

Buddhist Dzogchen: Being Happiness Itself

Without past, present, future, empty awake mind.
—Ju Mipham Rinpoche

Fundamental Innate Mind of Clear Light

That is the inherent love-wisdom mind basis of *Dzogchen* View and Practice. *Dzogchen* is the "clear light absolute space of all phenomena". *Dzogchen*, the Great Perfection is considered, by those who know, to be a radically simple, but very difficult path to realization of our all-pervading nondual primordial wisdom (*jnana*, *yeshe*) ground (*dharmakaya*, *gzhi rigpa*). How is this so?

Dzogchen Ati Yoga works directly—prior to conceptual Mahayana Buddhist dialectics, and to esoteric Vajrayana tantric mantra and deity practice—with our already present indwelling Buddha nature/Buddha mind (*buddhadhatu*, *buddhajnana*), the very nature of mind, luminous clear light wisdom Presence of *rigpa* itself, before any arising of phenomenal appearances through their all-embracing boundless spacelike emptiness/*shunyata dharmakaya* ground.

The original mode of being of all phenomena is innate primordial wisdom. It pervades all grounds (and paths). It is the pristine nature that is present in the mind-streams of all of us beings, from aphids up to buddhas, with no distinction as to good or bad, big or small... The mind of the Buddha is realized and actualized by nondual *arya* individuals...The essence of the sugatas pervades all beings (who are) endowed with the essence of the tathagatas (Buddhas)...

Perfect awakening is attained in the culmination of non-meditation (the fourth yoga of Mahamudra). In that regard, by accomplishing the supreme union of quiescence (*shamatha*) and insight (*vipashyana*)... the taste of absolute space and primordial wisdom, the fruition of the *dharmakaya* and the two *rupakayas* is actualized (*The Great Instructions*).

—Karma Chagmé, *Naked Awareness* (trans. B. Alan Wallace)

It is that primordial awareness essential wisdom nature of mind—the nondual ("not one, not two" subject-object unity) state of undistracted and unfabricated "non-meditation" Presence that is at first "introduced" directly, non-conceptually, to the prepared aspirant by the *Dzogchen* master. It is that luminous awareness in which we learn to tame and settle the "wild horse of the mind", then rest in the very Buddha nature of mind itself. It is That in which we train the unruly self-ego-I of the human mind.

Nondual *Dzogchen* has arisen in the context of the "old translation" ancient Nyingma school (8th century) of the Mahayana Middle Way Madhyamaka Buddhist teaching. Nondual *Essence Mahamudra* has arisen from the "new translation" Kagyu school. Both represent the subtlest or "highest" teaching of Gautama Shakyamuni the Buddha. The union of *Dzogchen* and *Mahamudra* is the realization of the unity of samsara and nirvana. Tsele Natsok Rangdröl:

Mahamudra and Dzogchen differ in words,
but not in meaning. The only difference is
that Mahamudra stresses mindfulness while
Dzogchen rests within awareness itself.

In the clear words of recent Nyingma *Dzogchen* master Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche:

In short, in Mahamudra you train with outer appearances,
and in Dzogchen you train with inner rigpa...All appearances
are beyond benefit and harm. In this way rigpa and appearances
are a unity...The word unity has great significance. Don't divide
appearances as being there and awareness as being here. Let
appearance and awareness be indivisible...

If you recognize the essence, then when forms appear, they
become the unity of appearance and emptiness...
Appearing and being empty occur as a unity...The Dzogchen
teachings refer to this as the unity of primordial purity (*kadag*)
and spontaneous presence (*lhundrub*). Since primordial time
(these two) have been inseparably united. Through Trekchö
you recognize that your own essence is primordial purity.
Through Tögal you realize that the nature is spontaneous
presence. Neither of these has any self-nature.

What is mind? Guru Rinpoche explains what is called the 'unity of
emptiness and cognizance suffused with awareness'...Its essence is
empty; its nature is cognizant. Its capacity is that these two cannot
be taken apart. That is the meaning of unity, impossible to separate.
(*Vajra Heart Revisited*, 2020, Rangung Yeshe)

Hence, in *Dzogchen* View and Practice the primordial awareness state of Presence (*rigpa, vidya*) is not dependent upon, nor distracted by external or internal appearances arising in mind. Whatever arises, the practitioner rests firmly in the state of nondual awareness, without grasping or rejecting anything at all. But, without the direct recognition (*yogi pratyaksa*) of primordial awareness, how could one train in it? Thus the necessity of dharma study, and a qualified *Dzogchen* master to initiate and guide the practice of the prepared yogi/yogini aspirant.

Wonder of wonders, that *buddic* Presence is alive and awake in the mundane everyday chaos of our "ordinary mind". So, we need not seek it elsewhere, for example in the causes and conditions of buddhahood. From Garab Dorje's *Three Vajra Verses*, "Introduce the state of presence directly....Remain there without seeking anything at all. That is the meditation". This cannot be told in words, nor in books.

