

Zen and Dzogchen: Unifying the Ground and Result

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From the beginning all beings are Buddha.

-Hui Neng

The nature of mind is Buddha from the beginning.

-Garab Dorje

The Graduated Path: A Most Unusual Paradox

The spiritual teachings that have arisen within the primordial Great Wisdom Tradition of human history have a **View** (*darshana*, theory) which explains the **Ground**, the great Source of all appearing reality, and a **Path** (*marga*) which establishes the **Meditation** (*bhavana*) that seeks the continuity of recognition of the Ground leading to the **Result** or Fruition of the practice. This endpoint is “the Fruit” that is ultimate realization of our inherently nondual primordial wisdom sourceground. This final realization is seen as the essence, if not the cause of human happiness, and in the highest nondual teaching of each tradition as ultimate Happiness Itself (*Paramananda, Mahasukha*). In Buddhism this blissful Result is Buddhahood. The Path is the confusion of the gradual seeking strategies to this “goal” of liberation enlightenment. Regarding the View, the teaching is generally presented exoterically. Then, as knowledge deepens to wisdom in the “advanced” practitioner the teaching becomes more and more esoteric (inward, secret, nondual). Regarding the View of the Fruition (result/realization) of the Path, it may be either gradual (*zengo, rim-gyis-pa*), or non-gradual (sudden, *tongo, cig-car-ba*). In actual practice these two are interdependent. We “make the goal the path.” Yet it is urgent that we understand the subtle differences, as we shall see.

The Buddhist gradualist path (*zengo*) of the sutras (*Hinayana and Mahayana*) and outer tantras (*Vajrayana*) is a linear step-by-step, cause and effect progression of practices that purify ignorance through application of transformational “antidotes” to the obscurations or *kleshas* (desire/attachment, anger/aggression, ignorance) that veil (*maya, vikshepa*) the “goal” of the realization of the supreme source or Base (*gzhi*) as *shunyata* (*stong-pa nyid*), luminous emptiness, the absence of inherent existence (*nihsvabhavata*). Ultimately, as this enlightenment, this enlightened awareness, is stabilized, it may accomplish the Result that is Buddhahood. On this gradual path with its ever increasing continuity of sudden *satori/samadhis* (“brief moments, many times”), the practitioner becomes a Bodhisattva who then “progresses” to ever subtler levels of demonstration of his/her enlightenment (the ten levels or *bhumis*) through the everyday practice of the “perfections” (*paramita*) of wisdom, compassion and meditative contemplation (quiescence/*shamatha* and penetrating insight/*vipashyana*) on *shunyata* (luminous emptiness). In Zen *shamatha/vipashyana* is *shikantaza* (*yoriki*, advanced *zazen* meditation). The gradualist path “aims” at or seeks the “goal” of *shunyata* realization. The aspirant works gradually on the relative conditional self through conceptual analysis – the discriminating wisdom of *prajna* (*sherab, sophia*) until

certainty is ascertained and emptiness is realized. Nagarjuna (2nd century) regularly reminds us that the only way to realize Absolute Truth is through liberating the obscurations arising in the world of Relative Truth. Thus, Absolute or Ultimate Truth—*shunyata*—is both origin and aim. While the gradualist path of the *Hinayana* and the *Mahayana* uses *prajna*, the Inner Tantras, and especially the Ati Yoga of *Dzogchen*, utilize the non-conceptual, nondual innate primordial wisdom (*sahajajnana*, *yeshe*, *gnosis*) the natural luminosity of essential mind nature. This blissful intuitive wisdom cannot be grasped by discursive, conceptual analytic meditation (*prajna*). It can only be directly realized (*pratyaksa*), suddenly, through transmission and empowerment by the master. It is then brought to fruition by nondual meditation under the guidance of the master. This primordial wisdom is the Buddha Nature, the *tathagatagarbha*, that is the primordial ground or base (*gzhi*), empty in essence, luminous by nature, and compassionate in manifestation.

