

The Buddhist View: Sutra, Tantra and *Dzogchen*

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The Middle Way: A brief history. The *Vajrayana*, the Tibetan Buddhist Mahayana vehicle consists of the *Kagyü*, *Sakya* and *Gelug* Schools and are referred to as the New Translation Tantra Schools (*Sarma*) that developed after the translations of Rinchen Sangpo (958-1055), during the time of Atisha and Marpa. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has shown that the view and basic structure of these schools are essentially the same as the Indian Middle Way Consequence School (*Madhyamaka Prasangika*) of Nagarjuna (2nd century), Chandrakirti (7th century), and Tsongkhapa (14th century) and is considered to be the epistemic foundation of the *Nyingma* School's nondual *Dzogchen*, the Great Completion. H.H. the Dalai Lama has referred to this great *Prasangika* Middle Way teaching as "that perfect harmony between the teachings on emptiness (*Madhyamaka*), and the teachings on the clear light (*Yogachara*)."

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

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

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

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

. . . the basic thought of *Ga-gyü*, *Sa-gya*, and *Ge-luk* is the same with respect to the philosophical views in that they are all of the Middle Way Consequence School.

- H.H. The Dalai Lama (*Kindness, Clarity and Insight*, 1984)

Dharma in a Cold Climate: the Supreme Teaching. But what of the Secret Mantra translations of this earlier Tibetan dissemination, the Old Translation School of *Nyingma*, with its supreme non-dual teaching of *Dzogchen*, The Great Completion? This teaching dates back to its historical founder, Garab Dorje (Prahevajra) in 2nd century CE Uddiyana (Orgyan). From

there it spread to Zhang Zhung, and in the 8th century to Tibet with the great translations of Vairochana, Shantirakshita and Padmasambhava, as we have seen.

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

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

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

- H.H. The Dalai Lama (1984)

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

The Triyana and the three turnings of the Wheel of Dharma are one path. Shakyamuni (Siddhartha Gautama) the historical Buddha (*circa* 566-486 B.C.E.) transmitted exoteric/outer, esoteric/inner, and nondual or greater esoteric (“innermost secret”) teaching for followers and disciples of different levels of understanding. The *mahasiddhas* of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition have generally taught in this exoteric/esoteric “two ways at once.”

The teachings of the Buddha are usually classified into *The Three Vehicles (yanas) of Enlightenment*—*The Triyana*, roughly, the “Three Turnings” of the Wheel of Dharma. They represent one dharma or one path with differing views, or differing emphases. We all need the right level of teaching for our present life stage understanding. On the accord of the Mahayana, the-

se Three Turnings of the *Dharmachakra*—broadly construed—represent the Buddha's three primary teachings: 1) The Four Noble Truths of the Foundational *Shravakayana* (*Hinayana*) Vehicle; 2) The Mahayana Vehicle: *Prajnaparamita* emptiness (*shunyata*), and the Two Truths, relative and ultimate; 3) The Mahayana Vajrayana Vehicle—Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*)—Shantirakshita's unity of middle way *Madhyamaka* and "mind only" *Chittamatra/Yogachara* with its Three Natures or Three Emptinesses. How shall we understand this?

These Three Vehicles include the Foundational Vehicle or the *Hinayana* (*Sautrantika* and *Vaibhashika* tenet systems) of the Pali School that flourishes today in Southeast Asia as the *Theravada*, and throughout the world in *Shojo* Zen of both the *Soto* and *Rinzai* schools; the Mahayana or Great Vehicle (the Causal Vehicle of the Bodhisattvas or *Bodhisattvayana*) of India, China and Japan (*Daijo* and nondual *Saijojo* zen), and includes the emptiness of *Madhyamaka* and the Buddha nature of the *Yogachara* (*Chittamatra/Mind Only*) tenet systems; and finally the *Vajrayana* or Diamond Vehicle, the Tibetan translation and transmission of the Mahayana. This is Buddha's Third Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma and reveals the inherent seed of Buddha nature that abides at the Heart of all sentient beings. It includes the subtlest tantric teachings of the Tibetan Vajrayana, namely, *Dzogchen* and Essence *Mahamudra*. However, the foundational *Shravakayana* vehicle that includes the Theravada path holds that there is only one true turning of the dharma wheel, the one true First Turning that became the Pali Canon.

The old *Nyingma* School classifies these Three Vehicles of the Buddhadharma into the *Nine Vehicles of Enlightenment*. The first three are the *Shravakayana* (listeners or disciples), the *Pratyekayana* or the vehicle of the *Pratyekabuddhas* (the Way of Solitary Awakening), and the Mahayana or Great Vehicle. These first three vehicles comprise the *Sutra Tradition* or the Outer Vehicle. The Inner Vehicle or *Tantric Tradition* is classified into three Outer Tantras (*Kriya* Tantra, *Carya* Tantra and *Yoga* Tantra), and the completion stages of the three Inner Tantras (*Mahayoga*, *Anuyoga*, and the *Atiyoga* of *Dzogchen*). This ninth vehicle, *Dzogchen*, the Great Completion is, on the accord of the *Nyingma*, the great completion and perfection life stage wisdom teaching that completes the Mahayana Causal Vehicle Two Truths duality and transcends yet includes, embraces and subsumes all of the teachings of the previous vehicles. This then is the *Nyingma* account of the Buddhist teaching vehicles.

"There is a refinement of understanding that becomes progressively more subtle through the vehicles" (Tulku Urgyen), culminating in the highest nondual teachings of both Old and New Translation Schools—*Dzogchen*, and Highest Yoga Tantra (*Essence Mahamudra*) respectively.

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

In the First Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma, in the Deer Park at Sarnath, Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths. Here he taught the great truth of "no-self" (*anatman*, *rangtong*, emptiness of self), the deconstruction of self or ego-I that is the foundation of all that was to

come. It is this great truth of *anatman* that gradually deconstructs our attachment to the sense of self, and to its impermanent (*anitya*) world of phenomena (*shentong*, emptiness of other) that are causes of suffering.

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

- Shantideva

These early teachings constitute the foundational *Shravakayana* vehicle represented now only by the Theravada School of Southeast Asia.

Siddhartha Gautama, the awakened one taught The Four Noble Truths (in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutra*) in order to lead human beings to the happiness that abides within yet beyond the inherent suffering of life. All too briefly they are: 1) *Life is suffering (dukkha)*; we don't get what we want, and we always get what we don't want; life is filled with adversity; 2) *Suffering has a cause* (ignorance/*avidya* which causes Attachment as greed and pride, and Aversion as fear, anger, hostility; we grasp and attach to self/ego-I, to permanence, and to independence as if they were inherently real/existent); 3) *Suffering has a cure* (the cessation of ignorance (*avidya, marigpa*) with its attachment and aversion); 4) *The Eightfold Path* is the cure, the way of release from suffering. This path consists of engaging right or authentic view, intention, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and meditation.

In the Second Turning of the Wheel, at Rajgir on Vulture Peak, the Buddha taught the Great Vehicle, the Mahayana; the subtler truth of the Great Emptiness (*Mahashunyata*); the Great Compassion (*Mahakaruna*), ultimate *bodhicitta* and the relative *bodhicitta* that flows from it; and the Three Buddha Bodies that are the unity of the *Trikaya of the Base (nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya, dharmakaya)*. It is this development of *bodhicitta*—the aspiration, then engaged action that furthers the liberation from suffering for all sentient beings and thus their ultimate happiness (*mahasuka*). It is this noble intention that is the defining motivation of the Mahayana path.