Therefore, nondual Dzogchen View takes the Result/Fruit of buddhahood as the Path itself. The dualistic "lower" Buddhist teaching vehicles take not the result but the *causes* of Buddhahood—dualistic practice—as the Path. For recent *Dzogchen* Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu:

Indian Mahayana Sutra and Tibetan Vajrayana Tantra teachings are characterized by the Path of Renunciation and the Path of Transformation, respectively. The method of the nondual *Dzogchen* teaching is the Path of Self-Liberation.

The Path of Renunciation renounces the ignorance (*avidya*) and cognitive obscurations that are the cause of the negative afflictive emotions that cause human suffering. We practice a cause (dharma practice) to gain a desired result (liberation from suffering).

The Path of Transformation is also a dualistic path wherein the practitioner proceeds from non-virtuous "impure vision" to virtue and "pure vision".

However, in the *Dzogchen* Path of Self-Liberation, there is no *concept* of impure and pure vision. In *Dzogchen* vision there is only the always present unity of the nondual state of self-liberation. It is from the inherent freedom of that view that we proceed upon the Buddhist Path. It is from the *bodhicitta* that spontaneously arises from that view that determines the compassionate conduct of this profound Path.

The Buddha told that the result of such selfless altruistic motivation to act is the main cause of human happiness; and the result of self-centered negatively motivated action is the main cause of human suffering. Cultivation of compassionate *bodhicitta* is the only way to authentic *relative* human happiness, and to awake *ultimate* happiness that is liberation from human suffering—Happiness Itself. Without an authentic individual and sociocultural ethic of compassion it is not possible even to begin to address to prodigious problems of human beings in this all too real relative world of pain and suffering.

The root cause of full bodhi mind awaking in all three Buddhist vehicles is the union of wisdom and compassion—these two limbs of the teaching of the Buddha. That the primordial wisdom of emptiness may result in buddhahood is due to mahakaruna—the great compassion. Just so, mahakaruna may result in buddhahood due to the wisdom that realizes mahashunyata, the great emptiness. Thus did the Buddha teach that in order to be happy being here as honored guests of this phenomenal world of time and space, we must cultivate compassionate relative "skillful means", but also the ultimate primordial wisdom of emptiness—as a nondual unity! In That we take refuge.

As Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava told so long ago:

You accomplish realization of ultimate truth only through the practice of relative truth...Keep your view as high as the sky; and your deeds as fine as barely flour...Descend with the (ultimate) view while ascending with the (relative) conduct. It is most essential to practice these two as a unity.

These two voices of the Buddha's teaching—skillful compassion and the wisdom of emptiness—strike a balance between construing emptiness as nihilistic nonexistence, wherein virtue doesn't much matter; or as eternalist material existence. The view of real, compassionate relative existence, and the absence or emptiness of intrinsic ultimate existence avoids these two metaphysical extremes that are the false dichotomy of *either* existence *or* nonexistence. That is the Buddha's Madhyamaka Middle Way teaching.

Indeed, it is the ultimate emptiness of appearing phenomena that allows their relative interaction in the function of moral conduct. If our phenomenal realities were not ultimately empty of permanent existence, relative change or motion would not be possible. Our "freedom of the will" would be truly illusory. People, stars, galaxies would freeze in their present spacetime locations. In that case how could we change anything at all in this relative world of time and space through our *choice* to practice the Path and engage *bodhicitta* conduct? The Buddha's Path would be but a cynical exercise in futility.

Middle Way Madhyamaka Prasangika realizes this ultimate emptiness of appearing objective reality, and of a self-ego-I that so often apprehends it in ignorance (*avidya*, *marigpa*) of the truth of the matter. "In terms of that emptiness, there is no distinction between this Madhyamaka view and the *Dzogchen* view" (Lama Gen Lamrimpa 1999).

As to relative conventional objective existence, Longchenpa told, "When you examine closely, there is nothing there to recognize". Nonetheless, the conceptually and verbally imputed objects of our "real world out there" (RWOT), and this ego-I that truly believes in its ultimate existence, still show up for dinner. Fortunately, for both Prasangika and for *Dzogchen* view and practice, this cause and effect reality is still, indeed all too relatively real. So, we still have to show up for work, and arouse and engage our precious *bodhicitta* to benefit living beings. Thus, the Madhyamaka and *Dzogchen* View negate the inherent ultimate existence of the phenomenal world, while affirming its relative-conventional causal/cause and effect existence. Indeed a Middle Way. Nice *concepts*. But what makes it so?

Nondual Non-Meditation on Clear Light Emptiness

It is in nondual *Dzogchen* "non-meditation"—beyond even the quasi-conceptual quiescence of the early stages of *shamatha* meditation—that one may realize ultimate wisdom of the *shunyata*/emptiness of phenomena, the very Buddha nature of mind.

Thus does the ostensible duality of relative mind (*sems*), and the nondual primordial base or ground, primordial awareness itself that is the very nature of mind

(*gzhi rigpa*), together rest in the nondual unity of sameness (*samatajnana*). Nagarjuna told it well, "There is not the slightest difference between samsara and nirvana"; between relative truth and ultimate truth. The Buddha's Two Truths, relative and ultimate, are already an ontic prior, and epistemic present unity—beyond even the slightest separation of knowing subject, and its known objects.

