatman* or no-self, for when the *neti, neti* (not this, not this) *vichara* consideration (p.209) is carried to its ultimate conclusion, the ostensibly permanent and eternal incarnating *Atman-Self* that is Brahman of the *Upanishads*, is ontologically identical to the "emptiness of self" (*anatman*) of the *Madhyamaka Prasangika* (*Rangtong*), the great centrist view of *Mahayana* Buddhism. **That is, the *Atman-Self* is not, at its nondual root, an absolute, eternal, permanently existent substrate or self-entity at all, for it is identical to Nirguna Brahman which is "empty of all qualities and attributes," including the attribute of self-existence.** The Self that is *Atman-Brahman* is rather, the timeless, spaceless nondual Absolute or Ultimate

Reality. This Reality is eternal, not as temporal duration, but as the timeless moment now. It is permanent, not as existing forever in space, but as changeless and spaceless. However, to exoteric, conventional dualistic understanding, the incarnated Soul-Self *Atman* that is Brahman is a separate, permanently existing eternal entity. Thus the Buddhist criticism that nondual *Vedanta* is eternalist. However, to the nondual mind of enlightenment—the view of Ultimate Truth—the egoic *jivatma* self is always changing and impermanent, while the *Atman*-Self is unseparate from, identical to, and arises within the monadic, changeless, timeless, spaceless Nirguna Brahman, the nondual Ultimate Supreme Source. And, this is analogous to *Mahayana shunyata*/emptiness. Again, the *Atman*-Self that is Brahman is empty of all predicates, including inherent existence. The Truth—emptiness, Dharmakaya, etc. —is said to be empty in essence, luminous clarity in its nature, and compassionate in its energy expression. This could be said of Nirguna Brahman as well. **Therefore, the Buddhist criticism targets only the outer exoteric, theistic, dualistic Hindu view of Brahman, and not the more subtle nondual view of *Advaita Vedanta*.**

The Emptiness of Emptiness. Do the absolutes of *shunyata*/emptiness and Nirguna Brahman actually exist? Are they real? Are they existing entities? Yes and no. They do exist conventionally, nominally, conceptually. But they cannot be found under ultimate contemplative analysis, as Absolute Truth. They exist as “relative valid cognition” (*shadma*), but not as “ultimate valid cognition” (*pramana*). Thus they have no ultimate, permanent essence, no essential self-nature. Therefore, they are not ultimately, essentially intrinsically real. They are not some kind of absolute core, substrate, or creator of arising forms. The Buddhist Middle Way Consequence School (*Madhyamaka Prasangika*) refers to this truth of emptiness as the “emptiness of emptiness.” Vedantists speak of nondual Brahman as “empty of all qualities and attributes.” Thus *Shunyata* and Nirguna Brahman share the same nondual ontological status. “Truth is One, many are its names” (*Rig Veda*).

Some may charge that this reduction and identification of the “many names” of the great nondual Truth of Absolute Spirit, primordial awareness itself, especially the ontological identity of *Advaita Vedanta*’s nondual Brahman and *Madhyamaka*’s *shunyata*/emptiness constitutes the theoretical placement of “a yak’s head upon a sheep’s body” (or vice-versa). As seen above, the Buddhist criticism seems to reduce to a “straw man” argument. In any case, clearly, there are important relative conventional differences between the great traditions. However, the *rime* (lit. unbiased) ecumenical movement of twenty first century Buddhism and the emerging non-sectarian *rapprochement* of religion, science and culture of the unfolding New Reformation require that the relative truths of the exoteric- conventional biases of the old paradigm be surrendered to this re-emergence of the primordial nondual view, the view of the absolute or ultimate truth of the great Primordial Wisdom Tradition of humankind. These relative truths have been debated and fought over by exoteric and esoteric religion since we evolved a cortex and a sword. Indeed, that there is any greater truth

than the metaphysical presumptions of scientific materialism – the cult of scientism - is still denied by the fundamentalist values of the mind states of the first three life stages (Chap I and Appendix A). Now, at the dawn of this New Reformation of Synthesis, we are called to surrender our identity in these dualistic conceptual and belief systems of the past, while yet participating fully in our individual and thereby collective liberation through the very specific *sadhana*—view and practice—of a particular tradition within this Great Wisdom Tradition.

Appearance and Reality: *Advaita Vedanta* Ontology

“Thou art that” because this whole world emanates from Brahman, which alone is . . . It is the supreme cause. . . all the worlds of name and form are its effects.

- Sri Ramana Maharshi (1970)

Metaphysics, literally “beyond physics,” is concerned to discover, to know, and to realize the ultimate nature of what is, the essential nature and source of all of this becoming in Being Itself. Thus metaphysics involves ontology, knowing the ultimate nature or ground of all appearing reality, Reality Itself. Metaphysics, as the “science of Being as such,” attempts to reveal and to understand this Ultimate Reality through its triune nature as it arises in mind as *Maya*: *illusory appearance, empirical (relatively real) appearance*, and the *Absolute base or sourceground that transcends yet enfolds all of this appearance*. Our nondual Primordial Wisdom Tradition understands this triad through the Two Fundamental Truths, the ultimate ground that is Absolute Spirit manifesting as relative-conventional spacetime appearance, empirical mental and physical phenomena.

Brahman and the World: *Maya*

In *Maya*'s Sanskrit root, *ma* denotes “not,” and *ya* denotes “that.” So *Maya* is “not that, not that” (*neti, neti*). It cannot be reduced to a concept, archetype or symbol. It is only through the fiery *sadhana* of spiritual practice of the Path (*marga*) that the veil of *Maya* may be pierced and its ultimate nature recognized.

Brahma Satya, Jagat Mithya, “Brahman is the only Reality, the world is an illusion.” Brahman, *Atman* and *Maya*, the interdependence of these three reveal the nature and essence of the prior unity of the Two Truths. The realization of this unity is *paramananda (mahasuka)* that is ultimate “Happiness Itself.”

Maya then, is the illusory appearance, and also the empirical, “real” appearance of phenomenal arising from the Absolute primordial base of all appearance. *Maya* is the power of relative manifestation inherent in Ultimate Brahman. *Maya* has no independent self-existence and it has no beginning. Its end is liberation (*moksha*). Brahman as *Maya* is the causal principal of *kosmos*. *Maya* through *avidya (avidya-Maya)* creates plurality, “the many” without recognizing the prior unity. *Maya* is the creative *shakti* energy of Brahman, the Absolute, and is therefore unseparate from Brahman, even as it arises as all the manifestations of phenomenal reality. **Without Brahman there is no matrix (*amba*) through which such appearances may arise. There could be no spacetime reality at all. Therefore conditional, phenomenal reality necessarily requires Brahman as its inconceivable nondual base.** Brahman/*Atman* and *Maya* together are Ishvara the Shakti energy of the creator-sustainer-destroyer God of *Kosmos*, and of human desire, understanding and worship. *Maya* draws the veil of ignorance or

illusion (*avidya*) over the divine face of Brahman, the changeless (*avikari*) unreal (*mithya*) yet only-existent (*satyam*), monadic nondual Supreme Absolute such that only the dualities of relative, conditional reality are perceived. (For twentieth century quantum theory, *Maya* is the illusion of objectivity — the real material world — finally refuted by the inherent and ultimate subjectivity of the uncertainty relations).

Vikshepa (adhyasa/adhyaropa): *Vikshepa* is the cloaking, veiling or concealing aspect of *avidya* or ignorance.¹ Ignorance (*avidya/ajnana*) is the inability to discriminate (*viveka*) between *Maya*, illusion or the unreal, and Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. When ignorance is present the nondual truth, the Reality matrix that is Brahman is always veiled or cloaked or overlaid by the mere illusory appearance. Shankara uses Nagarjuna's analogy of the coiled rope (Brahman) in the dark that is cloaked (*vikshepa*) by the illusion of a snake (the phenomenal world). The illusion of the snake is projected or superimposed by the perceiver onto the reality of the rope. But in the clear light of *vidya* the error is sublated or corrected and the truth of the matter becomes permanently clear, certainty beyond all doubt, beyond thinking and belief, beyond any experience (*nyam*) whatsoever.

The seer and the object seen are like the rope and the snake. Just as knowledge of the rope which is the substrate will not arise unless the false knowledge (*avidya-Maya*) of the illusory serpent goes, so the realization of the Self which is the substrate will not be gained unless the belief that the world is real is removed.