In the non-gradualist (*tongo*, sudden) path of *Dzogchen* and of the *mujodo no taigen* of nondual *Saijojo* Zen, our intrinsic Buddha Nature (*tathagatagarbha*) is already inherently present in each individual, so there is nothing to seek. The presence (*rigpa*, *vidya*) of our luminous primordial, original Buddha nature—Buddha Mind—is “always, already present”. “Wonder of wonders, All beings are Buddhas.” The dualism of conditional existence and of the exoteric gradualist path must be “cut through” (*trekchö*, *kensho*) directly via the fiery concentrative force (*tapas*) of spiritual practice or *sadhana* aided by direct transmission from the master (the Lama or the Roshi). “Introduce the state of presence (*rigpa*) of mind nature directly” (Garab Dorje). “If the view is dualistic, there can be no enlightenment” (Hui-neng). Of course, the necessary *ngöndro* or foundational practices of *Dzogchen* and *Shojo* Zen are “gradualist,” preparing the student for the liberating, sudden flashing realization of Absolute Truth, the always immediate presence of *rigpa* that is *satori*. The *tongo*, sudden approach, as with *zenjo*, the gradualist approach, is a continuity of many sudden *satori* experiences opening into the vast emptiness ground as we tread the ascending lifestage levels of realization, potentially all the way to Buddhahood (Appendix A).

As we have seen, generally the view of the path of exoteric *sutra* is based on renunciation and purification, the esoteric tantric path in transformation, and the radical *Maha Ati* of the *Dzogchen* View is that the self-perfected state is the primordial presence of Buddha mind is already present in each being. Buddha mind arises from the Buddha body of ultimate reality (*dharmakaya*, *chos-ku*) personified as Samantabhadra, the Primordial Adi Buddha whose ultimate realization is the Buddhahood of the individual. This concept-free innate “pristine cognition” (*dharmadhatujnana*, *chos-ying*) of the vast expanse of Ultimate Reality Itself (*dharmata*) is the emptiness (*shunyata*) base (*gzhi*) that is the actual nature of all arising relative phenomenal reality. These two realities are the Two Truths (*satyadvaya*, *denpa-nyis*), Relative and Absolute. The illusory or apparitional aspect of this primordial Absolute Reality is the dependent arising of form as *Maya* or *dharmin* (Dudjom Rinpoche,

1991). Again, Buddha mind is inherently present in all beings “from the very beginning,” or before. And it cannot be grasped or realized by discursive concept mind.

So the sutra and tantra views of Buddha Nature are antidotal, that is, we apply cognitive and behavioral antidotes to the negative emotional afflictions or *kleshas* (ignorance, desire/attachment, anger/aggression/hatred) as they arise. Just so, Buddha Nature itself is the supreme antidote to such ignorance (*avidya* or *marigpa*). Again, the Ati Yoga view of *Dzogchen* is that the state of presence of our Buddha Nature is already present, awake, awaiting recognition, realization, then actualization through compassionate conduct in the lifeworld. Thus there is no need of an antidote. Perhaps, we are not yet Buddhas, but we are all already Buddha. “From the beginning, all beings are Buddha” (Hui-neng). Alas, this true nature of ours is veiled or cloaked by ignorance (*avidya/maya*).