The Nyingma school's Dodrubchen Rinpoche teaches that as primordial awareness arises, the yogi/yogini does not at all feel this absence of the primal subject-object split. Still, the all-consuming flame of the wisdom of emptiness is vividly present to contemplative experience. And that utterly trans-conceptual non-goal directed "non-meditation" is the main difference between nondual *Dzogchen*, and the still conceptual dialectical Madhyamaka Prasangika approaches. While the view of Buddha's *shunyata*, his Two Truths—relative compassion and ultimate wisdom—and the fruition of the Path that is buddhahood itself are the same in Madhyamaka and *Dzogchen*, there is an important difference in the praxis of these two paths:

Dzogchen practice, which is unmoved by conceptualization,
is far more potent for dispelling the obscurations of the mind,
and in that sense is regarded as far more profound (than
Madhyamaka). —Gen Lamrimpa Rinpoche 1999

In *Dzogchen*, nondual, non-goal oriented direct "non-meditation" (*yogi pratyaksa*) the diaphanous objects of apparitional phenomenal appearance utterly vanish into their luminous empty aboriginal "groundless ground" as nondual empty *mahashunyata* arises. In the Mahayana Causal Vehicle, and in the "lower" eight vehicles of Nyingma school Vajrayana, contemplative focus remains more or less on quasi-conceptual mindfulness, mantra, and deity practice. Not so in the fruitional Nyingma nondual ninth vehicle—the *Ati Yoga* of *Dzogchen*—where the prepared yogi/yogini simply rests in the *Perfect Sphere* of *Dzogchen*, primordial *dharmakaya* ground, wholly free of dualistic conceptual cognition.

We shall see below in our "Approaching *Dzogchen* Practice" that nondual *Dzogchen* non-meditation requires both a deep conceptual, and non-conceptual understanding of the primordial wisdom of emptiness, introduced and transmitted under the enlightened guidance of the *Dzogchen* master. Such preparation is required before fruitional *Dzogchen* practice can really begin.

What remains for the meditator of this the radical dissolution of form in the formless emptiness/*shunyata epoché* after we surrender our habitual discursive concept mind and rest in the actual nondual nature of mind? Non-conceptual lucent already present *buddic* Presence—*rigpa*, *vidya*—of this "supreme source" remains always at the spiritual Heart (*hridayam*) of the yogi/yogini. Even when we forget. It's always present! The direct experience of our Buddha mind (*buddhajnana*) Presence makes it so.

It is said by those who know that this innate, empty, radiant clear light love-wisdom mind arises, non-conceptually, for all human beings at the moment of death, in deep dreamless sleep, in moments where waking consciousness is unwittingly suspended,

in the deep meditation of highly accomplished masters, and in the conscious awareness mindstream of a Buddha.

Told the Buddha, "Form is empty; emptiness is form". Relative form—the five aggregates or *skandhas*—and their selfless ultimate emptiness are an indivisible nondual (subject-object identity) unity. These are Buddha's Two Truths. Everything that arises and appears to sentient awareness is included herein.

It is through a profound understanding of the Two Truths that we perfect the two main facets of the Buddha's love-wisdom Path—compassionate skillful means/method (*upaya*), and the nondual primordial wisdom of emptiness (*jnana, yeshe*). This then is the conceptual foundation of Middle Way Madhyamaka that opens into the prodigious *Dzogchen* View. No dilemma. No problem at all.

How then shall we understand this interdependence of wisdom and compassion that pervades the View, Meditation, and Conduct of the *nondual Dzogchen* Path?

For all three extant Buddhist vehicles—Hinayana-Theravada, Mahayana, esoteric Vajrayana/Secret Mantra—spacetime stuff and the self that perceives it is empty. Empty of what? For Madhyamaka Middle Way Buddhists (the fourth and usually considered "highest" of the Four Buddhist Tenet systems)—both Madhyamaka Prasangika and Madhyamaka Yogachara—arising and appearing form is not empty of *existence*. Madhyamaka is not a nihilist view!

Clearly, something exists! Heavy indeed is the yoke of the burden of rejoinder for those nihilist absolute metaphysical idealists—East or West—who would altogether deny this dynamic world of conventionally existing and experienced objective stuff, our "real world out there" (RWOT) that we have come to know and love. It is this all too real self-ego-I after all, who *chooses* to enter the Buddhist Path, and to act in this world of conditioned cause-effect existence for the benefit of living beings. Appearing reality obviously exists. Yet, it does not exist as it appears. How does it exist? Spacetime stuff is relative-conventionally existent, but ultimately non-existent appearing phenomenal form.

For the Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana tantric tradition, with its highest nondual *Dzogchen*, the Nyingma School Great Perfection or Great Completion is the subtle nondual pinnacle of Shakyamuni the Buddha's teaching. The four schools of the Buddhist Vajrayana teaching vehicle—Nyingma, Gelug, Kagyu, Sakya—all agree.