Sri Ramana Maharshi (1970)

While Hindu metaphysics generally, and monistic *Kashmiri Shivaism* in particular are essentially realistic, in Shankara's centrist *Advaita Vedanta*, a relative, empirical, real phenomenal world appears and exists by way of perceptual and conceptual imputation, designation and reification (realism), but is not the ultimate or absolute Reality that is Brahman (idealism). "It is neither real nor unreal." Brahman is the Real, the only reality (*satyam*) in whom arises the unreal (*mithya*). Phenomenal empirical reality then, is not merely illusion. From the view of relative truth it is objectively real (realism). However, from the view of perfectly subjective absolute truth it is unreal or illusory (idealism). This is a centrist view between monistic objective realism (eternalism) and absolute subjective idealism (nihilism). Therefore *Maya* represents the conditional reality of physical and mental appearance, its inherent impermanence and selflessness, and our confusion and ignorance in mistaking this illusory reality for the *Purusha*, the nondual Supreme Absolute Reality that is Brahman. As we have seen, this is essentially the nondual view of Mahayana Buddhism's *Dzogchen*, *Mahamadra* and

¹In *Vedanta* there are two kinds of *avidya*: *mulavidya*, the intersubjective mass-mind illusion as to the reality of relative-conditional existence, and *tulavidya*, this illusion at the level of the individual. There are also two ways in which *avidya*-ignorance functions, concealment (*avarana*) and mis-representation or cloaking/covering (*vikshepa*). Both are examples of perceptual error (*mithya jnana*) which is the false knowledge that is *avidya*.

Saijojo Zen. Thus, the apparently separate ego—the sense of self—is *Maya*. However, because *Maya* is unseparate from Brahman, *Maya* is also the *Atman*—bright *vidya* presence of Brahman that shines awake at the heart of all beings. In the Buddhist *Dzogchen* tradition, Longchen Rabjam (Longchenpa) teaches of “the two *Mayas*,” undefiled, ultimate “Immaculate *Maya*,” and relative “Delusory *Maya*” (Dowman, 2010). It is urgent to remember that the two *Mayas* are always an ontologically prior unity – two aspects or views of one non-dual ultimate reality. Even “*prakriti* (conditional nature, objective and subjective reality) is *Maya* and the Great God (Ishvara) is the Lord of *Maya*” (*Shvetashvatara Upanishad*). In his commentaries on the *Vedanta Sutra (Brahma Sutra)* Adi Shankara teaches that “Everything other than Brahman, the Supreme Absolute is created by *Maya*, the ineffable, creative (*shakti*) energy of God (Ishvara), and is not the Real.” **All physical and mental phenomena, even our concept and belief in God is *Maya* beside the actual Supreme Absolute. “Dualistic (reality) is illusory, the nondual is the Absolute Reality” (Shankara).** Shankara’s *Maya* functions dualistically in the relative, conditional world of appearing reality and therefore, as with the *Dzogchen Maya* of Longchenpa, has two faces: ignorance (*avidya*) and wisdom (*vidya*). *Avidya—Maya (apara-maya)* sees only the world, veils Brahman, the supreme source. *Vidya—maya (para-maya*, the light of realization) guides us on the relative path to *moksha*, our realization of Brahman that is the very transcendence of the world of relative truth, conventional spacetime reality. However, as neither of these are nondual Brahman, both are *Maya*. Moreover, *Maya* functions in two indivisible and interdependent modes: individual or personal illusion (*pratibhasika*), and collective, intersubjective mass-mind illusion (*vyavaharika*). Then, *Maya* functions through concealment—the relative – conventional “concealer truths” —*tulavida* (collective) and *mulavida* (individual). Finally, *Maya* functions through super-imposition or projection (*vikshepa-adhyasa*).

Maya’s power then, arises from Brahman, and is not separate from Brahman, the Absolute Truth that is Reality Itself. *Maya* co-exists, co-creates and participates with Brahman, but *Maya* is not Absolute Brahman. It is because of *avidya*/ignorance that the arising of the phenomenal world is reified into solid objects by the ego-I. Mind and world arise together. Ignorance as relative *Maya* that arises within absolute Brahman is the relative **cause** of this arising of the separated “other” — subject and object, I and thou, spirit and matter. The **effect** is the apparently separate objects—mental and physical—of experience of phenomenal existence. For most sentient beings *Maya* is universal, with no beginning and no end. Wherever name and form (*namarupa*) arises, there is *Maya*. Thus, *avidya* is without beginning—but for human beings may be ended with *jnana-vidya*, nondual wisdom-presence of the divine. This is the “Immaculate” or Ultimate *vidya-maya*. As we have seen, Brahman is infinite, atemporal and changeless, beyond any conceptual attribute or understanding, and with no beginning and no end. We cannot, without conceptually reducing It, ascribe a creative principle to It. Indeed, we can ascribe no predicate, quality or attribute to It. Brahman is simply the

single, monadic primordial Base, the Supreme Source in whom *kosmos* arises, dwells and returns again.

We need then, a creative principle through which we may explain this miraculous arising of the world of relative spacetime reality. That principle is Ishvara, the creator-sustainer-destroyer God, by whatever name, of all monotheistic religions.

“Ishvara is the supreme interpretation of Brahman, the divine Absolute by relative human thought.”

Swami Vivekananda

Ishvara is the conditional, relative creative principle required by *Maya* to explain appearing, real conditional existence. Nirguna Brahman however, remains the utterly unknowable changeless Absolute (Tao, *shunyata*). The *Trimurti* with its *triguna* or three qualities of conditional existence (Brahma/*rajas*, Vishnu/*sattva*, Shiva/*tamas*) is the Hindu expression of Ishvara who is a projection or superimposition on Brahman, much as the Holy Trinity is the Christian expression of the Hebrew creator-God Yahweh. Brahman as the *Atman*, the timeless divine Self, is the always, already present presence, *vidya* (light), *rigpa*, *logos* of the absolute, changeless source or primordial Base of all arising relative conditional existence. We arise in Brahman. Brahman/*Atman* is our actual, supreme identity. *Maya* is the illusory, yet conventionally real relative-conditional world that arises, dwells, and returns without every leaving the ground of Brahman.

Thus, *Maya* has three fundamental qualities or *gunas*, the *Triguna*, which comprise the relative-conventional phenomenal world that obscures the self-luminous face of Brahman. *Sattva* is purity of intention, integrity, peace and clarity; *That* that is to be realized. *Rajas* is energy-motion, activity, desire and passion. *Tamas* is heavy and unmoving, laziness, torpor and ignorance. *Tamas* obstructs realization of *sattva*. *Rajas* is the quality of energy that dispels *tamas*, while *sattva* dispels *rajas*. When the three are in balance there is the state of no arising, or *vidya-samadhi-moksha*, nondual liberation that is the still silence (*mouna*) of the nondual Absolute that is Nirguna Brahman.

Again, there are the two *Mayas*: *avidya-maya* (delusory *maya*), ignorance of the divine presence, and *vidya-maya* (immaculate *maya*), the wisdom presence that removes *Maya*'s veil of ignorance and harmonizes the *Triguna* toward enlightenment/*moksha*. The ultimate realization of Brahman in our lifeworld finally transcends this duality of *Maya*, of ignorance and wisdom, dark and light, in the luminous stillness of the monadic Supreme Source, Nirguna Brahman, the great perfection that is *sahij samadhi- moksha*. Here, relative knowledge, Saguna Brahman, including the nondual view, even the *samadhi-moksha* experience of Brahman are all transcended in their very nondual source condition, perfectly subjective, primordial Spirit-Reality Itself that is ineffable Nirguna Brahman, which for human beings is *ananda*, happiness-bliss, and when stabilized and actualized in the conduct of the everyday lifeworld is *Paramananda*, the ultimate happiness of luminous *Maha-rishi* or Christ-Buddhahood.

Brahman and the World: Causality

Brahman . . . is the cause of the emanation, preservation, and reabsorption of the world.

Sri Ramana Maharshi

The *Advaita Vedanta* of Shankara and Ramana Maharshi is essentially the nondual Primordial Wisdom teaching: the ego-I of the bodymind, the soul-self, God, and the Supreme Source, the nondual Absolute sourceground of all appearing physical and mental phenomena are “non-different” and identical. *Kham Brahm*. All is Brahman.

To review: Appearing reality *Saguna* Brahman arises from *Nirguna* Brahman, the nondual source as the creative activity of Ishvara, the spacetime creator-God as the *shakti* energy-motion forms (*namarupa*) of *chit* or consciousness (*Satchitananda*). Sentient beings, including self-aware beings perceive and experience this phenomenal world through the dualistic gross perceptual and conceptual veil of *Maya*, illusion. Through ignorance (*avidya-Maya*) illusory reality is projected or superimposed upon nondual Reality Itself, Brahman, just as the coiled rope in the darkness is mistaken for the snake. This perceptual and conceptual error is *vikshepa* or *adhyasa*, the projection of illusory reality onto Brahman. The apparent transformation of Brahman (as Ishvara) into the relative-conventional phenomenal world without any change in nondual Brahman Itself is known as *vivarta*. ***Vivarta is the causal explanation that “Brahman is cause, Maya (as the world) is effect.”*** But what does this mean?