This “state of presence” that is Buddha mind or Buddha *gnosis* (innate *gnosis*, *sahajajnana*) is transmitted directly, from master to prepared student, then practiced by the student. Again, Buddha Nature is the essential Nature of Mind, the very essence of the primordial ground or base or source (*kun-gzhi*). According to the *Prasangika Madhyamikas*, this vast emptiness base is not just a negative void, a “non-affirming emptiness,” but a luminous clarity, a brightness that is an affirming emptiness, and it pervades all phenomena including all us sentient beings. We are luminous beings of light! **As this state of presence is originally and perfectly pure (*kadag*), from the very beginning, obstructing thoughts, desires and karmic actions need not be denied, renounced or transformed, but merely allowed to self-liberate (*rang grol, zenkan, kensho, satori*)—at the very instant of their arising—into their “primordially pure” source condition, the already present nondual awareness ground that is always our actual original identity, our Zen mind-Buddha mind. Therefore, all of the “slings and arrows” of our outrageous relative conventional existence are openings—an aperture—into the blissful primordial ground of being.** The knowing (*prajna*), and feeling (*bhakti*) realization of this is the vast expanse of our Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*), always already present here and now. Thus it is told by the radical nondual wisdom teaching of Zen and *Dzogchen*.

Does Buddhahood Have a Cause? Unifying Ground and Result

This Ultimate Primordial Awareness Wisdom has many names. “Truth is one, many are its names” (*Rig Veda*). As it is free of suffering, it is Absolute Bodhicitta. As it is nondual from the very beginning, it is the inseparability of the Two Fundamental Truths (relative and absolute). As it is the spontaneously present Mandala of the Ultimate Nature—the Nature of the Three Vajras—it is the unseparate expanse of the epistemological unity of *samsara* and *nirvana*. As it is always primordially pure (*kadag*) and spontaneously present (*lhundrup*) it is *Dharmakaya*, the Mandala of Primordial Buddhahood. The ultimate realization of this ontological indivisibility of the Primordial Ground or Base (*gzhi*) with its

Fruition or Result is the full *bodhi* of liberation-enlightenment that is Buddhahood, outpictured by the seed-syllable *HUM*, the pristine cognition that is Buddha mind. Such a mind knows directly the phenomenal reality arising from the primordial ground (*pratitya samutpada, tendrel nyingpo*) is simply the prior unity of the Two Truths—relative appearance and absolute emptiness—the unelaborated purity (*kadag*) of the constant state that is the unity of bliss and emptiness. Of course, such wisdom – *gnosis*, includes the Two Truths of the *Vajrayana*, namely the primordial purity and the sameness (equality) of phenomena that is the Great Dharmakaya (*chos-ku chenpo*), beyond mere emptiness (Mipham, 2007).

However, if we fail to recognize and understand this radical nondual teaching— that we and all beings, indeed, all of relative spacetime reality are “Buddha from the very beginning” — we will be unable to recognize, let alone realize, this “always already” present primordial Mandala of the Base in whom all of the spacetime dimension of Relative Truth spontaneously arises and participates. We may thereby limit our understanding to the less direct *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* gradualist paths that assume that the Fruit that is Buddhahood is a future goal that has a cause and that cause is the *bodhicitta* cultivated on the gradualist path that subscribes to a program of “keeping watch over purity,” which is the dualistic “tile polishing” and “dust wiping” path to enlightenment. The rub here is that with all the future oriented purity practice, we forget that our in-dwelling Buddha Nature “is already accomplished.”

According to this foundational, yet less direct view, only by such ritualistic goal directed *praxis* can we purify the peripheral, adventitious negative emotional defilements and accomplish the Fruit or Result that is Buddhahood. And this Result, according to the *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* vehicles, takes many eons or kalpas. In this view—from the dimension of mind that is relative phenomenal appearance—the Nature of Mind or Mind Essence is primordially pure, yet is defiled by the destructive thought and action arising from the ignorance (*avidya/marigpa/ajnana*) of human beings and therefore we must commit to the gradualist path of purification and development of *bodhicitta*. And this purification of defiled negative emotions (the *kleshas*) cultivates the relative *bodhicitta* that is seen as the *cause* of Buddhahood. But if Buddhahood has a cause, then there exists an untidy duality or separation between the “goal” of **future** Buddhahood, and our **here now** innate Buddha Nature that is always present, at the heart, in all beings. In the *Heruka Galpo Tantra* we are told, “In the expository vehicle of cause, living beings are known to be the cause of Buddhas. In the resultant *vajra* vehicle, one mediates upon the Buddhahood of mind itself.”