Tibetan Buddhist Middle Way Prasangika of the Madhyamaka Buddhist tenet system is the doctrinaire foundation upon which the *Dzogchen* view is established. The Madhyamaka Yogachara *Shentong* direct intuition of Buddha nature found in the Yogachara *chittamatra* tradition are equally important *Dzogchen* sources (Pettit 1999).

Middle Way Madhyamaka—with its two sub-schools that are Prasangika and Yogachara—are then the metaphysical, philosophical sources of highest *Ati Yoga* of the Great Perfection. However, *Dzogchen* ethics, and foundational practice preliminaries (*ngöndro*) are found in the yogic practices of the eight "lower" Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist teaching vehicles.

Dzogchen View, Path/Meditation, and Result/Fruition presuppose the Ultimate Truth of Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*), our ultimate wisdom mind (*jnana, yeshe*) of the emptiness base (*gzhi rigpa*) whose essence is empty, whose nature is clear light luminosity,

and whose expression is spontaneous compassionate *bodhicitta*—the thought, intention, and action for the benefit of living beings. More on this tripartite constitution of the Buddha nature of mind below.

Wisdom and Compassion. These are the two limbs of Buddha's teaching; the very bedrock of the whole of the buddhadharma. If a thought or action is wise but not kind, it's not wisdom. If a thought or action is kind but not wise, it's not wisdom.

Tibetan Buddhist Nyingma school views the Buddha's three teaching vehicles or *yanas* of the buddhadharma—Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana—as the nine vehicles. The first eight are the Mahayana causal vehicles and are based upon the duality of cause and effect—practice this cause now and reap that happy effect later—and so are inherently incapable of liberating the yogic aspirant from the primal atavistic subject-object split. This primal separation is the prodigious false bifurcation of knowing subject and its objects known. This duality between self and other is the root cause of human ignorance (*avidya, marigpa*) with all its attendant suffering. Thus do we require a nondual teaching.

The view and practice of the Great Perfection are grounded in the Vajrayana/Tantrayana subtle esoteric ninth non-causal vehicle—the *Ati Yoga* of *Dzogchen* which is the nondual state of *direct intuition* (*yogi pratyaksa*) of always already spontaneously present (*lhundrub*) Presence (*vidya, rigpa*) of our indwelling primordial Buddha wisdom mind nature (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*).

The Buddha's Two Truths in *Dzogchen* View and Practice

The dualistic dimension of everyday spacetime Relative Truth (*samvriti satya*, Tib. *kunzog denpa*)—already embraced and subsumed in the boundless whole that is Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*, Tib. *don dampa*), *Perfect Sphere of Dzogchen*—is personified as, and grounded in primordial *Adi Buddha* Samantabhadra (Tib. *Kuntazangpo*), the formless *dharmakaya* Buddha in whom form (*rupakaya* as *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*) arises and is instantiated. These three dimensions constitute the Tibetan Buddhist *Trikaya of the Base* or ground (*gzhi rigpa*)—the three buddha bodies (*kayas*) of ultimate reality itself.

This formless, timeless primeval aboriginal dimension that is Ultimate Truth is empty and absent "any shred" of *svabhava* (*rang zhin*)—relative, conceptually imputed, permanent, independent, intrinsic, ultimate/absolute self-existence. Ultimate Buddha mind (*buddhajnana, dgongs pa*) dimension is the perfectly subjective selfless formless primordial "groundless ground" and great potential of relative *svabhava*—omnipresent, appearing spacetime phenomenal form.

Thus it is, conditional form is relatively real, just not intrinsically, ultimately real. Stuff continuously, interdependently arising from the primordial base/ground does not exist as it appears! The stuff of our appearing realities exists only relatively, conventionally, not absolutely or ultimately. Yet here it is, all too real and full of itself throughout relative objective spacetime existence. This view is the wondrous Buddhist Mahayana/Vajrayana dominant Two Truths trope of *Dzogchen* View and Practice.

In the *Great Perfection Aspiration Prayer of Samantabhadra*—primordial *Adi Buddha* of the Ultimate Truth *dharmakaya* dimension—this primordial ultimate ground is revealed thusly (I have taken the liberty of making slight changes to Richard Barron's excellent translation):

Ho! The entire universe of appearance and possibility,
of samsara and nirvana, is one ground, two paths, two results.
This is the magical display of innate intrinsic awareness,
and its recognition or non-recognition.

Due to the aspiration of the all noble Samantabhadra,
may all beings awaken to perfectly manifest buddhahood
within the palace of the basic space of phenomena!

The primordial ground of all experience is un-compounded.
This reflexive self-arising vast expanse of being is ineffable.
There are no correct descriptions for either samsara or nirvana.
If there is intrinsic awareness of this point, there is buddhahood.
If there is no recognition of intrinsic awareness of the ground
sentient beings wander in the suffering of cyclic existence.

Therefore, may all sentient beings of the three realms be aware
of the ultimate profundity of the ineffable ground of being!