According to the exoteric, relative-conventional, empirical view (*vyavaharika*), under the influence of *vikshepa-Maya*, Brahman is the “material and efficient cause” of the world (Nikhilananda 1947, 1963). The **effect** that is the phenomenal world “pre-exists” in Brahman, its divine **cause** (*satkarya*). Brahman transforms Itself, through Ishvara, into *namarupa*, the relative conventional world of name and form, because Brahman is the primordial sourceground of all of the projections (*vikshepa*) of *Maya*. The conditional effect (the snake) is projected on to the nondual absolute cause (the rope). Thus, from the relative view, an effect is merely its material cause. Such a view is supported by common sense reality and the general Western philosophical-scientific materialist view of causality.

From the esoteric view of the nondual absolute however, the *vivarta* causal doctrine teaches that, although from the relative view the effect pre-exists in the cause (*satkarya*), actually this effect is but an illusory **appearance** of its cause.² In Brahman, beyond

²*Sankarya*, that the effect pre-exists in its cause is the relative view of *Advaita Vedanta* and is the objective counterpart of *vivarta* which holds that the effect (reality) is but the illusory appearance of its cause (Brahman). The transformation is apparent, not actual. The Hindu *Mimamsa*, *Nyaya* and *Vaisheshika* view of causality is *asatkarya*, that is, the denial of *satkarya*, the denial of an ultimate material causality. Here effects are independent of their causes (Deutsch, 1969). *Parinama* or *vikara* in *Samkhya* yoga is the actual transformation of the cause into its effect as opposed to mere apparent transformation. Buddhist *Madhyamaka* utilizes relative causality – the cause and effect of karma – but denies that Buddhahood has a cause because *Tathagatagarbha*, Buddha Nature, is already present in all beings from the very beginning.

spacetime causality altogether, there can be no distinction between cause and effect. Brahman, the apparent cause, is the absolutely Real, nondual Reality Itself, “yet is distinct from cause and effect, without attributes” (Ramana Maharshi). Brahman’s apparent effects are merely *namarupa*, interdependent relative-conventional names and forms arising through Brahman’s power as *vikshepa-Maya*. They have no ultimate reality. In the nondual view the “One without a second” cannot transform Itself (*vivarta*) into “the many” without ceasing to be the One, the nondual Absolute All. Rather, phenomenal reality arises, unseparate from the One, yet it appears through the obscuring superimposition power of *Maya* as the many. **Brahman, perfectly subjective Reality Itself, appears through Ishvara as *namarupa*, name and form, but there is no actual creation, merely *avidyic* appearances. Therefore, in the *Advaita Vedanta* nondual view, there can be no causal relation between Absolute Brahman—ultimate truth—and the relative spacetime world. Nondual Brahman (Ultimate Spirit) transcends yet embraces this empirical domain of Relative Truth. And wonder of wonders, “All is Brahman...” That is our ultimate Relationship.** This is essentially the Buddhist non-causal or contextual-causal view of dependent origination (*pratitya samutpada*). However, in the relative, conditional world, “Brahman is cause, *Maya* is effect.”

Brahman and the world are different in kind; qualitatively, they are incommensurable. In order to set forth a causal relation between two things, a minimum requirement is that they be of the same order of being . . . one cannot establish relations between disparate levels of being.

Eliot Deutch (1969)

We cannot therefore, logically derive a relative, temporal and finite effect (the phenomenal world) from an absolute, infinite cause (Brahman). In the nondual view Brahman, the “cause” is Ultimate Reality Itself, “The Real,” and its “effect,” the phenomenal world, is merely real by conventional imputation and designation. There is no causal relationship between the objects of the realm of relative truth (*Maya*), and Ultimate Truth (Brahman). Absolute Reality is utterly nondual. The finite conditional mind of the ego-I can do no more than reduce the infinite to finite conceptual names, forms and experience (*nyam*). Indeed, that is its primary and constant activity; our constant seeking strategy. Alas, until the full *bodhi* of liberation, the bodymind of the ego-I must exist and function through the relative-conventional veil of *avidya-Maya-vikshepa*, in ignorance, suffering and separation from the bright “always, already” present *vidya-rigpa-logos* presence of infinite divine Spirit-Being Itself, awaiting its realization, now, at the spiritual Heart (*hridayam*).

Consciousness is Matrix is Godhead

Something lives within you that lives longer than the suns. It abides at the place in the heart.

Chandogya Upanishad

The Western Tradition's view of consciousness is steeped in 400 years of Cartesian dualism of thinking mind and physical body, the "ghost in the machine." René Descartes' (1596-1650) infamous dictum, *cogito ergo sum*, "I think therefore I am," was intended to refute skepticism's doubt that God, or anything else, really exists — the one certain proposition that proves that something, in this case the self-aware thinking "I", objectively and independently exists. One can doubt everything, yet there exists that one who doubts. I doubt therefore I am.

To the Eastern mind however, particularly the genius of the Indian mind that produced the great *Vedic* teaching of *Vedanta*, (and from this tradition the Buddhist and Greek Orphic and Dionysiac teachings) "I am" also when I am **not** thinking. Consciousness is not merely intentional, that is, it need not always intend or direct itself toward a separate object. Indeed, in life stages five, six and seven consciousness is not intentional in this way. Thus, there need not be a split between knowing subject and perceived object. Indeed, at its root, consciousness is a prior unity, an all-embracing unbounded whole. Thus, for the Eastern mind conceptual thought is not the *sine quo non* of being, for clearly "**That I Am**" (*Tat Tvam Ami*) **in preconscious and superconscious awareness states of deep sleep and samadhi-moksha or turiya, just as surely as "I am" in waking-thinking, and in dreaming states.** Indeed, the nondual view of *Advaita Vedanta* is that it is not logically possible to doubt the subjective spiritual presence of *Atman-Brahman*, because the very process of doubt necessarily participates in that which it denies, namely the awareness or consciousness (*chit*) that is identical to and only Brahman, nondual Absolute Spirit, Consciousness-Being Itself. **The denial of consciousness necessarily requires the very consciousness that is denied. Therefore, Absolute Consciousness or Absolute Spirit alone cannot be denied.** Any *object* of consciousness may be denied without contradiction, but Consciousness Itself is, *ipso facto*, the very sourceground and essence base or matrix of any and all of the experienced subjects and objects of the phenomenal world. Thus, for the relative, logical view the denial of consciousness involves a logical contradiction. This observation is interesting, and would be more so were we logically motivated beings. But, as students of behavior know, we are motivated, indeed ruled, not by our reason, but by our emotions — desire, fear and anger, pride and envy — and with practice and training these negative emotions may be transmuted into compassion and joy-bliss (*ananda, mahasuka*).

Consciousness in self-conscious beings — reflective awareness — including affirmations and doubts about being, is continuous, coincidental and identical with Brahman, *That* Absolute Consciousness Being, the Base or ultimate subjective matrix in whom arises,

dwells and returns all relative phenomenal physical and mental existences. But this great truth cannot be logically derived or proven in the realm of relative, conditional thinking or reasoning, as we have seen. That is why the logical necessity of consciousness and the impossibility of its denial is of only minor interest. Absolute truth necessarily transcends, yet includes relative truth. This supreme nondual perennial wisdom teaching is “*Tat Tvam Asi*,” “That Thou art.” We are always *vidya*, the luminous divine presence arising within each human form. “This cannot be taught” (Shakyamuni Buddha). It can only be realized (*samadhi*) through liberation (*moksha*) from the ignorance (*avidya*) and illusion (*Maya*) of the rational (logical) conditional reality that separates us from this Supreme Source. **Through practice we accomplish identity with the selfless Atman-Self as we gradually remove the veil of Maya by surrendering and releasing our narcissistic self-contraction from the divine that is the constant activity of the embodied, seeking ego-I (*jiva*).** Through this process the self-stimulating seeking strategies of our “great spiritual search,” including our attachment to the bliss of “advanced” spiritual practice, is destroyed and our identity is realized as the always present luminous Absolute Reality that is Brahman Itself. Brahman then, stands in the same relation to the divine *Atman*-self as *Abba*, the Father of the “I Am That I Am” of Christianity stands to the Son, the divine *logos-Christos* presence that is the essence of each human being; that presence that was realized and demonstrated by the avataric incarnation of Jesus, the Christ (Chap. IV).

Advaita Vedanta however, views the Supreme Source, or Brahman as nondual rather than “One.” Brahman is the prior “unity” of substance or essence (*homoousia*) of the Christian Trinity that is ultimately the nondual Depth (*Bathos*) of *Abba*, the Primordial Father. “Nondual” avoids the dualism of the “One and the Many,” of the infinite and the finite, of being and becoming. “One” and “unity” suggest a prior or initial condition of separation, whereas the nondual Absolute (“not one, not two”) is “unseparate and nondual from the very beginning.” It is true that Brahman is described as “One, without a second.” But this “One” is not the dualistic “One” wherein a separate perceiver-subject observes or experiences the object perceived. “One, without a second” means that Brahman is not an objective monotheistic entity, but simply *Is*, non-conceptual inseparate, nondual absolute ultimate subjectivity, the perfect divine source in whom all subject-object dualities, including sentient beings and their theologies, arise, evolve and return. This Brahman is the Absolute Truth in whom all of the objects—objective and subjective—of spacetime Relative Truth arise.