Conversely, the view from the dimension of mind that is Absolute Truth—the mind’s ultimate nature or mode of being—is subtly, yet profoundly different. This “secret,” “greater esoteric” view that is the non-gradualist view of the Mahayana’s *Saijojo* Zen and *Vajrayana’s Ati Dzogchen* and Essence *Mahamudra* is here transmitted by the great Jamgön Mipham thusly:

Because the *sugatagarbha* (Buddha Nature) consists in the qualities of enlightenment, which are spontaneously present from the very beginning, all the various paths that may be implemented serve only to render these qualities manifest... The paths simply render the primordial luminosity of the dharmakaya manifest. They do not create (cause) it. . . . When the mandala of the primordial ground—the authentic nature of primordial buddhahood—is realized, the mind becomes inseparable from the wisdom of all the Buddhas of the three times (past, present, future). The irreversible ground of realization is thereby achieved. In that very instant supreme mastery is found—in which the ground and fruit are inseparably united.

Jamgön Mipham (2007)

Thus, all relative phenomenal appearance is suddenly realized to be the ultimate truth of the prior, spontaneously pure primordial base. In this radical view, there is no need of a purifying antidote. The presence—Buddha mind—is abundantly present, always right here now. We need simply to surrender, to “relax, into it.” This is the great perennial wisdom secret of *Wu-wei*, the effortless surrender or “relaxation into” the source. This “sudden” (*tongo*) realization is actually a continuity or tantric continuum of “brief moments, many times”—sudden *samadhi/satori/moksha* quantum event instants of the primordial ground state that results from gradual practice of the path. This *samadhi* is the atavistic, nondual Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*yeshe, jnana, gnosis*) that is Dharmakaya, or the three Buddha Bodies of the “Trikaya of the Base” (Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, Dharmakaya). From this supreme nondual wisdom view that is Absolute Truth, all of the appearing objective and subjective phenomena of the realm of Relative Truth have never existed—have never separated from the trans-conceptual, trans-personal spontaneously present mandala of the primordial ground. And this emptiness Base (*gzhi*) is not other than the ultimate, perfectly subjective unbroken whole in whom all realities are enfolded, the perfect sphere of *Dzogchen*. This sphere is the display ground for all the unfolding, arising, objective and subjective relative-conventional, pure and impure phenomenal mind projections/ productions (*maya/vikshepa*) that are the creative “deposits” of *lila*, the endless purposeless play of the duality of relative *samsara* and *nirvana* of the three times—past, present and future.

When you fully realize this view and this practice, everything is the infinite playful display of Buddha Bodies of light, and of primordial wisdom. These are the stainless and spontaneous displays of reality (*cho nyi*) itself, like the rays of the sun they are utterly pure...

Ad.Zom Rinpoche (Translated by Anne Klein from Rinpoche's Jigme Lingpa Dzogchen Ngöndro, *Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse (Longchen Nyingthig)*).

Therefore, the non-gradualist path does not depend upon the relative-conventional Law of Causality—cause and effect—to provide a **relative** cause for the **ultimate** truth of Buddhahood. In this subtler, greater view, what appeared to be the distant “goal”—our primordially pure, beautiful original face—is always spontaneously present and awake at the spiritual heart of all beings, right now. “Open the door... follow the path right to the end” (H.H. The Dalai Lama).