Now all this is embodied in the *Prajnaparamita Sutra of Transcendent Wisdom*—the perfection of the transcendent wisdom that is the ultimate realization of emptiness (*shunyata*), the realization of no-self (*anatman*), the wisdom of impermanence (*anitya*), and the final cessation of *duhkha* or suffering. Here we discover the prior unity of the “Two Truths” (*denpa nyis*)—ultimate and relative—the Middle Way *Madhyamaka* view between the two extremes of existence (permanence, eternalism, materialism), and non-existence (solipsism, nihilism). Thus, in his seminal *Heart Sutra* we hear: “Form is empty (*shunya, stong pa*); emptiness (*shunyata, stong pa nyi*) is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is not other than emptiness.” It is this great transcendental wisdom that is “the mother of the four noble beings”, namely, the *Arhats* of the *Shravakayana*, the *Pratyekabuddha Arhats*, the Bodhisattvas of the Mahayana/Bodhisattvayana, and all the perfect Buddhas of the three times, past, present and future.

On the accord of the Mahayana Vajrayana, on his final and subtlest teaching, the Third Turning of the *Dharmachakra*, the Buddha revealed that all beings are inherently endowed with

“Buddha nature” (*tathagatagarbha*), the indwelling capacity for ultimate awakening, realization and enlightenment (*bodhi*); the heart-seed of liberation from the ignorance (*avidya*) that is the cause of suffering, that is, astoundingly, this *presence* always already present at the Heart of each human form, and indeed of all beings. As “it is already present” we need not seek it. Yet, we require the Eightfold Path to remove the ignorance that cloaks our awakening to it.

Thus, it is not that we need to *seek* Buddha nature, or that we *have* Buddha nature, but that we already *are* Buddha nature. This heart seed, this bright Buddha mind presence (*vidya, rigpa*) of the unbounded whole (*mahabindu, dharmakaya*), the subtle knowing (*gzhi rigpa*) of perfectly subjective “groundless ground” abides always within the spiritual heart (*hridayam*) of every human being. It is this perfect primordial purity, utterly undefiled by any thought or action that is our natural, original state of Buddhahood, the fundamental clearlight wisdom nature of mind, our inherent Buddha mind. And from the trans-conceptual direct experience of this luminous awareness flows his supreme teaching that emptiness is not merely a nihilistic negation of phenomenal reality, but that the “nature of mind is clear light.”

Now this is the *Vajrayana* or Fruitional Vehicle—the path to ultimate realization and fruition of the prior unity of the Two Truths and the Three Buddha Bodies of the highest tantras of the Great Vehicle. Therefore, the ultimate nature of mind is not mere negative emptiness, but “the nature of mind is the unity of awareness and emptiness.” This prior unity is the vast expanse of undifferentiated, luminous primordial awareness, the boundless luminosity of the clear light that is completely free of any fabricated object, thought, or emotion. Thus, just as the vast expanse of sky cannot be obstructed by storm clouds, so our stainless primordial Buddha nature cannot be tainted by adventitious negative phenomena.

One Ground, Two Truths, Three Bodies

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

-Suzuki Roshi

What then shall we do with this precious life we’ve been given? The main point of all the vehicles of the Buddhist Path is the implicit or express wisdom teaching of the prior unity of the Great Emptiness (*mahashunyata*), The Great Compassion (*mahakaruna*) and our inherent Buddha nature. As we have seen, the essential nature of all dependently arisen phenomenal physical and mental appearance is the vast expanse of emptiness, *dharmakaya*. And this emptiness is not in any way separate from ultimate compassion.

Thus, from this great wisdom understanding and experience of emptiness spontaneously arises everyday lifeworld relative compassion for all unenlightened beings, and devotion to the master, but also to all enlightened beings (*vidyadhara/rigzin*) of the three times (past, present, future). Then, this compassion and devotion enhance understanding of luminous emptiness. The *practice* of the spiritual path includes and develops both this wisdom of ultimate emptiness, and the purifying intention and motivation of *relative* compassion-devotion that arises there from. Our primordial wisdom tradition knows this unity of basic space

(*chittadhatu*) and compassion as the wisdom of kindness (*karuna, ahimsa, hesed/charis*). All the masters and *mahasiddhas* of the three times have taught it. Without this view and action/conduct, spiritual practice becomes some species of spiritual materialism. Through this view and practice lies the cause of both relative and ultimate human happiness.

Bodhicitta is the “mind of enlightenment” —the loving, kind, compassionate *intention*, in thought and action to benefit others. This is the great “mind of light” of a Buddha. “The practice of unification of emptiness and compassion is the basis of the path” (Jamgön Kongtrül, *Lamrim Yeshe Nyingpo*). “The true path of the Buddhas is the unity of means (*upaya*) and knowledge (*prajna*)” (Tulku Urgyen, *Repeating the Words of the Buddha*, 1996). Enlightenment, our ultimate happiness, rests in step-by-step compassionate activity (*Apramana*, The Four Immeasurables or Four Boundless States), the relative-conventional means or method that is the expression in action of the spontaneous lived wisdom (*prajna/sherab*) that realizes (*jnana/yeshe*) the wisdom of emptiness. And this emptiness is none other than the Buddha nature of *Yogachara*. According to the Dalai Lama, there is no *essential* difference between these “two wisdoms” —between emptiness (*shunyata*), and Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*). “Realizing emptiness we realize our Buddha nature. Realizing our innate Buddha nature, we realize emptiness.” The great teaching of no-self (*anatman*), impermanence (*anitya*) and interdependent arising (*pratitya samutpada*) are unified in these two wisdoms. Such is the prior and present unity of Buddha’s Three Turnings of the Wheel of the Dharma.

A tale of two truths. So our perceptually imputed and conceptually and emotionally designated *provisional meaning*, the spacetime reality of the relative-conventional empirical truths (*samvriti satya*) of phenomenal reality arise from the emptiness of the primordial “groundless ground” or source—empirically—but are not *ultimately* findable under scientific, philosophical or *noetic* (mind-spirit) epistemological and ontological analysis. Therefore, such spacetime reality is necessarily empty (*shunya*) of inherent existence or self-nature, even though such arising phenomena are undeniably “real” by our intersubjective and interobjective relative-conventional agreement. Indeed, twenty-five hundred years of inter-theoretical, metaphysical and scientific analytic scrutiny—in both West and East—has revealed absolutely no *permanent, independently* existing phenomenal particulars or *things*—no enduring or eternal concrete physical or mental objects, selves, or souls. Postmodern, postclassical scientific theory—relativistic quantum field theory—is essentially in agreement with this view. Yeshe Tsogyal, the great female Buddha of the Vajrayana expresses it definitively:

Since life is conditioned by time, it has no permanence.

Since objects of the senses are but relative perceptions,
they have no ultimate existence.

Since the spiritual path is filled with delusion,
it has no essential reality.

Since the ground of everything is ultimately non-dual,
it has no solidity.

Since mind is only thinking, it has no basis or ground.