This understanding of the “Two Truths”, the exoteric, Relative Truth (the finite), and the greater esoteric, Absolute Truth (the infinite), forms the root or the heart of any religious/philosophical view. Coomaraswamy has described this relationship as it effects the three classical views or interpretations of *Vedanta*: nondualism (Shankara), qualified nondualism (Ramanuja), and dualism (Madhva):

[The Absolute] is an essence without duality (*advaita*) . . . but not without relations (*visishthadvaita*) . . . [this] essence (*asti*) subsists in a two-fold nature (*dvaitabhava*); as being and as becoming.

- A.K. Coomaraswamy (1943)

In the *lila* play of Absolute Brahman, the illusion of phenomenal reality, arises as the content of mind, projected onto Brahman. This reality is an insubstantial, impermanent emptiness, utterly devoid of inherent existence, merely the allegorical veil of *Maya* drawn over the ineffable, luminous face of Brahman. Yet, for the participant in this nondual Reality play that is Consciousness Being Itself, there remains a diaphanous presence, the faintest luminous glow of the face of the divine Reality of all-that-is. That primordial face is our own original face "that is brighter than a thousand suns." *Kham Brahm*. All of this is Brahman.

The Finite and the Infinite

The primary dilemma for religion, science and culture is this relationship, this duality of the finite and the infinite. The difficulty for conventional, "natural" theology and religious philosophy, as well as for philosophy of religion, is the logical and ontological impossibility of the finite, thinking mind to transcend itself, that is, to grasp and conceive the infinite, a different or more subtle ontological order or strata of being. This is the *paradox of mind*. We may however, approach the infinite through the conditional vehicles of contemplative spiritual practice, and through poetry: analogy, allegory and metaphor (Appendix B). Just as the eye cannot see itself, finite conceptual thought cannot know its infinite source. From the relative view, the infinite and the finite are qualitatively different. Again, the egoic, discursive mind or intellect must always reduce and thereby limit the infinite to finite, conceptual terms. The conditional, rational-dualistic mind must separate the infinite from the finite, as if the former somehow precedes the latter in time or is beyond it, or outside it in space. However, the infinite is not eternal, but timeless, the timeless moment now (*Turiya*). It is not space, but spaceless (*dhatu/ying*). It is not permanent substance, but changeless, impermanent emptiness. The infinite transcends yet includes time and space and all relative terms and conditions, conceptual qualities and attributes (*namarupa*). Absolute Being Itself, ultimate nondual godhead, when perceived and conceived in the relative, ideational terms of spacetime, or a spacetime creator God, becomes logically and ontologically separate from the human perceiver. **If the nondual Absolute is reduced to a conceptual, relative, spacetime creator God, then such a God becomes limited and finite. By "his" very act of creation "he" exits nondual infinite Reality itself and becomes limited and finite, a separate "other" dualistically co-existing with his creations in a relative conventional spacetime reality.**

Again, the finite mind cannot grasp the infinite unbroken whole. Dualistic concept mind cannot know the nondual Absolute. The Absolute can only be realized through the *sadhana* of *marga*, the spiritual path in, *satsang*, “the company of truth” of the Master. Qualitatively different orders or strata of being necessarily refer beyond to ever subtler levels. The Great Chain or Nest of Being: the nondual infinite, Absolute Spirit transcends and includes soul, as soul transcends and includes mind, and mind transcends and includes life, while life transcends and includes matter. Thus, the nondual infinite transcends and includes (embraces, loves) the finite, or the potential of the finite, including all of its values, relationships and free will. For Vedanta the infinite nondual absolute is Brahman. The nondual presence of Brahman in the relative world is *Atman*, the *vidya* witness (*saksin*), the impermanent, empty Self who knows its identity with ever changeless Brahman, its supreme source. Knowledge of the Absolute, *paravidya*, is direct and immediate. It transcends and includes the reason-logic of the discursive ego-I because it arises at the more subtle primary operation of mind, the sensory-perceptual level (*dhyana*), prior to the secondary operation of attention, concept and belief (Chap. I).

Brahman, the infinite Absolute Reality then, manifests the apparent phenomenal world of relative-conventional finite reality through a nested holarchy of being, without Itself becoming finite. Brahman is not the One creating the Many. This is the role of *Ishvara* and the *Trimurti*. Brahman remains the infinite, eternal, unconditional Absolute Spirit. However, through the non-conceptual eye of contemplation, Reality Itself is simply nondual (non-conceptual, non-separate). All of the objects of sensation, perception and conceptual thought are projected or superimposed (*vikshepa*) upon this Absolute Reality through the mechanism of attention-ideation (concept and belief), the secondary operation of mind. There is no “other” reality, no real *prakriti* (nature), only an intersubjectively verified conventional reality of projected appearances, the material, objective reality of delusory *avidya-maya* that is ignorance (*avidya*, *ajnana*).

Again, according to Shankara, appearing objects are neither existent, nor non-existent. They are not existent because, like the snake in the darkness, they are sublated or corrected in the light of *vidya*; nor are they non-existent because they initially appear and are thereby conventionally real. This view of Shankara is influenced by Nagarjuna’s dialectic of the *Madhyamaka* or Middle Way, and demonstrates not only the similarity of *Advaitic* and Buddhist centrist idealism, but the constancy of our great nondual Primordial Wisdom teaching. **Thus the supreme, nondual views of both Buddhism (*Dzogchen*, *Essence Mahamudra*, *Madhyamaka of the Definitive Meaning*, *Saijojo Zen*) and of Hinduism (*Advaita Vedanta*), with their nondual teachings of our Primordial Wisdom Tradition, offer both a relative, objective realism and a nondual, subjective idealism which transcends and includes it, just as the real world of finite, relative, empirical reality is transcended, embraced and pervaded by the infinite nondual Absolute Reality.**

Again, for the *Advaita Vedanta* of Shankara, the nondual transcendent Absolute that is Brahman, is for self-conscious beings, always present at the spiritual heart (*hridayam*). This witness presence is *saksin*, the *Atman-Self*. As we have seen, this “always already” present presence is recognized and realized” —brief moments, many times—by way of the three yogic disciplines of the Path (*Marga*) as transmitted by a living spiritual guru or master who points out and mirrors the inner guru of the aspirant student. These are the three: the study of the scriptures, the study of the nondual nature of Reality, and non-conceptual meditative contemplation on the supreme identity of the luminous *Atman-Self* presence with Brahman, Absolute Reality Itself. From this View and Meditation spontaneously arises the Conduct, the wisdom of kindness, wise compassionate acts in the everyday lifeworld.

Knowledge and Liberation: *Advaita Vedanta* Epistemology

There is a self-existent Reality which is the base of our awareness of our ego-I . . . that Reality is the primordial witness . . . luminous Spirit Itself.
- Shankara

Epistemology or knowledge theory is concerned with what and how we know. Thus it is concerned with the limits of finite relative-conventional conceptual knowledge, which leads necessarily to ontology or metaphysics and the realization of absolute truth. What is the epistemological status of mental and physical phenomenal reality as it arises in mind from its absolute, supreme sourceground? Is it objectively real (realism)? Or is it transcendental manifestations of a subjective reality, even a supreme Reality arising in mind (idealism)? Is its nature dualistic, monistic, or nondual? These questions of epistemology parallel the concern of metaphysics and ontology to know and realize the subtle nature of the sourceground, Absolute Being Itself. So the questions and distinctions of epistemology and metaphysics overlap. Just as nondual absolute or infinite Consciousness-Being-Spirit Itself transcends yet embraces finite relative-conventional phenomenal appearance arising therein, so metaphysical ontology is prior to and includes its second order, epistemology, how and what we can know of what is given of the whole to the senses and the heart through appearing phenomenal reality.

Brahman and the World: the Two Fundamental Truths

The ancient *Vedas*, as with our entire Primordial Wisdom Tradition, describes two aspects of knowing, Two Truths. *Para* or *vidya*, is the light, the absolute or Ultimate Truth (*paramaratha-satya*, *don dam denpa*, *gnosis*), and *apara* or *avidya* is the world of Relative Truth, the “concealer truths” of spacetime, cause and effect reality (*samvriti-satya*, *kundzob denpa*). *Para* (the beyond) as absolute, nondual essence is Brahman,

“The Bright,” the Light of Absolute Being, Reality Itself, *Brahmavidya*, the Base or divine source of *avidya* (ignorance) our limited illusory knowledge of relative, physical and mental phenomenal reality. In the *Upanishads* these two modes of knowing are referred to as Brahman without attributes or *Para* Brahman, and Brahman with attributes, *Apara* Brahman. We have seen that in Shankara’s *Advaita Vedanta* these two aspects of the knowledge of Reality that is Brahman are *Nirguna* Brahman and *Saguna* Brahman. ***Nirguna* Brahman is Absolute Truth transcending spacetime causality and indeed all relationship, yet remaining as the changeless substrate or sourceground that is the possibility of all relationships. *Saguna* Brahman as Ishvara (Creator God) and *Satchitananda* (Being/Consciousness/Bliss arising) as the concepts and experiences of our existence conditioned by ignorance (*avidya-maya*).** Therefore, this creator, sustainer, and destroyer (the *Trimurti*) of the ever-changing phenomenal worlds is not the nondual Absolute. In *Advaita Vedanta* however, this apparent dualism of the two Brahman of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* is resolved in a nondual view of Brahman. Here, *Nirguna* Brahman is ultimate subjectivity, the perfectly subjective absolute source condition of phenomenal reality. This reality arises and appears as *Maya*. The *Shad-darshana*, the *Upanishads* and *Vedas* variously describe Brahman in dualistic, idealistic, realistic, theistic and pantheistic language. Sometimes the nondual transcendence of Brahman is emphasized. Sometimes the permanent quality is emphasized over against illusory and impermanent *Maya*. The Buddhist argument against Vedanta seems always to target these dualistic, realistic and theistic views, but not the nondual view of *Advaita Vedanta*.