Just as the surface of a mirror (*melôn*) remains unchanged by the images or reflections which appear therein, the crystal, adamant clarity and purity of this immediate Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*) presence (*vidya, rigpa*) remains untainted by the peripheral adventitious physical, emotional and mental appearances that arise. Again, there is nothing to be purified, nothing to improve and nothing to seek. No antidote is needed. No cause is necessary. Why? Because everything is “already accomplished” (Garab Dorje). Buddha nature/Buddha mind is already the case. It is “always already” present at the spiritual heart. From this radical nondual view, the gradualist path of seeking may seem to be a distraction. Alas, “Yet the seeds of past action, karma, continue to cause further arising” (Shakyamuni Buddha). And thus, paradoxically, we utilize the skillful method (*upaya*) and merit (*prajna* wisdom) of these relative distractions to recognize, then realize the Absolute. At the beginning of the Path we utilize the relative means of the Path to recognize, then realize that *That* which we seek is already spontaneously present. “The only way to realize ultimate truth is through Relative Truth” (Nagarjuna).

Of course, ultimately, the Two Truths are, as we have seen, aspects of a unitary reality—one truth. Why? The conceptual dualistic dimension of Relative Truth is necessarily, already subsumed in nondual Ultimate Truth. Not to put too fine a point on it, but the *Prasangika* of the Middle Way (*rangtong*) has told it; no ultimately true assertion can be made even as to this ultimate or Absolute Truth (*paramartha*), for all assertions are merely the conceptual imputations and designations of Relative Truth (*samvriti*). Does anything then exist ultimately? Yes and no. It depends upon the view, relative or ultimate. Relative-conventional things—objective and subjective experiences— really do exist in their relative dimension. However, ultimately, no objective or subjective **thing** exists. And what is the ontological status of **this** metaphysical assertion? It is merely a useful relative, conceptual presumption that applies only in the realm of relative truth. The great paradoxical Ultimate Truth cannot be grasped conceptually. It can only be realized, beyond concept and belief. Let us then further explore this most amazing paradox of the Two Truths—relative form and ultimate emptiness—and its astonishing resolution.

Realizing the Emptiness of Emptiness

Although the Mahayana emphasizes the realization of the radical emptiness of *shunyata* (Chin., *wu*, Tao, Jap., *mu*)—the fruit that is Buddhahood—and the Vajrayana, especially the inner tantras, emphasizes the radiant presence of our Buddha Nature, the nondual View of both *Dzogchen* and of *Saijojo* Zen is that *shunyata* is not merely a dark “non-affirming negative” emptiness. Rather, *shunyata* is, as we have seen, an affirming negative because its actual nature is luminous clarity. There is an effulgent brightness to this intrinsic emptiness of form. We must always remember that the Nature of Mind, the Ultimate Source of all of this relative-conventional reality is “empty in essence, luminous clarity in its nature, and compassionate in its lifeworld expression”. Thus emptiness, the Ultimate Truth, the ultimate reality, is in absence of any essential intrinsic nature. This absence of essential nature is real. Emptiness, the ultimate reality, exists. But how does it exist? Is it a vast ultimate, all embracing permanently existing substantive entity? According to Buddhism’s highest or subtlest teachings—the *Madhyamaka Prasangika*, (“empty of self,” *rangtong*) and the *Madhyamaka* of the Definitive Meaning (“empty of Phenomena,” *shentong*)—*shunyata* exists only as relative-conventional truth, nominally or conceptually, not as Ultimate Truth. Although relative-conventional things—objective or subjective—are “findable” and real through “relative valid cognition” (inference, *anumana*), emptiness itself is findable neither through relative valid cognition nor through “ultimate valid cognition” (direct intuitive perception, *pratyaksa*). Thus, emptiness is devoid of self-nature and cannot exist intrinsically. We must not reify and entify the emptiness of phenomena into an absolute. Emptiness too is **ultimately** empty of inherent existence. This ultimate ontological status of emptiness, the Dalai Lama terms the “emptiness of emptiness.” Again, it cannot be grasped by the intellect. Can it be known? Yes. It may be cognized through nondual Buddha *gnosis*, Buddha mind that is inseparable from Buddha Nature (*tathagatagarbha*), the Buddha essence of all beings, and indeed of all appearing reality. This always present primordial wisdom (*gnosis*, *jnana*, *yeshe*) is the *samadhi* of realization of the luminous emptiness and primal unity of all of the apparent dualities—form/ emptiness, purity/ impurity, apparent /absent—of Buddhist hermeneutics.