The "one ground" is, as Lama Tsultrim Allione has shown us,

The base or the womb of the great mother...It is pure latency,
depth, radiance, an expanse of emptiness and infinite potency
from which the whole universe comes, yet the ground itself is
without external radiance or projective (energy/motion) aspects".

The "two paths" arise from the aboriginal, timeless, formless one ground. One of these paths is the pristine *nirvanic* "recognition of intrinsic awareness of the ground" as primordial *Presence* of one's innate, intrinsic dynamic Buddha mind, the very nature of mind that abides in an already prior and always present unity with that primordial ground—utterly inseparable from the ground itself. The *Result* or *Fruition* of this path? "There is buddhahood", already present from the very beginning.

The other path is the path we all have taken—all of us pre-enlightened beings cycling here in samsaric existence—the not so happy *Result* of "non-recognition" (*ignorance, avidya, marigpa* of self-ego-I) of the empty primordial "groundless ground" that is Samantabhadra, our already present Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*), Buddha mind (*buddhajnana*). The usual result of this path is endless cyclic suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death. Not a pretty picture. What then shall we do?

It is this second path that provides the opportunity to *choose* to enter in the practice of Buddha's Eightfold Path (*Pali Canon*), and the Six Paramitas of the Mahayana. Through the profound teaching of these vehicles we recognize, then realize the indwelling, "innate

intrinsic awareness" of our Buddha mind that was, and is, as *Dzogchen* founder Garab Dorje told so long ago, "already present from the very beginning". It is that primordial love-wisdom mind Presence to which we awaken—step by mindful step—through the Buddhist *Dzogchen* view and practice.

Emptiness of Mind; Emptiness of Self

Twentieth century *Dzogchen* master Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche points out that selfless Buddhist emptiness/*shunyata*—essential nature of primordial *dharmakaya* ground—is not a nihilistic, blank void of nothingness, but as "empty luminous cognizance". "*Emptiness is not empty of the kayas (buddha reality bodies) and of primordial wisdom*".

Rather, *shunyata* is the empty absolute space (*dharmadhatu*) of *dharmakaya*, radiant clear light primordial awareness base (*gzhi*), formless ultimate nature of form, selfless, innate clear light Buddha nature of mind. Always present bright Presence of That. We experience That non-conceptually, via direct yogic perception (*yogi pratyaksa*). How then shall we conceptually understand this?

We are told by the wise that as one *chooses* to settle the obsessively busy "wild horse of the mind" into, and then rest in *selfless* "open presence" (*rigpa*) of this "natural state of pristine awareness"—Buddha nature/Buddha mind—one realizes that the mind has no past origin, no present location, and no future destiny. The three times—past, present, future—are absent and empty of mind.

The human mind has no physical structure, nor mental form. It cannot be located in the brain, nor is it elsewhere. If the mind were as big as a house, we might thoroughly search the house, but we will not find the mind. Mind therefore, is a present *luminous cognizant emptiness* that is inherently ineffable and ungraspable by any conceptual construct or cognitive modality—relative-conventional or ultimate. Yet, here it is, brimming with the relative conventional realities of space and time.

Just so, self-ego-I that is so relentlessly embedded in this diaphanous apparition of mind, with all the virtuosity of its conceptual affordances, is also empty of intrinsic ultimate existence. It too is empty of past origin, present location and future destiny. This bizarre phantom self entity does not exist in physical body, nor in mental mind, nor elsewhere. Exhausting analytical *vipashyana* examination reveals no *essential* self at all. Thus is self-ego-I confirmed to be wholly empty of any whit of inherent, intrinsic existence. This is the *anatman* or no-self teaching of the Buddha.

Yet, upon the arising of a strong desire (attraction), or a perceived threat (aversion), self arises like a seductive demon, or else a screaming banshee. How then shall we definitively know and feel, directly—beyond analysis—this great truth of the selfless intrinsic luminous boundless emptiness of form that we actually are?

Approaching Dzogchen Practice

We tame, then train this obsessively "selfing" conceptual "wild horse of the mind" through quiescent *shamatha* meditation practice (*smriti, sati*) as taught in Sutrayana. This,

with the foundational *ngöndro* practices of Tibetan Vajrayana, is the *Dzogchen* approach. In the Great Perfection the nondual indivisibility of the *Dzogchen* View and contemplative *Ati Yoga* non-meditation practice—with selfless compassion for all other beings—is axiomatic.

In beginning practice it is urgent to recognize that a naive duality between a goal-directed "gradual path", and a direct, immediate "nondual" ("not one, not two") *Dzogchen* path is, as is the conceptually contrived distinction between the Buddha's Two Truths—Ultimate and Relative—a false dichotomy that introduces a confounding duality into the *Dzogchen* View and Meditation. The Two Truths of the great Mahayana teaching vehicle are already a prior and always present unity. We must know this. How then shall we enhance our view that we may feel and know the nondual truth of the matter?