Adi Shankara insisted upon both an objective realism, and a subjective idealism. As with Buddhist *Madhyamaka*, this centrist view (between eternalism and nihilism) is of an objectively real world arising from its perfectly subjective nondual source (Prabhavananda 1947, Johnston 1946, Thibaut 1890 in Deutsch, 1969, Nikhilananda 1963). **The direct, objective, empirical reality of the unfolding phenomenal world then, is acknowledged (realism), yet this manifest apparent reality is enfolded in and is not different or other than Brahman. Indeed it is identical in essence with *Nirguna* Brahman, the perfectly subjective Absolute Reality (idealism).** Thus, realism is required in order to understand our relative-conditional existence, but is ultimately transcended and embraced by the subjective idealism of the perfectly ultimate subjectivity that is Brahman. So, Shankara’s epistemological realism is embedded in an ontological idealism. But an absolute subjective idealism with its denial of relative spacetime reality altogether is precluded for, as with the nondual Buddhist view of *Dzogchen* and *Saijojo* Zen (Ch.II, III), from the view of relative truth, phenomenal empirical reality is truly, objectively real, appearing as the primordial, creative *prana-*

shakti energy of the illusory and impermanent *namarupa* of *Maya*, the objective aspect or power of perfectly subjective Brahman.³

However, from the liberated nondual view (*vidya-moksha*) of absolute truth (*paramartha satya*), only Brahman, the supreme source, the self-luminous, unchanging, utterly ineffable Absolute is the Real, Ultimate Reality Itself. To the enlightened master (*maharishi*) all of the illusions of *Maya*—including these interminable concepts about Brahman—are only Brahman. *Kham Brahm*, “All is Brahman.” Thus, in *Advaita Vedanta*, as with the “highest” or subtlest nondual teachings of our entire Primordial Wisdom Tradition, the exoteric, objective relative-conventional view is transcended in an ontological absolute subjective nondual monism that includes all relative views.

Let us now consider the Two Truths in the Buddhist *Heart Sutra (Prajnaparamita)*, with the intention of clarifying nondual *Vedanta*. “Form is emptiness” (idealism). This is “self-emptiness” or emptiness of intrinsic existence and negates the extreme view of eternal or absolute existence. But “Emptiness is form” (realism). This is “emptiness of other” or emptiness of all phenomena and negates the extreme view of nihilism. Further, “form is form... and emptiness is emptiness” (nondual monism). This is the union of appearance (dependent arising) and emptiness (*shunyata*). These four constitute the centrist, Middle Way (*Madhyamaka*) between the extreme views of nihilism (nothing exists) and existential absolutism (phenomena have a permanent, absolute existence) [Mipham, 1999].

“Existence is the view of realism. Non-existence is the view of nihilism.
Therefore the wise dwell neither in existence, nor non-existence.”
- Chandrakirti

Yet, Ramana Maharshi reminds us, “everything is just concepts.” And the fundamental truth that is the emptiness of Brahman cannot be reduced by conceptual elaboration to a concept or a symbol by the intellect (try as we may). Again, no relative mind-created object can grasp ultimate Reality Itself. “Truth is One,” forever “neti, neti” —not that, not that. Thus it is, even though arising phenomena do have a relative existence, from the view of the nondual absolute, there is no name, no form and no view. The Heart Sutra continues,

“Therefore Shariputra, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no mental formation, and no consciousness... There is no body and no

³ Indeed, in *Tantra (Shaktism)* it is the divine “Mother Shakti” aspect of Absolute God through whom the seven *chakras* (spiritual energy centers) are awakened allowing the *shakti* spirit current (*kundalini*) to ascend up the spinal chakras to the crown where it unites with Shiva, the male energy as the *Trimurti*. It is through such yogic practice or *sadhana* in relationship with a living master (*satsang*), and by the grace of the Mother *Shakti*, that the student is enabled to realize the absolute source condition of the primordial *shakti* energy (*prana, c’hi, tsal, lung*), which in self-aware beings is liberation into the primordial love-wisdom (*gnosis, jnana, yeshe*) of *ananda*-bliss, Ultimate Happiness Itself.

mind... There is no ignorance, no suffering... no wisdom, no attainment and no non-attainment..."

Is Brahman, the Ultimate Truth merely Buddhist emptiness? Are either of these an existent entity? Do they exist, ultimately, from their own side? No. Ultimate Truth, nondual Reality Itself, as ultimate subjectivity, the unbounded whole—by whatever name—is utterly beyond the conceptual understanding. It is empty of all predicates, qualities and attributes. Yet, miraculously it may be touched, recognized, then realized at the spiritual heart of each human being.

Why Do I Exist? Who Am I?

Why does anything at all exist? What is the meaning and purpose of creation? Why is there ignorance and evil? The *Avdaita Vedanta* of Adi Shankara—as with the other nondual traditions of our Great Wisdom Tradition—answers that the “Why Question” can have no answer. The realm of relative conventional reality arises necessarily and spontaneously as *Lila*, the unintelligible divine Play and display of Brahman, the nondual primordial absolute, through the activity of Ishvara, the Creator. It is Brahman’s very nature to create, to arise as itself through the apparition of form. There is no motive, no intention, no purpose, no “why” and therefore no Creator responsibility for evil and suffering in this created world. Thus there is no theistic “problem of evil” to brood about. The “why question” then, is but the futile effort of the limited, concept-bound ego to understand its apparent existence in what is, in the ultimate view, a Reality utterly beyond conceptual cause and effect understanding. In this ultimate view not even the *Lila* of Brahman exists. The empirical realm of Relative Truth exists relatively. The nondual reality of Absolute Truth exists only relatively, as conventional concept and belief. Who is it then that asks this “why” question? Who am I?

As with the Buddhist *Madhyamaka Prasangika* view of the “Two Truths,” from the nondual view of the *Paravidya* of Absolute Brahman, Ultimate Truth, all else is *aparavidya-maya* and *adhyasa*, the tainted ignorance of Relative Truth. All of the *pramanas*—attention, perception, deductive and inductive inference, discriminating wisdom, emotion—have truth value, but only in the realm of Relative Truth. Thus, for the realizer of *paravidya*, the ultimate nondual noetic knowledge that is Brahman, all arising phenomena are mere illusory *aparavidya*, the ignorance that is *Maya*. For the non-realizer, the means of knowledge of the *pramanas* are valid cognition (*pramana*) so long as they are recognized to be *avidya-maya*, and not confused with *vidya-maya*. This

is the *Vedanta* theory of *svatah pramanyavada*.⁴ “Knowledge and ignorance cannot co-exist in the same individual, for they are contradictory, like light and darkness” (Shankara, *Brahmasutrabhasya*, Apte, 1960). From this absolute view of the enlightened *rishi* (*jivamukta*) there is only primordial wisdom, non-conceptual nondual *paravidya*. There is no ignorance and no existence which needs to be explained. From the view of relative truth the “why” question is ever present. From the wisdom view of enlightenment the “why” question does not, indeed, cannot arise. Ultimately, there is no “why”. Ultimately there is only Silence (*mouna*) from whence arises the cacophony of the world. This is “That by being known, everything is known” (*Mundaka Upanishad*). Who am I? “*Tat Tvam Ami.*” **That** I Am. Without a single exception.

⁴ The doctrine of *svatahpramanyavada* does not preclude the Cartesian *Cogito*, “I think, therefore I am.” We may have a doubting cognition, “Do I exist?”, but we cannot doubt that this is a *pramana* cognition. In Relative Truth, the possibility of error exists. In Ultimate Truth, it does not.

OM

Creation and Completion: The Descent and Ascent of Spirit

The goal which all the *Vedas* declare . . . the heart's desire . . . is *Om*. . . *Om* is indeed Brahman . . . this is the highest support.