Therefore, there are not **ultimately** “Two Truths,”—emptiness and form—for if there were, it would logically follow that Relative Truth would be Absolute Truth (the relative subsumed in the absolute) which contradicts the basic concept of Two Truths. Is this then, one truth viewed conceptually in two modalities? Is Absolute Truth merely the ultimate unreality of Relative Truth? Does the one all-embracing Absolute Truth absolutely subsume apparently, obviously real Relative Truth? Yes, yes, and yes. The Two Truths that are the one truth exist only conventionally. Everything exists merely as dependant arising from emptiness (*pratitya samutpada*). But this is not the final view. Such logical discourse is

mere conceptual elaboration, useful in leading us to the edge, the logical, epistemological limit of discursive mind. Beyond this is the truth of utterly non-conceptual “Mu!”

Again, this can only be realized in the “pristine cognition” of emptiness (*chos-ying yeshe*, *dharmadhatujnana*), the vast expanse of Basic Space that is sublime Buddha mind, perfect, luminous nondual primordial awareness wisdom (*gnosis*, *sahajajnana*, *yeshe*). But if all of this is mere relative-conventional ideational concept and belief, how do we finally establish a meaningful coalescence of the unity and multiplicity of the Two Truths that are the unbroken whole of non-dual Reality Itself? For this we must return to the radical nondual view and practice of *Anuttara Yogatantra*, and to *Ati Dzogchen* (Ch. II).

Enlightenment: Sudden or Gradual?

What **can** be asserted here is that the non-gradualist, *tongo* nondual view of *Dzogchen* and *Saijojo* Zen holarchically transcends yet embraces the gradualist renunciation view of the *sutras* and the transformation view of the outer *tantras* (and even of the inner *tantras* of *Mahayoga* and *Anuyoga*), just as the radical and revolutionary nondual teaching of Hui-neng’s *tongo* transcended and included the dualistic gradualist view that characterized *Ch’an* Buddhism in China in the fifth century, CE. Thus as Hui Neng told, sudden *tongo* and gradual *zengo* enlightenment are a prior unity. Both are necessary aspects of the path. This ecumenical (*rime*), unitary view continues today in Zen as the nondual view of *Saijojo* Zen in both the *Soto* and *Rinzai* schools, and in the inner *Madhyamaka* of the Definitive Meaning, and in Essence *Mahamudra*, and in *Ati Dzogchen* of the *Vajrayana*.

Therefore, the perennial Buddhist hermeneutical problem regarding sudden versus gradualist liberation is a false dichotomy. The above mentioned traditions all permit sudden enlightenment while utilizing a gradual path. Mipham and other *rime* masters have argued that the sudden intuition of primordial wisdom (*gnosis*, *yeshe*) in both Essence *Mahamudra* and *Ati Dzogchen* is compatible with the gradualist, analytical view of the *Madhyamikas*. Indeed, according to Mipham (1999), the gradualist dialectics of *Prasangika* permit a “sudden” liberation of the “Four Extremes of Elaboration” (*sprospa*) that is similar to *Dzogchen*’s establishment of *kadag*. Nagarjuna told it two thousand years ago. We accomplish sudden enlightenment through gradual practice. That is, we accomplish a gradual continuity of sudden *satoris*, “brief moments, many times,” until the full bodhi of irreversible liberation. But we must remember, the Buddha essence is always, already present and awake at the Heart, whatever *praxis* we indulge.

So, at the highest or subtlest level, the “innermost secret” teaching holarchically transcends yet includes the previous dualistic limitations of human created sects, schools, sectarian bias and all the rest—the conceptual, outer/exoteric and inner/esoteric relative-conventional aspects of Buddhism. The same is true of the great nondual practices of *Advaita Vedanta* (Chap. IV), and nondual *Valentinian* and *Thomas Gnostic Christianity* (Chap. V).