We have seen that the dualistic objective dimension of relative-conventional, causal, physical, perceptual and conceptual truth (*samvriti satya*) is already embraced and subsumed in the nondual perfectly subjective dimension of Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*). Thus exists the prior ontological and always present epistemological and phenomenological unity of the Buddha's Two Truths. This all-pervading unity is directly experienced (*yogi pratyaksa*) non-conceptually, as feeling knowing certainty of our indwelling Buddha nature/Buddha mind—clear bright light Presence of That—well beyond our conceptual "global web of belief" (Quine 1969) *about* it. Instant, open, knowing-feeling, *maha-ati* "pure Presence" (*vidya, rigpa*) of it, by whatever name, is recognition, and in due course, realization of That!

What then shall we do when we inevitably become distracted and forgetful of this great truth of our here now Presence of the nature of mind. The *Dzogchen semdzins*—Vajrasattva mantra (short and long versions), the essential mantra *OM AH HUM*, and the forcefully expressed seed syllable *PHAT*—are our instant antidote, our *Ati Yoga* awareness touchstones. It is through the non-conceptual *semdzin* that we return our attention to "innermost secret" Presence of the formless ground, the *Perfect Sphere of Dzogchen*, again and again.

False dichotomy caveat: our self-ego-I concept-mind—under sway of ignorance (*avidya, marigpa*)—firmly believes and defends the linguistic semiotic split between dualistic and nondual Path; between Ultimate Truth and Relative Truth; between form and emptiness; between knowing subject and its objects known; between the two illusory *mayas* that are ultimate nondual selfless primordial awareness *Dzogchen vidya maya*, and relative conceptually contrived *avidya maya*; between existence and nonexistence; primordial purity and impurity; nirvana and samsara; dualistic and nondual view and meditation. All of these ultimately indivisible, yet complementary cognitive unities are cloaked in the false dichotomy of dualistic Relative Truth (*samvriti satya, kunzog denpa*) with its cognitive reticulum of "concealer" concepts and beliefs.

Thus do the two *mayas* share an identity of non-difference (*samatajnana*). Relatively they differ. Ultimately they are the same. Great 14th century *Dzogchen* master Longchenpa bespeaks in his lapidary *Gyuma Galso* the inherent nondual *unitarity* (an apropos neologism of Niels Bohr) of the two *mayas*. How is this so?

There are two kinds/aspects of human ignorance. The first is inborn and innate. The other is learned. Innate ignorance is instinctive; we are born with it. It is the instinctual

evolutionary view of self-ego-I, a perceiving subject inherently separate from all "other" selves and objects. It has proven most useful in allowing our species to dodge predators, both animal and human. The second face of ignorance is learned ignorance, the cognitive product of sociocultural conditioning—in Western culture our Greek materialist cognitive efflorescence that has become the destructive prevailing cognitive deep cultural background mass mind ideology of Scientific Materialism/Physicalism that has colonized the Western heart and mind. Both of these sad forms of ignorance (*avidya*, *marigpa*) are woefully short on altruistic kindness and compassion.

Dualistically appearing *avidya maya* experience is embraced and pervaded by the nondual *vidya maya* of the primordial "groundless ground" of being itself. As mere concepts both of these *mayas* are illusory. This unity of the inherently apparitional two *mayas* arises to our experience from the nondual "primordial purity" of the aboriginal emptiness ground/base (*gzhi rigpa*) in whom all appearing reality arises and is instantiated—perfectly free and unencumbered by desire, or by conceptual reification, fabrication, and elaboration. Because, in the *Perfect Sphere of Dzogchen*, our illusory and delusory realities are, in this Ultimate Truth view, "primordially pure" and undefiled "from the very beginning" all appearing *avidya maya* is "perfect just as it is". In the clear words of Gautama the Buddha:

What you are is what you have been;
What you will be is what you do now....
So let it be as it is, and rest your weary mind;
All things are perfect exactly as they are.

Yet, under sway of ignorance (*avidya*), and delusion (*moha*) we almost immediately conceptually interpret this selfless pristine pre-conceptual direct attentional/perceptual experience as afflictive emotional experience—sense desire, fear/anger, greed/pride, paralyzing doubt, and the rest. The result is human suffering. The antidote is instant effortless, spontaneous non-meditation—"placement of attention/awareness"—again and again upon our always present Buddha mind Presence, by whatever name or concept. *OM AH HUM PHAT!*

This is the foundation of timeless, radical nondual *Dzogchen* View and practice.

Further, this instant, always already present open "pure presence" of the original ground are at once both origin and aim of the cognitively fluent ambulant *Dzogchen* practitioner. "The ground is no different at the pinnacle of enlightenment than it is at the primordial base" (Adzom Rinpoche).

Caveat Auditor: Nonetheless, from the relative view, delusory dualistic *avidya maya* has a thorny thicket of bogus cognitive concepts on offer for the naively innocent obsessively thinking mind. *Avidya maya* concept-mind is a trickster. Don't be fooled. Please avoid impetuous true-false reality judgments based in our habitual, skeptical, dualistic deep cultural background "global web of belief" about what is true or false; good or bad.