Katha Upanishad

As we have seen, Brahman, primordial Absolute Spirit, Reality Itself, the source of all arising conditional phenomenal reality manifests in spacetime through its illusory power of *Maya* (ignorance, *avidya*, *ajnana*, nature-*prakriti*). *Maya* then, is an aspect of the creative power of Brahman. First arises *Saguna* Brahman as Ishvara, the *Trimurti*, (Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma), the triune God from which arises the entire *kosmos*. After Ishvara arises *akasha*, vast empty space, the ether or quantum field from whence arises *prana-vayu*, the *kosmic*, then vital breath followed by the subtle and then gross material elements of air, fire, water, and earth. From these, matter, life, mind and all beings evolve in relative, causal spacetime reality. ***Om* is this descent of Absolute Spirit—Brahman— into the names and forms of conditional spacetime reality. And *Om* is the ascent, the touchstone, the mantra, sign and support for the practitioner on the ascending path of return to this supreme source.**

The *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and *Vedanta* utilize archetypal symbols, as do all religious traditions, to represent the process of creation, destruction and the Divine Person, *Purusha*, the world soul that is actually Brahman in whom this all arises, abides, and passes away. Aspirants on the path cannot comprehend or relate to a Being with no attributes, thus until the full *bodhi* of enlightenment, *Ishvara*, *Satchitananda*, *Om* and the indirect experience of its relative symbols serve as support to the spiritual devotional (*bhakti*) path of the devotee-aspirant.

Akasha is vast empty space (*dhatu/ying alaya*, the quantum field); *vayu*, eternal wind is the *kosmic* breath; *prana* is the vital breath of life and the energy of all living beings, *aditya* is the spiritual sun, the dwelling place of the divine self-luminous *Purusha*, and *manas* is the mind. But the most important symbol of esoteric Vedic-Hindu spiritual practice is the sacred seed syllable *Om*, the direct outpicturing of Brahman Itself, both as *Nirguna* Brahman (the nondual Absolute), and as *Saguna* Brahman or God, and the created subtle, mental and material worlds of arising and evolving conditional reality. For Tibetan *Vajrayana* Buddhism *Om* is equally important, representing the sourceground of Being Itself, *dharmakaya*, *dharmata*, *tathata*, *shunyata*, *alaya* that is the Buddha Nature, *tathagatagarbha*, *sugata*, the body of all Buddhas and supreme identity of all sentient beings. And the realization of this great truth is *HUM*.

The Four States or Dimensions of Consciousness. In *Advaita Vedanta*, *Om* is the sign of the nondual divine *Atman* presence that is Brahman within each manifested form of *Maya*. Herein, self-conscious beings participate in the Absolute through the four dimensions (*kosha*) or mind states of consciousness: the waking state, the dream

state, the deep sleep state, and *turiya*, “The Fourth,” the nondual state of primordial, transcendental Absolute Consciousness-Being Itself, *Nirguna* Brahman in whom the “other” states arise for our experience. The first three states are aspects of *Saguna* Brahman, Brahman with attributes, and includes the transpersonal divine creator-god *Ishvara*, his *Trimurti* and all his created relative-conditional existence (*Satchitananda*). The **waking state** represents our pre-personal and personal sensory-perceptual and mental experience (life stages 1, 2, 3, Appendix A). This is the consciousness dimension of relative mind (*manas, sems, citta*). Through the cognitive mechanisms of perception-attention and the mental-emotional operators, such relative consciousness is always consciousness-of an object, that is, it is intentional consciousness. The subject’s perceptual-mental consciousness is intended or directed toward its object. This is our **Gross Body** dimension. It is located upon the curve inside the base of the sacred syllable (1 in fig. below). This represents lifestages 1, 2, and 3. Beyond these stages and dimensions consciousness is not intentional or “other directed”. **The dream state** represents our transpersonal **Subtle Body** or dimension or consciousness state (*buddhi*, higher mental, psychic, mystic, life stage 4). This dimension is located inside the second curve, on the right side of the syllable (2). **The deep (dreamless) sleep state** or dimension represents our **Causal Body** (life stage 5 and 6), the spiritual completion stage (the witness practice, *nirvakalpa samadhi*), so named because of its identity with the ultimate cause of Reality rather than its finite, temporal effects. This causal dimension is located inside the upper curve (3). **The Fourth State** of consciousness is *turiya*, ultimate nondual Reality Itself, Brahman. *Turiya* is the silent timeless moment between thoughts. *Turiya* is the perfect divine liberation of *sahaj samhadi-moksha* (life stage 7). It is located at the point to the upper right of the sacred syllable (4). *Turiya* is the permanent realization and release from the egoic self-contraction of the bodymind. *Turiya* is completion, final ascent and return to the source by a liberated self-conscious being; return to the self-radiant nondual Absolute, Ultimate Happiness Itself. In the *Mandukya Upanishad* we are told:

Turiya [is] neither subjective nor objective experience, neither knowledge of the senses, nor relative knowledge, nor derived knowledge . . . [it] is pure, nondual consciousness, *shanti*-peace and the very nature of the *Atman* (that is Brahman).

- Shankara



The Path: Liberation Now

All beings are ever free from bondage and pure by nature.
They are ever illumined and liberated from the very beginning.
- Chandogya Upanishad

Transcendence of the Five Koshas. In step-by-step practice or *sadhana* with the master (*satsang*, the company of truth) the devotee gradually penetrates, and ultimately transcends altogether the five *koshas*, sheaths or cloaks obscuring the radiant light of the selfless *Atman* presence, the liberated individual soul-self that is identical with Brahman. The spiritual purpose of each empirically real individual soul or *jivatma* is the transcendental realization of its already present supreme identity with the divine *Atman* presence (*vidya*, *rigpa*, *logos*) that is at its very heart, the essence of Brahman, the nondual Absolute.

In the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* we discover that the divine *Atman*-soul-self, through the veiling power of *Maya* (*avidya*-ignorance) projects or superimposes (*vikshepaladhyasa*) arising phenomenal physical and mental reality with all of its *upadhis*, the desire-mind limitations of name and form (*namarupa*), from or upon its own Divine Being—Brahman—without ever separating Itself into these apparently “other” forms. And the experiencer of this illusory phenomenal reality is the embodied *jiva* or egoic conditional soul-self of the *Atman*-descended bodymind. Again, the goal of the Path is liberation from the illusory power of *avidya*-*Maya*, our relative view, such that the prior, nondual identity of the dualism of the apparently “two souls” is realized. From this non-conceptual, absolute view there is no separation, no duality, no “other,” no path and no goal; indeed, no view and no reality at all. All appearing reality is merely the essence of Brahman. “*Kham Brahm*, All is Brahman.”

We have seen that Brahman, the Absolute, manifests the divine *Atman* presence in whom arises *akasha* (space), *prana-vayu* (breath of life/*kosmic* wind) and mind (*citta/ manas*). From mind arises the ten *indriyas*, the sensory-perceptual and activity organs. The organs of sensing and perceiving are the ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin. The organs of action are the hands, feet and procreation and elimination organs. **However, the primary organ is the mind whose dimensions, nature and essence is always Brahman. All of the conditional limitations (*upadhis*) and all of the brightness (*vidya*), indeed all consciousness (*chit*) arises through this bright awareness that is mind.** The relative mind (*citta* or *manas*) is our primary relating instrument. Desire, will and volition, fear and anger, *buddhi*-soul or dualistic discriminating intelligence (*prajna*) and the greater nondual primordial awareness wisdom (*jnana/gnosis*), faith and the disciplines of meditative concentration and contemplation all arise through the mind. It is through this process of mind that sensation-perception and attention

are figured into mental-emotional concepts, beliefs, will and action (*sankalpa*). All of the suffering of *samsara*, the separation from the divine, and the ultimate happiness of *nirvana* (*moksha*) arise through the mind. The ten organs, the five *pranas*, and the *buddhi* of mind together comprise the five obscuring *koshas* or *Maya* bodies of conditional existence: the **gross physical body** or dimension (*annamaya-kosha*); the **life body** or dimension (*pranamaya-kosha*), the vital *prana* or breath of life, the life energy that animates the bodymind of all life forms; the **mental body** (*manas/citta*) or dimension of mind (*manomaya-kosha*) through which arises perception, concept and belief; the **subtle body**, *buddhi* or soul dimension (*vijnanamaya-kosha*) discriminating wisdom and will; the **causal body** or dimension of spirit-bliss (*anandamaya-kosha*), all of these productions of *Maya* arise in the light (*vidya*) of Brahman, Absolute Spirit-Being Itself (Appendix A). Regarding the Path, the sheaths or bodies of the nondual *Atman* become progressively more subtle and difficult to penetrate as dimensional duality is transcended to ever subtler ontological strata of the enlightened awareness of Being Itself. However, the goal of the path is the penetration, transcendence and ultimate realization of the very nondual selfless source of the Self and its five *koshas*, these relative dimensions of conditional existence. Again, *Om* is the touchstone, the sign and support for the yogi or yogini on the path of creation, the spiritual ascent from the descended, incarnate relative-conditional reality, the return to the divine domain of Brahman, the completion that is Ultimate Truth, Absolute Reality, and for human beings, Happiness Itself (*paramananda, mahasuka*).