Therefore, I find no thing that ultimately exists.

If no thing ultimately exists, and if all objective and subjective phenomena are ultimately “unfindable,” we must ask, how is it that they *appear* to exist.

The question is not *whether* they exist but *how* they exist. They exist, but not in the manner in which we perceive them. They lack any discrete, intrinsic reality. This absence, or emptiness, of inherent existence is their ultimate nature. . . It is critical to understand that *Madhyamika* does not say that things are absent of inherent existence mainly because they cannot be found when sought through critical analysis. This is not the full argument. Things and events are said to be absent of inherent or intrinsic existence because *they exist only in dependence on other factors*. . . In other words, anything that depends on other factors is devoid of its own independent nature, and this absence of an independent nature is emptiness. . . Nagarjuna says that things and events, which are dependently originated, are empty, and thus are also dependently designated. . . [He] concludes there is nothing that is not empty, for there is nothing that is not dependently originated. Here we see the equation between dependent origination and emptiness. . . the path of the Middle Way, which transcends the extremes of absolutism and nihilism.

- H.H. the Dalai Lama, *Buddhadharma*, Winter 2004, p.20

The true and ultimate nature and source of all relative empirical appearance therefore, is pregnant luminous emptiness (not void, empty nothingness), Ultimate or Absolute Truth (*paramartha satya*), the *definitive meaning* that is the “ultimate mode of existing of everything” — *Tathata* or *Dharmata*. Astonishingly, this luminous emptiness is intrinsically aware! And therein abides the cognition/awareness/consciousness that all sentient beings participate in, whether or not they realize it. And this is our immediate potential for enlightenment—the presence of Buddha nature, Christ Nature (*Christos*), Tao, Zen, *Atman* that is *Nirguna Brahman*—inherent within all beings. *Tat tvam asi*. That we are!

Moreover, we may utilize the *Sutrayana* discriminating wisdom (*sherab/prajna/sophia*) of relative empirical truth as method (*upaya*) to recognize, then realize the *Tantrayana* nondual transcendent Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*yeshe/jnana/gnosis*) that is Ultimate Truth. *Upaya* is Ultimate Truth *acting* wisely, skillfully and compassionately in the everyday world of spacetime relative-conventional truth. It is this Middle Way teaching of the ever-present unity of these Two Truths—form and emptiness—of the Buddha that extends through all the vehicles of the *dharmachakra*. But, according to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, these vehicles (*yanas*) differ as to the subtlety or depth of their views and meditation on emptiness, on the clear light, and on the altruistic intention of *bodhicitta*. So the views of emptiness in sutra and tantra are the same, and they are different. How is this apparent contradiction resolved?

Emptiness: Objective and Subjective. Let us now consider the *Tantrayana* distinction between objective and subjective emptiness.

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

- H.H. The Dalai Lama (*Dzogchen*, 2000)

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

Likewise, in the final three tantric vehicles—the inner tantras of *Nyingma* including *Dzogchen* with its *Ati Yoga*, and the *Anuttara yoga*/Highest Yoga Tantra (*Essence Mahamudra*) of *Kagyü* and the new translation tantra schools—the levels of subtlety or depth regarding emptiness as the intentional object of meditation are again the same. This is the view of “objective emptiness,” the objective clear light (“objective luminosity”), “the emptiness which is the *object* of a wisdom consciousness.” Here, emptiness is viewed as a negation of phenomenal existence, and therefore of an ontologically independent perceiving self. Here, emptiness is a “non-affirming negative phenomenon,” and is not replaced with anything positive, affirming, more inclusive or transcendent.

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

As we shall see, *Mahashunyata*, the Buddha’s Great Emptiness is not *ultimately* a non-affirming negative. In the highest or subtlest view, the negated phenomena appearing to a self as relative-conventional reality is replaced by the *affirming* luminosity of the clear light (*‘od gsal/ösel/özer/prabhasvara*), the selfless, egoless positive pure bright clarity of the intrinsic dynamical emptiness of form. “Form is empty; emptiness is form” (from Buddha’s *Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*). Indeed, from the very beginning, there is no enduring *permanent* reality or self to negate! As we have seen, there are only these perceptually and conceptually imputed and designated relative-conventional “concealer truths” of arising phenomenal appearance.

So there emerges a subtle, outshining luminosity as emptiness manifests as form from the primordial purity (*kadag*) of the base, the basal “groundless ground” (*gzhi*) as mere appearance of arising physical and mental forms—apparent, relative-conventionally perceived and imputed spacetime phenomenal reality. This brightness or radiance is then, the ultimate nature of reality itself (*cho nyid*), the clearlight wisdom nature of mind (*sems nyid*).

However, we are cautioned throughout the teaching that this essential mind nature is not an ego-self, nor is it an *atman* “higher self,” eternal soul or logocentric theistic creator God. Nor is this luminous continuity of mind essence some separate *thing*—something “other.” Such relative-conventional dualism—attachment to appearing phenomena, attachment to our

beliefs and concepts about mind-created God or gods, and attachment to our experiencing separate egoic self-sense—belies the Ultimate or Absolute Truth of the prior unity of the Two Truths that is singular mind nature. So the Two Truths, relative and ultimate, are in actuality this selfless (*anatman*) one great truth, invariant through all impermanent (*anitya*) modes of human cognition—objective exoteric, subjective esoteric, innermost esoteric, and nondual.

Yet, paradoxically (to concept-mind), this Ultimate Truth, ultimate emptiness, *dharmakaya*, unbounded *mahabindu*, is not itself an independently existing absolute entity or *thing*. According to His Holiness, it too is subject to the prior causes and conditions of previous universes and *kalpas*, that is, it too is subject to the natural law of cause and effect dependent arising (*pratitya samutpada*). This is, from the view of conceptual, relative truth, the ultimate paradox of the “emptiness of emptiness.” However, from the nondual view of Ultimate Truth there is no dilemma, no problem, indeed, no conceptual thinking whatsoever.

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

- Suzuki Roshi

Hence, there is a profound difference between the direct and immediate actuality of the transcendent wisdom presence (*vidya, rigpa*) of the trans-conceptual boundless emptiness whole, and indirect perceptual-conceptual emptiness. So here, in the nondual view of subjective emptiness of the subtlest or highest tantras of both old and new tantra schools the Middle Way of the *Madhyamikas* of the *Svatantrika* and *Prasangika* Schools yields to the deeper, subtler or more direct understanding that dialectically transcends, yet pervades and includes it.

Here, in highest stage innermost secret *Dzogchen Ati Yoga* and Essence *Mahamudra*, emptiness meditation is an “affirming negative” in which the *actuality*—not an indirect concept and not a direct experience (*nyam*)—of clear light wisdom mind nature appears directly to the yogi, yet is “known to be empty of inherent existence.” This urgent distinction between objective and subjective emptiness is the difference that makes a difference between the *Madhyamaka* of sutra and lower/outer tantra *vis-à-vis* the highest inner and nondual tantras with regard to the view of emptiness. . . .