Yet, wonder of wonders, it is this duplicitous, dualistic concept-mind of our very own self-ego-I that reflexively recognizes *avidya maya* just as it is; ignorance, illusion, and

delusion. That reflective reflexive awareness cognition is after all the first step in waking up to our selfless, luminous, clear light love-wisdom mind Presence—primordial Buddha nature of mind—"supreme source" that is nothing less than our "supreme identity". Who am I? "That I Am!"—without a single exception.

Be That as it may, such complementary cognitive doublets may be—once the *ultimate* boundless love-wisdom wholeness ground (*jnana, yeshe*) in which they arise and abide is recognized/realized (*rtogs pa*)—useful gifts to our *relative* discriminating wisdom (*prajna*). *Prajna* facilitates spontaneous, skillful *bodhicitta* conduct—our thought, intention, and action for the benefit of living beings. And that after all is the Mahayana open secret of human happiness. The two wisdoms, ultimate and relative: Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava advises, "It is most important to practice these two as a unity".

Popular Buddhist idiom and ideology too often sees *Dzogchen* as a shortcut to *buddic* primordial awakening. Read some books about *Dzogchen trekchö* and *tögal* practice; rest occasionally in mostly conceptualized *rigpa*; maybe even show up for a *Yeshe Lama* weekend retreat; and become fully enlightened buddhas in this lifetime. But it is not so.

This great and precious *Dzogchen* wisdom treasure is decidedly not a conceptual enterprise. It cannot be learned, let alone accomplished through books, tapes, intellectual speculation, along with a bit of mindfulness practice. Indeed it cannot be learned at all. Buddha told, "This cannot be taught". The nondual primordial wisdom state of *Dzogchen* must be introduced to the prepared aspirant *directly*, non-conceptually, by the *Dzogchen* master. Yet, study and quiescent *shamatha* "taming the wild horse of the mind"—gathering our scattered "monkey mind"—is a propitious beginning.

Although, as we have just seen, the luminous Presence of *dynamic intrinsic awareness* that is the very Buddha nature of mind abides always present in our *ordinary mind stream*—and while the Great Perfection with its nondual *Ati Yoga* is indeed a direct and expedited path to ultimate awakening to our already present innate clear light *rigpa* love-wisdom Buddha mind Presence—*Dzogchen* practice requires assiduous "gradualist" contemplative, behavioral, ethical conduct preparation under the guidance of a qualified *Dzogchen* master. Only then shall be revealed the trans-conceptual miracle that "it is already accomplished from the very beginning". Should you aspire to such an ultimate path, please consider well this truth of *Dzogchen* practice: Garab Dorje's *Three Vajra Verses*:

The nature of mind is Buddha from the beginning...
Realizing the purity essence of all things, to remain
there without seeking is the meditation....It is already
accomplished from the very beginning.

"To remain there without seeking is the meditation". That is *Dzogchen* "non-meditation". Roughly speaking, in the Mahayana Causal Vehicle, meditation seeks something—peace, happiness, liberation from suffering, enlightenment. Practice this cause now, and get that payoff later, in some blissful future mind state. In the *Dzogchen* Fruitional View there is nothing to seek, and nothing to accomplish. That which we seek is always already present. Seeking that which we already actually are to avoid suffering, is a

form of suffering. Thus do we make our present imperfect practice itself the goal. And everything that we feel, think, and do is our present practice—both on and off the cushion.

Thus is *Dzogchen* View and "non-meditation" practice—with assiduous *shamatha* meditation practice—the nondual Great Perfection/Completion of the dualistic preparation of the Mahayana Causal Vehicle. Yet, without this urgent "development stage" Mahayana Middle Way Madhyamaka practice there is no auspicious entry into *Dzogchen*. The *Dzogchen ngöndro* foundational practices are an auspicious, difficult beginning. Effortless *Dzogchen* practice requires hard work preparation—both conceptual and contemplative. Please consider this well.

So, first we learn basic mantra and deity practice, along with mindful *shamatha* meditation. We learn to rest in this luminous spacious Presence of our Buddha mind emptiness ground that is the *Perfect Sphere of Dzogchen*, in whom everything arises.

Gradually we begin to notice that our concepts *about* our indwelling Buddha mind is more and more nondual direct contemplative experience *of* it. We notice our hitherto constant concern for self has subtly shifted toward concern for the well being of others, even beyond immediate family. We notice that the incessant chatter of the mind is infused with love-wisdom mind awareness. We begin to notice that this very subtle process—wonder of wonders—makes us happy, not later but now. We find ourselves offering thanks for the precious gift of our life, just as it is now. *Emaho!*

Now, with this enhanced capacity, and with the occasional "pointing out" instruction of the qualified *Dzogchen* master, we approach the nondual *Dzogchen* View with its inherent *bodhicitta*; and its "non-meditation" awareness continuity of the Buddha's wisdom of emptiness.