Self-Inquiry: The *Atma-Vichara* of Ramana Maharshi

The great Twentieth Century Indian master Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) spontaneously developed and transmitted an *advaitic* (nondual) spiritual practice or path to self-realization based upon relentless self-inquiry in the form of the consideration, "Who am I?"

The true Self is not the gross body. Nor is it the five senses of perception, or the organs of action. Neither is it *prana*, or the mind, or the state of deep sleep . . . After all of this is negated and you can say I am not this, not this (*neti, neti*), what remains is the true Self, and that is Awareness (Itself), that is *Satchitananda* in whom there is not the slightest trace of the ego-I. It is called *mouna*, Silence, or *Atman* the true Self. It is the only thing that really exists. . . Put the question "Who am I" only once and then concentrate on finding the source of the ego and preventing the occurrence of thoughts (concentration on the spiritual center [*hridayam*] of the body-mind at the heart) ... No answer the ego can give can be right ... (remain in the silence) and the reply will come (through arising heart current awareness). . .

-Sri Ramana Maharshi (trans. A. Osborne, 1970)

Sri Ramana Maharshi's path (*marga, lam*), although in the nondual tradition of Shankara and his *Advaita Vedanta*, shares the spirit of the non-sectarian *rime* tradition of the *Vajrayana's* nondual *Dzogchen* and *Mahamudra* teaching. However, Maharshi's teaching is unique in the Indian wisdom tradition, both Vedic and Buddhist, in that he did not adhere to the traditional scriptures. Maharshi's self-inquiry utilizes two of the traditional yogic disciplines of *Vedanta, jnana yoga* and *karma yoga*. *Jnana yoga (jnana marga)* is the path of meditation and discriminating wisdom. *Karma yoga (karma marga)* is the path of compassionate selfless activity and charity. The traditional Hindu renunciate path of silent, isolated *jnana* meditation was discouraged by Maharshi. Maharshi's devotees were encouraged to bring the wisdom-bliss of their *jnana* yogic contemplation into the earth-path of compassionate *karma yoga* service in the everyday lifeworld. This is a path of the unity of love and wisdom; wise, compassionate service to others, and devotion to the outer guru in the form of Maharshi who mirrors to the devotee his/her inner guru who is the very heart essence of the incarnate bodymind. This is the wisdom of kindness. When love is objective, wisdom is subjective. When wisdom is objective, love is subjective. This is a path that anyone, from householder to nun or monk, can follow to liberation from *samsara*.

There are two ways: either ask yourself "Who am I," or submit to me and I will strike down the mind. . . God, Guru, and Self are the same.

-Sri Ramana Maharshi (Osborne 1970)

Morality and The Path

Ultimately, the whole purpose of religion is to facilitate love and compassion . . . Until we put our own spiritual teachings into practice, we will never be taken seriously.

-H.H the Dalai Lama

Because Brahman, the Absolute, transcends relative morality, from the view of the Absolute, Brahman transcends good and evil, and a fully realized being is likewise beyond relative moral injunctions. However, for the yogi or yogini on the spiritual path the inexorable Law of *Karma*, or the law of cause and effect, reaping what is sown, dictates very specific moral behavior and precludes antinomical behavior. Thoughts, intentions and actions are good that "first, do no harm" to others, or that help others, while leading the aspirant toward realization of Brahman, the highest good. The behavior that promotes the fulfillment of the egoic desires that lead away from liberation (*moksha/mukti*) is to be avoided. The primary injunction for the devotee on the path is truthfulness (*satya*) and constant practice of the *dharma (Taittiriya Upanishad)*. Moral virtues are the everyday practice of compassion, non-aggression

(*ahimsa*), equanimity (*sama*), and the wise, selfless service to others that is love (*Toward a Secular Ethic of Compassion*, Appendix B).

Growing is cultivating and sustaining the fire of our own inner spirit. It is not something that allows us to become comfortable. It allows us to become deeply peaceful. It illuminates the selfless inner Self, the universal view, the Absolute.

- Swami Chetananda (1955)

Liberating Narcissus

How do I cross this ocean of the world?

-Shankara

The fruit or result of the yogic View and Path to liberation is *moksha* (*mukti*), liberation from the false presumption of the ego-I and its transmigrating soul that is the illusion of Narcissus, the destructive essential permanent self. It is this ignorance (*avidya/ajnana*) that binds us to the law of *karma* and continuous transmigration on the terrible wheel of birth and death. According to Shankara (*Vedanta Sutra Commentaries*, Apte 1960), the goal of the path is progressive discrimination and renunciation: the development of the *sadhana catustaya*, the fourfold spiritual discipline: (1) **discrimination** (*viveka*-wisdom) between illusory desire-mind physical and mental appearance (*avidya-maya*) and the outshining Absolute Reality of Brahman; (2) **renunciation** or divine indifference (*vairagya*) to desire and the distracting pleasures of the senses; (3) **mind disciplines**, *sama* or equanimity, *uparati* or mental indifference, *dama* or mental and emotional control, *titiksa* or mental concentration, and *sraddha* or faith in and trust in the master and the *dharma*; (4) **desire for realization** (*mumukshutva*), the desire and the will to proceed, all the way to the end of it. The goal of the path then, is not a nihilistic, renunciate escape from the suffering of conditional existence, but an on-going surrender, an opening to, and magnifying of the living *Atman*- witness presence through the disciplines of *karma*, *bhakti*, *jnana*, and *raja yoga* in the very midst of the continuing drama of the everyday lifeworld. Although compassionate service to others (*ahimsa*) through *karma yoga* is a vital part of the path, the fully developed *bodhisattva* ideal (*bodhicitta*, *tonglen*) of *Mahayana/Vajrayana* Buddhism is seemingly absent.

There are three stages or levels of the path: (1) **hearing** (*sravana*), listening to the teaching (*dharma*) and to master's *darshan*, and the study of the scriptures; (2) **seeing or reflection** (*manana*) on the symbols of *Saguna* Brahman — *Satchitananda*, *prana*, *akasha*, *Om* — and the intermediate knowing of the workings of ignorance — *Maya*, *avidya*, *vikshepa/adhyasa*, and the *pramanas* (the six modes of relative knowledge); (3) the **witness practice**, moment to moment surrender (*wu-wei*), the non-goal oriented, non-meditation

(*dhyana/ nididhyasana*) then demonstration of the nondual state of contemplation, the experience of which is *moksha-nirvikalpa samadhi* leading ultimately to nondual *sahaj samadh*. This realization is demonstrated in the lifeworld as *ahimsa/compassion*. This witness practice then, is the on-going *atma-vichara*, the “Who am I?” “*neti, neti*” consideration that results in the realization of the always present presence of *Atman-Brahman*, the nondual Absolute, beyond all the symbols, beyond cause and effect and karma, moment to moment in the everyday lifeworld.

Moksha-Samadhi: The ultimate realization of Brahman, the divine Absolute Reality is *moksha*, the stabilization of *nirvikalpa samadhi*, and potentially, the seventh lifestage realization of *sahaj samadhi* in the lifeworld (Ch.I). Yet, according to our Great Wisdom Tradition, this realization is always present now, that prior, inherently real source condition of Reality Itself, albeit cloaked by ignorance (*avidya-Maya*). What realization is not, is a process of the evolutionary development of the always seeking conditional egoic bodymind. **Evolutionary seeking strategies of this nondual ultimate goal of the path remain exoteric and dualistic, missing the mark that the path is the goal—the divine *Atman* presence already present—beyond any egoic effort or “positive,” agreeable seeking strategy for ego-self-improvement and happiness at some future time. The time is now. Happiness is already present.** This great truth—the truth of *wu-wei*, ego surrender, non-action—has been told a thousand ways throughout the many traditions our nondual Primordial Wisdom Tradition. “All *jivas* (embodied ego-selves) are ever free from bondage and pure by nature. They are ever illumined and liberated from the very beginning” (*Chandogya Upanishad*). The primordial essence or nature of mind is Brahman, our indwelling inherent self-nature. Realization or liberation then, is not an *effect* or result of the *cause* of seeking acquired knowledge of Brahman. All seeking strategies are founded in ignorance. Realization *is* always, already Brahman, here now, beyond the duality of the relative, evolutionary phenomenal sphere of the law of cause and effect, subject and object, good and evil, hope and fear, *nirvana* and *samsara*. Realization or *moksha*, the divine domain, requires the transcendence of the conditional existence of the ego-I and the cosmic domain altogether. Realization, *nirvana* (literally “blown out”) is That (*Tat*) remaining when the conditional ego-self is blown out, like a flame. That is the infinite, changeless, transcendent self-condition (*Atman*), liberated from the desire-mind attachments of the impermanent soul-self and ego-self. That is the “selfless Self” that is actually no-self, the fruit of the *neti neti*, “Who am I” consideration, perfectly present and identical to Brahman, that perfectly subjective Reality Itself. Realization then, is the “selfless Self” that acts in the world as the witness (*saksin, Atman*), without attachment, yet with great compassion. And wonder of wonders, *Tat Tvam Ami*, That I Am! “When all the desires that dwell in the heart are gone, then such a one, having been mortal, is immortal Brahman in this very body” (*Chandogya Upanishad*).