Relationship: Big Mind, Small Mind, and the Bridge. Can this direct, greater esoteric or non-dual (*advaya, gnyis med*, “not one, not two”) teaching of the innermost secret, highest tantras be reduced to the understanding of the less direct, lesser esoteric or even exoteric view and practice of the less subtle teaching of sutra or lower tantra, as Evans-Wentz, Jung and many other non-practitioner scholars have done? No. Throughout Buddhism, and indeed throughout our great wisdom traditions the exoteric outer and lesser esoteric inner view cannot accomplish the greater esoteric, innermost or nondual realization, despite protests of the pathologically independent, facile, uber-egalitarian, postmodern ego-I. *Under sway of the ignorance (avidya) of this separate egoic self-sense we become the fearful, hopeful advocates of the developmental limits of our present lifestage with its uncomfortable “comfort zones,” arguing and defending the painful result.*

As we have seen, cross-cultural psycho-spiritual development (spiritual evolution), our relative-conventional growth through culturally universal sequential life stages and mind states of the body-mind-spirit (gross, subtle, causal and nondual) continuum of consciousness, is invariant and state-specific. Life stages and their accompanying mind states presuppose earlier, less subtle emotional, phenomenological stages or levels of consciousness development. Although life stages overlap, and unfinished psycho-emotional business must be revisited and interpretively unpacked, life stages cannot be skipped. While the wisdom understanding of the subtler, deeper or “higher” life stages subsumes, includes and transcends the earlier, less subtle life stages, the understanding of the latter cannot grasp, accomplish or realize the former. The parent's understanding transcends yet embraces the child's understanding. Of course there are surface differences—relative-conventional perception, concept and belief—in the structural constitution of developmental life stages across socio-cultural space and time. But the deeper, subtler mental/emotional/spiritual structures are the same. And the mere surface understanding cannot comprehend the depth.

Let's unpack this a bit. In the prevailing East/West stage model of our cognitive continuum of psycho-emotional-spiritual development, deep background, pre-conscious, culturally conditioned, semiotic (logical syntax, semantics/meaning, pragmatics), relative-conventional symbols (language) emerge just before concepts, which emerge before rules and morality, which necessarily precede exoteric (outer) religious belief, and then esoteric (inner), and finally greater esoteric (non-dual or innermost/secret) subtle spiritual mind states and life stages. The surface conceptual and belief systems and deity icons differ within the numinous Deep (*Bathos*), primordial womb that is their singular matrix and basal ontological structure, the very essence and nature of mind.

Just so, this nondual perfectly subjective, luminous clear light wisdom nature of mind (*purusha/cittata/sem nyid*), Suzuki Roshi's “Big Mind,” our ultimate supreme source subsumes pervades and embraces, yet transcends all of the dualities of conditional existence, the relative-conventional limits of physical and mental experience that is the dependently arisen subjective content and objective production of dualistic “Small Mind” (*prakriti/citta/sems*). Again, conceptual small mind cannot grasp or realize Tao, the great emptiness that is Big Mind, although paradoxically, the “pure presence” of it is “always, already” present at the spiritual heart of each individual being. And it is the confusion of the spiritual path that is the bridge to the resolution of this paradox, and ultimately, the realization of this great truth. “Just as the steps of a staircase, you should train step-by-step. . . steadily to the end” (Shakyamuni, the Buddha).

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

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

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

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

Thus, from ignorance (*avidya*) arises concept mind (*manovijnana*), the egoic negative afflictive emotions—fear, anger, greed and pride—and attachment to the self (*klesha-mind/klishtamanovijnana*) that results in the mental and emotional imbalances that produce the destructive behavior that causes suffering. The positive emotions of tantric Buddhism's Four Boundless States (The Four Immeasurables), our wisdom tradition's Great Love—kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity—result in mental and emotional balance that produces the behavior that causes happiness. It's so very natural and logical, so lawful. We reap what we sow. What we give is what we get. What goes around, comes around. "What you are is what you have been. What you will be is what you do now" (Shakyamuni, the Buddha).

Thus, according to Chandrakirti, from an understanding of these First and Second Noble Truths, we may consider that there may be a possible way to the final cessation of suffering—its cause or origin—a path or bridge to freedom from this ignorance and imbalance (*avidya/marigpa/ajnana/hamartia-sin*) that is the root cause of suffering. Thus follows the Third Noble Truth, the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering.

And if this cessation is possible—and by the demonstration of the lives of all the buddhas and *mahasiddhas* of our Great Primordial Wisdom Tradition, it clearly is possible—we can then postulate the Fourth Noble Truth, the Eightfold Path that is the precise, objective, scientific mind training program that transforms habitual negative mental, emotional and attentional imbalances into our natural inherent transcendent wisdom, the *Prajnaparamita*, Great Mother of all the buddhas. This is the great truth that realizes and actualizes our primordial source or ground state, and beyond, to the ultimate perfection of buddha mind, perfectly awakened state and activity of being in form that is, paradoxically, always present within each one of us from the very beginning. "The child knows the mother."

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

- T.S. Eliot (*Four Quartets*)

How then, does an ordinary being become a buddha? What did the Buddha have? He had the Two Truths that became the Four Noble Truths with its Eightfold Path that leads, step-by-step, to the final cessation of suffering (*nirvana*). What do we have? We have our Refuge in the Three Jewels—Buddha, Dharma, Sangha—that are the Three Roots (Guru, Deva, Dakini) and the Trikaya of the Base (*gzhi*) or three *kayas* or Buddha bodies. That is, we have—here and now—our inherent *Buddha nature*, mirrored by the spiritual mentor or Vajra Master; then we have the great teaching of the *Buddhadharma* and the intervention of mantra and the deities; and we have the *Sangha*, our spiritual community that also includes our spiritual lineage and all the enlightened ones—the *vidyadhara/rigzin* of the three times—past, present and future. Hence, we have always this primordial relationship that is the bridge, that is the path of all the buddhas continuously revealing the prior and ever present unity of these precious three refuge sources.

So we take refuge in the Three Jewels, the Three Roots, and the Trikaya of the Base, and begin to develop the great intention to the compassionate heartmind that is *bodhicitta*, for the benefit of all beings. In Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism we accomplish this through *shamatha* or mindfulness practice and *vipashyana* or penetrating insight, and the foundational practices (*ngöndro*) that are the prelude to the *Dzogchen* or to the *Essence Mahamudra* view and practice.

The point of practice of this *Mahayana* path is recognition, then realization of the prior and present ultimate unity of the wisdom of emptiness and the compassionate *bodhicitta*, and thereby the gradual integration of that into our everyday lifeworld of relative-conventional thought, intention and action. This is the integration of View and Conduct, integration of Ultimate Truth with Relative Truth, integration of the Ground with the Fruit or Result, integration of *nirvana* and *samsara*—step-by-step, even though to the fearless warrior-yogi of “uncontrived wisdom conduct” such an integration has never left the prior unity of the perfect sphere of *dharmakaya*. Herein arises the most unusual paradox of those most subtle paths of Buddhist *Dzogchen*, and of Highest Yoga Tantra. . . .

The Paradox of the Path: Integrating View and Conduct. So gradually, through the practice of the path, the veils of ignorance (*vidya, maya*) to this great truth of reality are lifted and the understanding of the unity of the wisdom of emptiness and the wisdom of compassion is enhanced. Then, wonder of wonders, upon the breath arises mindful and aware equanimity, this trans-conceptual recognition that is *vidya/rigpa*, primordial “pure presence” of uncreated, ineffable peace.