Happiness Itself: The End of All Our Seeking

Therefore, the Ati Yoga of *Dzogchen* and the *Mujodo no taigen* of *Saijojo* Zen exemplify the archetypal primordial wisdom teaching that has always arisen as part of the nondual Primordial Wisdom Tradition of self-conscious species in this, and other star systems for eons (Norbu, 1999). This great ecumenical teaching does not, under the guidance of a qualified master, suffer the dualistic limitations and religious dogmas of the limited egoic structures that have conceptually unpacked the teaching on their various exoteric and esoteric paths to liberation. However, as the heart essence of the teaching is dependent upon direct "heartmind to heartmind" transmission from master to prepared disciple, realization of the great ecumenical teaching requires this very relationship within the context of a specific tradition (Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, Islam) and the wisdom personality of an individual living master or masters abiding within that tradition. Shakyamuni the Buddha, Jesus the Christ, Padmasambhava, Longchen Rabjam, Shankara, and many other Buddhas and adept realizers, past and present, appear in their avataric *Nirmanakaya* forms in different times and places to transmit this great nondual primordial wisdom teaching to those teachers and students who have recognized the love-wisdom imprint, and have prepared to receive it. These sublime avatars embody and transmit the primordial presence (*vidya*, *rigpa*, *Atman*, *Christos/logos*) of the "Buddha Nature" or the "Christ Nature" or the *Atman* that lives, awake, if cloaked (*maya*), within each human form. **"We must never forget the Tathagatas . . . the thousand Buddhas. There exist many, many ways for realized beings to manifest themselves and for the teaching to arise"** (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu).

Is one nondual tradition ultimately superior to another? It depends on the view, relative or absolute. Sectarian bias, from gross to subtle, is natural to the relative view. As to the absolute view, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one remains silent" (Ludwig Wittgenstein). Through this Silence (*mouna*) the ultimate view of each tradition speaks one truth (*paramartha satya*) in many tongues. But of course, we cannot remain silent in the face of such profundity. "No small matter is at stake. The question concerns the very way in which human life is to be lived" (Plato, *Republic*, Book I).

In all cases, meditation masters caution against three errors: 1) the error of egoic separation from the inherently divine presence within; 2) the error of attachment to the form of the teaching and its practices (with the resulting sectarian bias); and 3) the error of the idealized exoteric worship of the spacetime physical form or personage of the master. Any one of these can derail the necessary, difficult self-transcending practice/*sadhana* required by the path.

The nondual primordial wisdom teaching is this: The numinous presence of the Buddha, the *Atman*, the Christ, the Tao, by whatever name, is the divine nature and supreme source of the bodymind, always already spontaneously present and awake at the spiritual heart of every human being. The teaching, the practice and the master

mirror or transmit this utterly ineffable miracle directly, non-conceptually, to the prepared aspirant. Yet the aspirant must train the mind and the heart first through dualistic, but finally through nondual, non-graduated practice (the desideratum devoutly to be wished). This is the union of quiescence meditation (*shamatha*) and insight meditation (*vipashyana*) that opens the conceptual cage and releases the profound blessing of ultimate truth that is always here, now Happiness Itself (*paramananda, mahasuka*). Such is the nondual teaching of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition, and of the great teaching of *Ati Dzogchen* and *Saijojo Zen*.

On the Nondual View of Dzogchen and Zen:

In terms of the source, the root of all phenomena, there is no such thing as an observer and an object to observe. All the phenomena of existence, without exception, abide in the supreme source in a condition of birthlessness . . . As the supreme source (Samantabhadra), pure and total consciousness, I am the mirror in which all phenomena are reflected. Although lacking self-nature everything exists clearly; without need for a view, the nature shines clear. Understanding the essential unborn condition is not an object to observe dualistically. This is the great understanding!