Advaita Vedanta then, participates in our great nondual Primordial Wisdom tradition. **All of the nondual spiritual paths result in the same fruit, the realization of That (*Tat*) that is changeless, and infinite; That that cannot be reduced or sublated in light of**

something else; *That* that illumines all that is, beyond doubt and error, transcending yet embracing and pervading the pseudo-*sadhana* of spiritual materialist egoic self-fulfillment with its painful, chronic self-contraction from the divine by the ego-I (*ahamkara*) of the bodymind. In the nondual view of *Advaita Vedanta* and our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition the presumed “problem” of ignorance/suffering is already transcended in its perfectly subjective source condition. This nondual view is not problem-centered, but freedom-centered from the very beginning. The ultimate subjectivity that is the Absolute Truth of Brahman, Tao, *shunyata*/emptiness, Samantabhadra, the *Trikaya* of the Base, *Ein Sof* cannot therefore be objective, but lives in a relation of identity with, yet ontologically prior to arising relative, spacetime existent reality. Again, the goal of the path is to “make the goal the path.” The *sadhana*, the real work is this moment to moment realization that the divine presence (*Atman, vidya, rigpa, logos*) of that ultimate Reality is always, already present as the “abode of Brahman” in the space-like *akasha (dhatu, ying)*, the secret place at the spiritual heart (*hridayam, nyingpo, anshin*) of each self-conscious being in every world system.⁵

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

⁵For information on *Vedanta* practice contact the *Vedanta Society*, 1946 Vedanta Pl., Los Angeles, CA 90068, (323) 465-7114.

Appendix A: part II

Kosmos: Descent and Ascent of Spirit In Advaita Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism*

Life Stage/Mind State (evolutionary, developmental) 1, 2, 3 <i>Egocentric</i>	Consciousness Dimension/State (<i>avastha</i>) (<i>non-developmental, inherent in all beings.</i>)	Corresponding Energy-Body/Kosha Dimension/ <i>Vijnana</i> (Body, Mind, Soul, Spirit) Gross Body (<i>sthula-sarira</i>)
Physical, Emotional, Mental Stage; Individuation of lower mind. Dualistic material seeking strategies dominate the view and behavior. Sleepwaiting denial of spirit-presence. Exoteric, relative-conventional response. Gross ignorance of the essencelessness and impermanence of the five <i>skandhas</i> of existence and the five sense consciousnesses. <i>Om Gate . . .</i> 4 Ethnocentric	Waking State (Exoteric) (<i>vaishvanaral/jagrat</i>) Intentional, ego-motivated, desire-mind awareness, estranged and ignorant (<i>avidya</i>) of nondual <i>Atman</i> that is Brahman. Empirical reality. Subject-object separation and dependence. The physical and lower mental phenomenal worlds. Physical and emotional body of desire. Lifeworld ruled by fear and hope. Prepersonal to personal. The Bardo of Living. <i>Nirmanakaya</i>	Gross physical matter-energy body (<i>annamaya-kosha</i>). Life, <i>Prana</i> or Emotional Body (<i>pranamaya-kosha</i>). The Quantum potential. Mental Body (<i>manomaya-kosha</i>), <i>manas</i> desire-mind/sense-mind (<i>citta</i> or <i>sems</i>). Brahman as Virat. Conditional self and its identities. The five <i>skandhas</i> /sense consciousnesses (<i>panchdvara-vijnana</i>) plus mind (<i>manovijnana</i>) <i>Om . . .</i>
Spiritual development ground and path stage; dualist conventional religious and beginning mystical seeking; finding the master; conditional <i>savikalpa Samadhi</i> ; the lesser esoteric response. <i>Shamatha</i> mindfulness practice. The <i>Mahatman</i> or essence-self recognition; deity practice. Spiritual materialism. Path of form. Kindness. Quiescence practice. <i>Para gate . . .</i> 5, 6 Worldcentric	Dream State (Esoteric) (<i>svapna</i>) Prepersonal, preconscious, subtle body of desire. Non-empirical illusory (<i>maya</i>) subject-object independence. Objective, relative-conventional realism. Beginning compassion. Fear and hope. Personal to transpersonal. "State effects" not yet "trait effects." The Bardo of Becoming. <i>Nirmanakaya</i>	Subtle Body (<i>sukshma-sarira</i>) (<i>vijnanamaya-kosha</i>) Transcends & embraces previous <i>koshas</i> . <i>Buddhi</i> , higher mental, <i>citta</i> , reflecting and discriminating mind. The will. Intellectual and subtle dharma understanding. Beginning insight and bhakti/devotional meditation (<i>dhyana</i>). Path of the yogis/saints (love wisdom). Brahman as Prajapati or Hiranyagarbha. <i>Klishta-Manovijnana</i> , subtle body, the root of ego-I. <i>Mani . . .</i>
Spiritual completion fruition stage; deity, formless and <i>kosmic</i> mysticism; the greater esoteric inner most secret response, <i>vipashyana</i> practice. <i>Moksha-nirvikalpa samadhi</i> . Karma ceases only when in <i>turiya (vidya/rigpa)</i> ; compassionate transcendent Witness practice, <i>Dzogchen</i> , Essence <i>Mahamudra</i> Frequent "clicking" from asleep to awake states. <i>Parasam gate . . .</i> 7 Theocentric	Deep Sleep State (Greater Esoteric) (<i>formless sushupti/prajna</i>) Transpersonal, transrational; profound, wise compassion. A lifeworld devoted to surrender, renunciation and service. Subjective idealism. Transpersonal subtle to causal cognition. Path of the <i>siddhas, rishis, arhats, saints</i> and <i>bodhisattvas</i> . Transcendent Witness Presence awareness. The Bardo of Dharmata. <i>Sambhogakaya</i>	Causal Body (<i>karana-sarira</i>) (<i>anandam aya-kosha</i>) Soul, transcendent mental, wisdom-spirit-bliss; path of sages and <i>arhats, bodhisattva</i> late <i>bhumi</i> levels. Nondual witness practice bridging causal dimension to nondual Absolute. Saguna Brahman as <i>prana-vayu</i> or <i>sutratman</i> . <i>Alayavijnana</i> (store consciousness). Very subtle body. Realization of the unity of the Two Truths. <i>Padme . . .</i>
Spiritual perfection stage; final, fruition, alpha pure nondual response and realization; full <i>bodhi</i> ; <i>Atman</i> identity with Brahman; no more learning; muni; transcendent integration of conditional self in lifeworld (<i>moksha-sahaj samadhi</i>), beyond fear and hope. Karma ceases; Maha-rishi, Christ-Buddhahood. Realization of <i>Kham Brahm</i> , "The Bright," Ultimate Spirit Itself, Tao, <i>Dharmakaya, Dharmata</i> . <i>Bodhi Svaha</i>	Turiya ("The Fourth") (The innermost secret, nondual transcendent Witness) Realization (liberation) of personal identity with Absolute Reality, Brahman, <i>Dharmakaya</i> , Buddhahood, primordial, nondual Spirit Itself in whom arises all phenomena Great compassion. Transcends and includes the previous relative states. The timeless "fourth time," prior unity of <i>Svabhavakakaya/Trikaya</i> of the Base; emptiness (<i>shunyata</i>) realized through <i>yeshel/jnana/gnosis</i> , the nondual Primordial Awareness Wisdom. This final realization is <i>turiyatita (sahaj)</i> the fifth state. <i>Dharmakaya</i>	Atman The nondual untainted divine presence (<i>vidya, rigpa, logos</i>), Supreme Identity, the Witness (<i>saksin</i>) that is identical to Nirguna Brahman, the Supreme Source. Transcends and embraces previous <i>samadhis, koshas</i> and all conditional experience. Mouna, the great Peace in the Silence. Om Shanti Om. Tao, <i>shyunyata</i> /emptiness, <i>Dharmakaya</i> . The unobstructed Pure <i>Alaya (amala-vijnana)</i> . Vuddha Nature Ultimate Mind Nature (<i>sems nyid/cittata, gnosis</i>). Tao <i>Hum</i> .

*The multidimensional pie of Spirit descending as phenomenal reality and the ascending realization of our non-dual Source is sliced in slightly different ways by different wisdom traditions, and even within traditions. Moreover, although the *koshas* of Vedanta and the *vijnanas* and *kayas* of Buddhism generally correlate, there is at present, no agreement on the definitions and correlation of consciousness dimensions, lifestages, bodies, levels, structures, and mindstates. Excerpted from *The Nature of Mind: The New Reformation in Religion, Science and Culture*. ©2010, David Paul Boaz, Copper Mountain Institute 505-898-9592 www.coppermountain.org or www.davidpaulboaz.org

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