Here, the prior unity of compassionate method (*upaya, function*) and wisdom (*prajna, yeshe, structure*) of all development and completion lifestages (*Mahayoga, Anuyoga* and *Atiyoga*), mindstates, *yanas* and wisdoms are, just for a moment *now (turiya)*, nakedly seen and known as *dharmakaya*, utterly free of fear and hope, free of the duality of all emotional afflic-

tion and conceptual elaboration. “Who are you in the space between two thoughts?” In this nondual “state of presence” ego-attachment, grasping, clinging, fear and anger “self liberate” at the very instant of their arising. Like a bird in the vast empty sky, thought and action leave “no trace.” Thoughts and appearances—happy and sad—rise up from the great primal ocean of luminous clarity, then return again to this source without any change in identity or essence.

When one realizes that the actual nature of thinking and emotion is this bright luminous clarity, there is no need to suppress or repress thoughts, concepts and emotions. There is no need to believe that which we think, nor to defend that which we believe. “The Nature of Mind is Buddha from the beginning.” This is the view (*shoshin*) and fruition of Ultimate Truth. But it’s just very ordinary—“nothing special” (*wushin*). It’s merely the actual nature of existence. It appears special and dramatic only from the view of a permanent subject/self/ego in an intrinsically separate objective reality. “No problem at all”.

Hence, it is the ascending development stage of the path—devotion to the master, ordinary, repetitive everyday compassionate living, and the surrender (*wu wei*) or “letting go” that is renunciant practice—that transforms such extraordinary, special but temporary *samadhi* “states” into the permanent lifeworld “altered traits” of the meditative stabilization of completion stage realization, and compassionate life world conduct. Then finally, in due course and by grace, there manifests the later *bhumis*, and ultimate perfection of Buddhahood. “Descend with the view while ascending with the conduct. It is most essential to practice these two as a unity” (Padmasambhava).

We must then, engage this “paradox of the path” that is the paradox of seeking—the effortful foundational practices of the Buddha’s teaching—while standing firmly in effortless view and conduct of the highest nondual tantras. This is the Buddha’s great teaching in “two ways at once.” Thus, through skillful effort (*upaya*), while “letting it be as it is”—in due course, and by grace—we exhaust the seeking strategies of the adventitious great search and awaken to our already present perfect happiness, the Buddha nature within each one.).

The great nondual truth of the descent and ascent of Spirit through form is told again and again throughout the subtlest “innermost secret” teachings of our primordial wisdom traditions. This is “the light of the Tao that is beyond heaven and earth,” the very “Gnosis of Light that lighteth every one that cometh into the world.” This is *Kham Brahm*—“All is *Brahman*”—“The Bright” of the old *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *Vedanta*. In Sutrayana this view is Ultimate Truth, the final third truth of T’ei T’ai’s non-dual “Middle Way Buddha Nature” (Chih-i), beyond the duality of permanent, eternal existence, and nihilistic non-existence.

In *Dzogchen* this practice is “swooping down from above (with the ideal of the view) while climbing up from below (through the struggle of the conduct).” Padmasambhava advises, “Keep the view as high as the sky, and your deeds as fine as barley flower.” Yet here, Guru Rinpoche cautions us not to “lose the view in the conduct,” and not to lose “the conduct in the view.” We must not lose the View of Ultimate Truth—The Great Emptiness—in the dualistic ignorance of hope and fear of conceptual relative-conventional truths and the ethical conundrums of right and wrong conduct. Just so, we must not lose the relative truths of ethical con-

duct—valuation, deciding on kindness while rejecting unkindness—for a political, idealized, but unrealized view of the Great Completion of nondual Ultimate Truth.

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

- Tulku Urgyen, *At It Is*, 2000)

So we just continue the compassionate ethical conduct of our relative-conventional spiritual practice, in the midst of the continuous error (*shushaku jushaku*) of hope and fear, of accepting and rejecting, while making a constant mindful effort to *keep the View* that is utterly free of this dualistic bias—perfectly free of the three emotional poisons of ignorance, attachment and anger—that mindless cycle of “black diffusion” of one without a greater view.

What a marvelous paradox! In order to integrate the two truths of View and Conduct we must distinguish the duality of their relative difference—so that we don’t lose one in the other—while yet abiding in the continuous nondual awareness of their prior essential unity.

This then, is the perfect practice of the integration of view and conduct, wisdom and merit, the prior unity of the Two Truths—ultimate and relative—that is both origin and aim of the activity or conduct of the ascending and the descending aspects of refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddhist Path, and indeed, of all the “greater esoteric” or non-dual innermost secret spiritual paths of our entire great tradition. This unity is and has always been, “already accomplished,” nothing special, ever present and never absent from our inherent happiness, right here and now, inherently present in all beings. Wondrous paradox indeed!

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

As we have seen, in *actuality* this primordial transcendent wisdom dialectically subsumes and transcends not only the exoteric objective understanding of the less subtle teaching on emptiness, but even its esoteric direct subjective yogic experience, for such wisdom is utterly nondual (“not two, not one,” “two in one,” *neti, neti*—not this, not that). This resplendent clear light awareness is, for the yogi “essential rigpa” (*paravidya*)—prior unity of appearance and emptiness, of clarity/luminosity and emptiness, of bliss and emptiness, of awareness and

emptiness (the four *wangs* or empowerments) of development, completion and perfection life stages of the path. *Rigpa* then, is not a mere concept (thought) or an experience (*nyam*), but the *apriori*, bright naked *presence* of the transcendent Primordial Awareness Wisdom (gnosis, *yeshe*, *jnana*) itself, *Prajnaparamita*—wisdom mother of all the Buddhas.

Again, the transcendent unity of clearlight mind has its objective and subjective aspects. The former is the “object emptiness” (*lhundrub*/presence) that is always already united with the latter, the subjective aspect of clear light (*kadag*/purity), *dharmakaya* (*chö ku*), the Ultimate Reality (*chö nyid*). This reality is the Ultimate Truth (*don dam denpa*, *paramartha*) that is the “all empty” nondual primordial ground or emanation base (*gzhi rigpa*), our great wisdom mother (*Yeshe*), primordial womb of all the descending subtle and gross appearing phenomena of the relative truths of *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*. “Form is empty; emptiness is form.” There is no emptiness other than form. There is no form that is not an emptiness.

Yet emptiness and form are not separate objects or “things,” as we have seen. They are utterly interdependent, interconnected and interpenetrating, a prior and present perfectly subjective unity. “This is the Buddha’s great truth of dependent arising—the final view that is free of the duality of the extremes of absolute permanent existence, or the nihilism of non-existence. . .” (Adzom Rinpoche, 2002).

The future is entirely dependent upon what is occurring now. “What you are is what you have been. What you will be is what you do now” (Shakyamuni Buddha). This great truth is the basis of our great wisdom tradition’s natural law of cause and effect—karma—our behavior and conduct, the way we must live to be happy in this mad, mad world.