-*Kunjed Gyalpo, The Supreme Source* (trans. Namkhai Norbu)

From the beginning all beings are Buddha . . . If we turn inward and prove our true nature, that true self, is no-self . . . our form now being no-form... our thought now being no-thought . . . this earth where we stand is the pure lotus land, and this very body the body of Buddha.

-Hakuin Zenji (trans. Philip Kapleau)

Historiographical Note

Neither the Buddha, nor Jesus, nor Shankara, nor Lao Tzu created a school or a religion. The schools, sects and cults of religion are human inventions and bear the limitations, distortions and dualism of secondary human gross and subtle egoic ignorance (*avidya*) as we conceptually and experientially unpack their view and meditation teachings.

That the esoteric and nondual teaching of Zen and *Dzogchen* are historically associated with Buddhism, does not mean that they began with or are limited to historical Buddhism. *Dzogchen*, for example, was practiced by the ancient pre-Buddhist *Bonpos* of the indigenous Tibetan *Bon* wisdom teaching, and by the pre-historic "Twelve Teachers of *Dzogchen*" centuries before the incarnation of the historical *Nirmanakaya* Buddha Shakyamuni (Norbu,

1999). Just so, esoteric Christianity teaches “That which is called the Christian religion existed among the ancients, and never did not exist, from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh.” (St. Augustine, Ch.V). Nor does the fact that *Nyingma Dzogchen* was influenced by *Shivaism* and *Ch’an*, or that *Ch’an* and Zen were influenced by Taoism mean that one is derived from or reducible to the other. As we recover from our habitual, linear cause and effect thinking we see that all of the traditions of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition have arisen not so much one from another in a linear historical cause and effect chain, although these influences exist, but interdependently, as a continuum from the Primordial Wisdom Base. The various traditions of our Great Wisdom Tradition all respond to the primordial wisdom of this same ultimate ground of arising reality forms. Contemplation and meditation upon this “wisdom of emptiness” opens equally into that ground for all of them.

Who Is It?

In whom does this all arise?

-Adi Da Samraj

The primary *Dzogchen* tantra, *The Kunjed Gyalpo (The Supreme Source)*, must be considered one of humankind's great spiritual treasures. According to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, this supreme non-dual teaching has been transmitted from master to disciple directly, heartmind to heartmind, for thousands of years. Its current tantric version dates from the 8th century C.E., and is a fundamental tantra of the *Dzogchen semde* (mind) teaching series. This version of the great nondual primordial wisdom teaching is derived from Buddhist sutra and tantra understanding of the Nature of Mind, yet its truth essence runs, like a golden thread, through the grand tapestry of humankind's Primordial Great Wisdom Tradition. *Kunjed Gyalpo, The Wise and Glorious King* is Samantabhadra/Samantabhadri in inseparable yabyum embrace—androgenous primordial Adi Buddha—state of pure presence, clarity and emptiness that is actually our original Buddha nature, Supreme Source, Basis, primordial womb of everything. Samantabhadra, this Ultimate *Dharmakaya* Buddha speaks to Vajrasattva, the *Sambhogakaya* Buddha:

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

- Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Supreme Source*, (1999)

Thus do the sutras and the tantras of Buddha's teaching, the dualities of the path—objective and subjective, self and other, observer and data, true and false, relative and ultimate—abide in the prior unity of the dependently arisen perfect sphere of infinite Mind Nature, luminous innate clear light mind that is always the unity of awareness and emptiness. Who is it, that I am? All the masters of the three times have told it. This infinite vast expanse of the primordial awareness wisdom continuum is who we actually are. *Tat tvam ami. That, I Am!* That is our supreme identity, great perfection of our always present Buddha nature, deep heartseed presence of ultimate happiness that is both origin and aim of all our seeking.