Phenomena appear dualistically, as subject and object, pure or impure, but their *energy essence* and basis or source—their actual nature—is always nondual yet luminous emptiness, ever free of all the perceptual imputation, conceptual designation, and the emotional hope and fear of relative-conventional “small mind.” “There is nothing other than this.” This then, is the radically post-critical, post-metaphysical Middle Way balance between materialistic permanent existence and idealist nihilist non-existence. This is the nondual view of the unity of relative form and ultimate emptiness. It transcends yet embraces the endless dichotomies of conceptual judgment, beyond crazy or sane, beyond good and evil, utterly “gone beyond” (*paragate*) all concept, belief, deity, icon and archetype.

Of course we must evaluate—polarize/dichotomize—to live in the realm of empirical, relative-conventional spacetime reality. As we have seen, ethical conduct requires that we discriminate between good and evil, between unifying pure view, and separative false views, between kind intention and action, and harmful destructive thought and action. Yet, there is this great primordial transcendent View—the big picture “as high as the sky”—abiding in perfection of the nondual middle (*madhya*), always in the timeless fourth time (*turiya*), deep at the heart of this very moment now.

The Triune Nature. In the classical tantric metaphor, this formless, perfectly subjective basal source, ground or base (*gzhi*) is like the infinite expanse of cloudless sky. *Rigpa* is like the sun, the sky’s vast capacity for knowing the perfect clarity of awareness. The descending light/energy/motion ($E=mc^2$) of this infinite awareness continuum is like the sun’s rays (*‘od*

gsal), transcendent Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*yeshe, jnana, gnosis*) penetrating and illuminating the dark clouds of ignorance (*avidya/marigpa*) that obscure the actual clear light wisdom nature of mind.

These three manifest as the five rays or five colors of the great mandala of the five Buddha families, dependently arisen phenomena emerging as the five aggregates or *skandas* of relative-conventional, empirical spacetime reality. These three—sky, sun and rays—are respectively, *dharmakaya, sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*; the Three Vajras of Body, Voice, and Mind; OM, ÂH, HUM. These three Buddha bodies are the inseparable, unborn, stainless *Trikaya of the Base, Absolute Bodhicitta, Svabhavakakaya*—The Fourth Body—prior unity of the vast expanse of this infinite consciousness continuum that is primordial mind nature itself (*sems nyid*).

This unified *Trikaya* of the Base is the perfectly subjective deep background continuum that is unobstructed *pure alaya (amala-vijnana)*, the ninth consciousness revealed in the highest tantras. Its luminous presence is the Buddha nature heartseed of all the *tathagatas*, the Buddhas of the three times—past, present and future—transcending yet pervading our waking, dreaming and deep sleep states through this timeless moment now, primordial abode of the fourth time (*turiya*). “The three times are one. . . Now is the time to enter into it” (Garab Dorje).

Therefore, from the view of relative-conventional truth, these three *kayas* or bodies are the three aspects of the great wisdom truth of our non-separate participation and growth through *exoteric* (course/outer/waking state), *esoteric* (subtle/inner/dream state), and ultimately, the nondual *greater esoteric* (very subtle/innermost secret/deep sleep state) development life stages—all the way to the end of it—Buddha mind, Buddhahood.

However, from the view of absolute or ultimate truth, the view of a Buddha, all of this is merely the playful display of the prior infinite unity of *dharmakaya*, utterly “gone beyond” sentient perception, concept, belief, archetype and all negative afflicted emotion. The stages of the path and the transcendent wisdom revealed and grounded therein is perfectly expressed in Sutra in the great *Prajnaparamita Mantra: Om Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha* (from Buddha's the *Heart Sutra*), and in Tantra in the Great Mantra of Avalokiteshvara: *Om Mani Padme Hum*.

An equally profound Tibetan Buddhist mantra for the practitioner on this path is the Vajra Guru Mantra: *Om Ah Hum Vajra Guru Pema Siddhi Hum*. It is said that the twelve syllables of this mantra bestow the complete blessing of the Buddha's twelve kinds of teaching that entirely purifies the negative emotional obstructions of the twelve links of dependent arising on the *Dharmachakra, Wheel of Becoming*. It furthers one to practice these mantras. . . .

Such an Orphic, participatory epistemology and ontology has been called, in the gloss of our emerging Noetic (mind-spirit) Revolution, the “wholeness principle”—*telos, eros*, the movement that connects (growth)—attitudinal view, meditation and action or conduct. This is the path that is the inter-theoretical, meditative-contemplative and practical antidote to *thanatos*, the destructive “separative principle” embodied as the afflictive emotional poisons: *avidya/ignorance* that is Attraction (pride, greed), and Avoidance (fear, anger, hatred, hostility). Within the unbroken wholeness of the ultimate nature of mind arises the twelve links of mind-generated positive and negative thought and emotion. Ignorance of the essential good-

ness of this ground is ignorance (*avidya*), and *thanatos*—human evil and alienation that manifests as human suffering (*dukkha*).

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

- Adzom Rinpoche (2002)

The Threefold Space. According to recent *Dzogchen* master Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, the two innermost principles of *Dzogchen* are Space (*ying/dhatu*) and Awareness (*rigpa/vidya*). This basic space is pregnant luminous emptiness, the unity of emptiness and wisdom of the clear light. In *Dzogchen* view and practice basic space is often seen as a threefold unity. Outer *ying* is like pure vast empty sky, the Great Emptiness (*Mahashunyata*) in which, or in whom arises all relative spacetime phenomena. This is *Akashadhatu*. Inner *ying* is the emptiness of mind essence, the very nature of mind (*citatta/sems nyid*). This is *Vajradhatu*. Innermost *ying* is essential *rigpa*, luminous clarity of nondual recognition, bright knowing awareness of the prior primordial unity of these three. This is *Jnanadhatu*. In *Dzogchen*, this innermost realization of space, of the infinite “Vast Expanse” is *klong* (*long*), beyond all concept, belief, judgment and bias, beyond even the subtlest subject-object duality, beyond subjective and objective emptiness, beyond ground and path luminosity.

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

- Tulku Urgyen (*As It Is*, Vol. I, 1999; *Rainbow Painting*, 1995)

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

- Francesca Fremantle, *Luminous Emptiness*, 2001

“The dharmakaya arises unnecessarily out of infinite space” (Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche). And the great beauty of it—“It is already accomplished,” here, now, for everyone as our indwelling, intrinsic Buddha nature, bright presence of that. Constant attention, awareness of this great truth precedes the compassionate conduct that lifts the suffering of beings and generates both relative happiness (human flourishing, *felicitas*), and ultimate happiness (*mahasukha*, *paramananda*, *beatitudo*) in the giver.

No Problem. We may now review the three essential *yanas* of the Buddhist path— Sutra, Tantra and *Dzogchen*. According to the Third Dodrupchen, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the higher or Inner Tantras of both *Anuttarayoga tantra* or Highest Yoga Tantra (father, mother and nondual tantras), and of *Dzogchen* (*semde, longde, mengagde/upadesha* teaching series) are essentially nondual tantras, while the less subtle, less direct outer tantras and sutras of the *Triyana* remain the more fundamental or foundational vehicles of the Buddha's transmission to us. And all these vehicles of the path have the same goal—*Prajnaparamita*—the great primordial Transcendent Wisdom (*jnana, yeshe*), the wisdom of the primordial Buddhas.

His Holiness reminds us that without this foundation of the path; indeed, without all three Turnings of Buddha's *Dharmachakra*, all of Buddha's speech (*Buddhavaccana*), the wisdom temple cannot be built. Thus, for Vajrayana the preliminaries or foundational practices (*ngöndro*) are actually the most profound. They introduce the very highest nondual teaching of both the *Sutrayana* and *Tantrayana* (*Mantrayana*) vehicles. They continue to be fundamental through development, completion and perfection stages of all the Vajrayana paths. Let us then forsake the traditional hubris inherent in the lesser/greater, *hina/maha*, provisional/definitive (*neyartha/nitartha*) dualities and honor Buddha's speech in a non-sectarian, *rime* spirit.

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

The profound paradox of the Dzogchen fruitional or resultant view is that there is no afflicted consciousness or emotions to be renounced, purified or transformed! Indeed, there is no actual reality at all to negate, no absolute or ultimate ontological ground at all! There are merely perceptually and conceptually imputed appearances, and our experience of them. Thus the rather ambiguous epithet "groundless ground" for the prodigious, non-logocentric, empty emptiness source/base (*gzhi*).

On the nondual *Dzogchen* view the primordial nature of reality itself, its very heart-essence, is "perfect from the very beginning," is "Buddha from the very beginning." This prior, inseparable unity of emptiness, luminosity and awareness is blissful "primordially pure" presence of androgenous Samantabhadra (Kuntazangpo), primordial Adi Buddha, our supreme source, always already present within and throughout the body-mind, ascending and descending upon the gentle breath of mindfulness, indestructible *thigle* essence deep at the heart.

This Buddha nature is the essence of Buddha's Third Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma. Again we understand, this, our bright "innermost secret" presence (*rigpa/vidya*) is our continuous interdependent participation in this ultimate nature of reality itself (*chö nyid*), *dharmakaya*, just as it is (*thamel gyi shepa*), utterly transcending any thought, concept or even experience of it. *Tat tvam asi. That I Am*, our supreme identity, already here now.

When we forget ourselves we are actually the true activity of the big existence (Big Mind), or reality itself. When we realize this fact, there is no problem what-

soever in this world. The purpose of our practice is to be aware of this fact. . . It may be too perfect for us, just now, because we are so much attached to our own feeling, to our individual existence. . . When you can sit with your whole body and mind, and with the oneness of your mind and body under the control of the universal mind, you can easily attain this kind of right understanding. . . When we reach this understanding we find the true meaning of our life. . . How very glad the water must be to come back to the original river!

- Suzuki Roshi, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, 1970

In this way then, through nondual understanding, the two seemingly contradictory theses of the views on emptiness in Sutra and Tantra—objective and subjective, ascending and descending—are dialectically transcended, yet included and embraced in the higher or deeper synthesis of the supreme view and practice of the subtlest highest tantras, without mistakenly reducing the great nondual teaching to explanatory experiences and expressions of a mere conceptual "web of belief" (Quine). "No problem whatsoever."

Ultimately then, the emptiness of *Madhyamaka* is the emptiness of *Dzogchen* and of highest *Essence Mahamudra*, although the relative-conventional view and practice differs slightly. And the result or fruition of all three is identical—Buddhahood. Again, this is the Buddha's perfect teaching in "two ways at once," the prior "natural unity of one identity with two aspects." One ground, two truths, three bodies are a prior unity that is *a priori* unity of this Buddhist Two Truths trope—Ultimate Truth and Relative Truth—subsumed in the ineffable one truth that is invariant through all of our cognitive states—objective, subjective, contemplative and nondual. A most amazing paradox!

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

- H.H. The Dalai Lama

Ground, Path, Fruit

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

- Adzom Paylo Rinpoche

Integrating the Ground and the Fruit Through the Path. In the *Dzogchen* View the Fruition—enlightenment or Buddhahood—is always already present in the very nature of our essential base or ground (emptiness/Buddha nature), but it is not yet realized and actualized through the Body, Voice and Mind of this nature. We must awaken to it.

The essence of enlightenment—the very heart-seed of Buddha Nature (*tathagatagarbha*) "is a continuity that extends throughout our journey along the stages of ground, path and fruition" (Kenchen Thrangu Rinpoche). The precious *samaya* or covenant between Vajra Master and student facilitates the *Dzogchen* development (creation) and completion stages of the path. This is absolutely necessary to integrate and accomplish the prior already perfect unity of

ground and fruition in the confusion context of our everyday life world, and of the spiritual path. If this process is to bear the fruit of liberation, the student must continuously dedicate the merit and benefit of these profound practices, not to the self, but to the benefit and ultimate happiness of all beings, great and small, everywhere. What then, is the *Dzogchen* method of clarifying the confusion of the path? It is View, Meditation, and Conduct.

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

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

The Main Point. Dodrupchen teaches that “The main point is that the *rigpa* taught in the *Dzogchen* approach and the wisdom of clear light (*Anuttarayoga tantra*) are one and the same.” Twentieth Century *rime* (non-sectarian) master Tulku Urgyen agrees. Regarding the “three great views”:

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

- Tulku Urgyen (*Rainbow Painting*, 1995)

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

Dodrupchen’s “effulgent *rigpa*” of the clear light is the aspect of *rigpa* that is “experienced” when conceptual thoughts (*vikalpa*) of the less subtle mind states are present—“*rigpa* that arises from the ground, and is the appearance of the ground.” “Essential *rigpa*” is the indwelling, pure direct “experience” in the yogi—free of any conceptual elaboration—the expe-

rience of the nondual ultimate “fundamental innate mind of clear light.” Moreover, this clear light mind is essentially the same as the *Sutrayana* nondual “transcendental wisdom” of the *Prajnaparamita Sutra*, beyond or prior to subject and object, self and other, and all the dualities of the conditional spacetime dimensions of the world of empirical relative-conventional truth.

So there is effulgent *rigpa* of the appearances of the ground or base, and essential *rigpa* of the actual ground or base. But Dodrupchen also identifies *rigpa* that is both, and *rigpa* that is neither. In the former there is *rigpa* of the conceptual appearances arising from the base, effulgent *rigpa*, but here, in “*rigpa* attaining its full measure” the yogi has taken a “firm stance within the essence of the base” or essential *rigpa*.

Here then, we have both effulgent and essential qualities and experiences of *rigpa*. However, Drodrukchen’s fourth alternative is *rigpa* that is neither effulgent nor essential *rigpa*. This is the “*rigpa* of all-embracing spontaneous presence (*lhundrub*), the dharmakaya wisdom of fruition” that is the “ultimate fruition. . . the ultimate state of freedom . . . exhaustion of phenomena beyond the mind” (H.H. The Dalai Lama, 2000). . .

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

Self-arising wisdom is *rigpa* that is empty, clear and free from all elaboration, like an immaculate sphere of crystal . . . it does not analyze objects . . . By simply identifying that non-conceptual, pristine, naked *rigpa*, you realize there is nothing other than this nature. . . This is non-dual self-arising wisdom. . . Like a reflection in a mirror (*melôn*), when objects and perceptions manifest to *rigpa*, that pristine and naked awareness which does not proliferate into thought is called the ‘inner power (*tsal*), the responsiveness that is the ground (*gzhi*) for all the arising of things’. . . For a yogin who realizes the naked meaning of *Dzogpachenpo*, *rigpa* is fresh, pure and naked, and objects may manifest and appear within *rigpa*, but it does not lose itself externally to those objects.

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

So the atavistic self-arising clear light wisdom consciousness (*rigpa*) is primordially pure, and in Longchenpa’s words, “empty and clear” —the unity of emptiness and the clarity that is luminosity. Again, it is the prior “natural unity of one identity with two aspects.” *Shunya* literally means empty, *ta* is awareness; *shunyata* then is empty awareness. This supreme source or primordial base of the chaos of appearing energy forms is empty and aware—the unity of emptiness with its interdependent energy appearances arising upon the *prana* wind of awareness (*lungta*). Its *essence* is emptiness, *primordial purity/kadag* (*trekchö* practice): subjective “inner lucidity,” wisdom, *dharmakaya* ultimate truth. Its *nature* is awareness, spontaneous presence (*lhundrub*) of emptiness in every form (*tögal* practice): objective “outer lucidity,” *upaya*/means, compassion, *rupakaya*, relative truth.

The nondual unity of these two truths is *Dzogchen*, perfect sphere of The Great Perfection or Great Completion of the two truths wisdom of both Sutra and Tantra realized through the practice of *Ati Yoga*, utterly liberated and free of the twofold ignorance—forgetting and thinking—grasping at a self and grasping at phenomenal reality. This grasping and attach-

ment results from the impure view that is the reifying conceptual elaboration (*namtok*) of relative-conventional phenomena and states of experience of the ego-I of dualistic mind (*sems*), our conceptual, semiotic "web of belief" abiding in the three times—past, present and future.

The antidote? "Without past, present, future; empty, awake mind." As we have seen, this awake mind is the nondual unelaborated spontaneity of the fourth time (*turiya*, the fifth state of *turiyatita*) that abides within this relative-conventional moment, exactly as it is now.

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

Within the essence, original wakefulness which is primordially pure, manifests the nature, a radiance which is spontaneously present.

- Mipham Rinpoche

Choosing Our Reality. What shall we do with this precious life we've been given? According to the great Buddhist *Dzogchen* and *Mahamudra* master Adzom Rinpoche: "*Peace and happiness arise from our present mind state. To be happy we must train our mind to be free of the negative emotions. This places us at ease so that we can act to benefit others*". And this is the very cause of human happiness. "It is only by training the mind that one reaches peace of mind" (H.H. The Dalai Lama).

"The Meditation" of the Path is the practice of training the mind in equanimity (*upeksha/shanti*), recognizing—"brief moments many times"—the "one taste" of this nondual unity of mind essence, this ever present *state of pure presence* that is the marvelous transcendent Primordial Awareness Wisdom, pointed out and mirrored (*semtri/darshan/denbo*) by the Master.

Gradually through such "meditative stabilization" we learn: "Without changing anything, let it be as it is." "Make of yourselves a light," the Buddha's last words to his disciples. Then let it shine. This is the difference in view and conduct between the dualistic deluded, negative materialism of narcissistic consumerist mass-mind that has colonized Western consciousness—and our nondual primordial wakefulness (*rangjung yeshe*). This, our beautiful original face is *Yeshe*, our unborn Buddha nature that is the "single sphere of *Dharmakaya*." Thus do we choose our destiny.

Remaining naturally (in the state of *rigpa*) is the meditation. The nature of mind is Buddha from the beginning. . . Realizing the purity essence of all things, to remain there without seeking is the meditation.

- Garab Dorje (*The Three Vajra Verses*)

Regarding the subject and object of meditation, this perfectly subjective, empty, transcendent wisdom consciousness—ineffable supreme source that is androgynous, primordial Adi Buddha Samantabhadra—Longchenpa reveals that this fundamental ground in whom all appearing phenomena arise is without beginning and without end, unborn, uncreated and un-

ceasing, ontologically prior to the relative-conventional causality of appearing spacetime reality. What never existed, cannot cease to exist. Therefore, arising objective phenomenal particulars, universals and beings of the perfectly subjective ground or base who abide in a spacetime transcendent relation of essential identity with this source-ground can have no creator for they are originally and primordially inseparable and ever embraced and pervaded by this primordial ground. Phenomena, beings and the egoic sense of self are, in actuality, a perfectly subjective unity, beyond belief, prior to all apparent, interdependent spacetime arising. The painful perennial duality of creator/creation, of self and other—our uncomfortable “confront zones”—is thereby transcended in its infinite nondual source condition, Ultimate Truth of reality itself (*chö nyid*). For the great 14th century Tibetan master Longchenpa,

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

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

This same heart essence of innate clearlight mind, this “essential *rigpa*” that is the joyous blessing gift (*jin lab*) of the state of primordially pure presence of the compassionate Buddha nature within us was earlier transmitted directly to us through the Buddha’s Second Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma, revealed and elaborated, as we have seen, in the *Prajnaparamita Sutra (The Great Sutra of Transcendent Wisdom)*, the heart essence of which is expressed in the Buddha’s sublime *Heart Sutra*. This transcendent unity of the Two Truths of *Madhyamaka*—the Perfection of Wisdom of Sutrayana and Tantrayana—and the nondual View of the prior and ever present unity of the Ground, Path and Fruit of Highest Yoga Tantra and of *Dzogchen* are expressed by the Buddha thusly:

Form is empty; emptiness is form. Form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form. . . The nature of mind is the unity of awareness and emptiness. . . The mind is devoid of mind, for the nature of mind is clear light. . . Leave everything as it is and rest your weary mind, all things are perfect exactly as they are...and all the *Tathagatas* will rejoice.

-Shakyamuni Buddha (from the *Prajnaparamita Corpus*)

Now, there is nothing left to do. So all that we do is selfless, authentic and kind. . .

Who Am I?

In whom does this all arise?

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 nondual 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* teaching series. This version of the great nondual primordial teaching is derived from Buddhist Sutra and Tantra understanding of the nature of mind, reality itself, yet its truth essence runs, like a golden thread, through the grand tapestry of humankind's great Wisdom Tradition. *Kunjed Gyalpo, The Wise and Glorious King* is Samantabhadra/Samantabhadri in inseparable *yabyum* embrace—androgynous primordial Adi Buddha—state of pure presence, clarity and emptiness that is none other than our original Buddha nature, Supreme Source, base (*gzhi*), primordial womb of everything. Samantabhadra, this formless *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, with the dependently arisen dualities of the path—objective and subjective, self and other, self and Buddha mind, observer and data, true and false, good and bad, right and wrong, relative and ultimate—abide in the prior yet present unity of the all-embracing perfect sphere of *Dzogchen*, Supreme Source, our infinite mind nature, primordial groundless ground of reality, ultimate truth, luminous innate clear light wisdom mind that is always already this bright unity of awareness and emptiness.

Who is it that I am? All the masters of the three times have told it. Once again, this infinite vast expanse (*longchen*) of the Primordial Awareness Wisdom continuum is who we actually are. Great *vidya* presence of That, abiding always at the Heart. *Tat Tvam Asi. That, I Am!* That (*Tat*) is our supreme identity, great completion, our always present Buddha nature, Bud-

dha mind, deep heart-seed presence of relative and ultimate happiness that is both origin and aim of all our seeking. Nothing left to do. So all that we do is selfless, authentic and kind.

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