Padmasambhava, in *Natural Liberation*, speaks of foundational *Dzogchen shamatha*:

Flawless shamatha is like an oil lamp that is unmoved by wind. Wherever the awareness is placed, it is unwaveringly present; awareness is vividly clear, without being sullied by laxity, lethargy, or dimness; wherever the awareness is directed, it is steady and sharply pointed; and unmoved by adventitious thoughts, it is straight. Thus, a flawless meditative state arises in one's mind-stream; and until this happens, it is important that the mind is settled in its natural state...Cast your gaze downward, gently release your mind, and without having anything on which to meditate, gently release both your body and mind into their natural state...Without any modification or adulteration, place your attention simply without wavering, in its own natural state, its natural limpidity, its own character, just as it is now. Remain in clarity, and rest the mind so that it is loose and free...Fine stability will arise and you may even identify (primordial wisdom) awareness.
(trans. Alan Wallace 1998. See *Appendix A* below.)

In *Dzogchen shamatha* practice, naturally arising discursive thoughts, mental images, and emotions—negative or positive—are not seen as troublesome distractions to reject or

enjoy. Rather, one sees them as emanations or manifestations of *dharmakaya*, primordially pure and of the same nature as the vast expanse of the ground itself, just as waves are of the same nature as the great ocean.

Dzogchen is generally considered by those who know to be the most direct path to the final nondual realization of our ultimate Buddha nature—primordial "groundless ground" of all arising phenomenal reality, the very nature of mind and all its experience—perceptual, conceptual, contemplative, and nondual (*advaya*; "not one, not two").

Self and all arising spacetime phenomenal reality—our beloved "real world out there" (RWOT)—are thereby dynamic, luminous, empty virtual displays of the play of the mind observing this boundless whole—primordial awareness-consciousness ground itself in which, or in whom all our physical and mental experience is instantiated. We are luminous instances of That! It is told that resting naturally in this vast spacious boundless whole (*dharmadhatu*) is the primary cause of human happiness, both relative flourishing, and the liberation from suffering that is Happiness Itself. And "Wonder of wonders", "It is already accomplished from the very beginning", deep within us. It is that love wisdom mind to which we awaken as we tread the Buddhist Path.

Now, as to our open question, "How shall I know, and feel this?" *Shamatha* and *vipashyana* meditation practice open the gate to the path of the innermost esoteric *Dzogchen* Great Completion of the exoteric Buddhist Causal Vehicle—always under the guidance of the *Dzogchen* master.

Nyingma *Dzogchen* Master Dudjom Rinpoche clarifies this for us:

(Dzogchen), which makes the result into the path is superior to the vehicle of the transcendental perfections which makes the cause into the path (*Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, Vol. I)

Thus is the ultimate Result or Fruit of enlightenment—our fully realized innate, primordial nondual wisdom *bodhi* Buddha mind (*jnana*, *yeshe*) that is realized as Buddhahood—taken as the "innermost" esoteric foundation of the tantric Path. Why? Because the result, Buddha nature/Buddha mind is always already present within us. So we work with that ultimate reality, from the outset. As Guru Rinpoche told, "We discover ultimate truth only by way of relative truth. Practice these as a unity". Meanwhile, "Keep your view as high as the sky; and your deeds as fine as barley flour".

In short, we "keep the view" that we are always already Buddha. Perhaps we are not yet fully awakened Buddhas, but we place our attention, moment to moment, upon our "supreme identity"—clear light Presence of our already present Buddha mind. That is the nondual original nature of mind—this wondrous gift of our here now present relative spacetime embodied, ultimately non-existent, cognizant, primordially pure and empty mind. Realizing That, we forget ourselves for a few moments and go to work to benefit living beings. It is That that makes us happy now. That is the teaching of the Buddha.

Once again, no need to seek happiness in some future perfect time or place, or mind state. Rather, we gradually awaken, through the assiduous practice of the Path, to that "supreme source" that we already are. Now present Presence of That. Who am I? To

rehearse the Vedic pith, *Tat Tvam Asi*. That I Am! "It is already accomplished from the very beginning" (Garab Dorje). As Gautama Shakyamuni told so long ago, "Wonder of wonders, all beings are Buddha". Thus do we "Make the goal the Path".

Conversely, the exoteric, dualistic sutra Mahayana Causal Vehicle (the dialectical vehicle) takes causality, cause and effect—practice these Six Perfections now and become a Buddha later—as the foundation of the Path. The main point here is that, although we are not yet fully awakened Buddhas, we are already Buddha! Our ordinary mind is Buddha mind from the very beginning! It is that great nondual Ultimate Truth to which we gradually awaken through the assiduous relative practice of the Path. This great Vajrayana tantric foundational premise makes all the difference in establishing the correct conceptual View (*darshana, lta ba*) from the outset. Who am I? I am Buddha from the very beginning. Good to know in approaching the *Dzogchen* Path, or at any stage of the Path (*marga, lam*); especially at the beginning.

Thus it is said, *Dzogchen Ati Yoga* is the teaching pinnacle, subtlest and "highest" view and practice of Nyingma "inner tantras", and the very Fruitional Vehicle of the entire buddhadharma Path.

While the causal Paramitayana and the fruitional Tibetan Vajrayana are equally concerned to "accomplish" Buddhahood, unlike the skillful objective conceptual means of Sutrayana, the tantras of highest *Ati Yoga Dzogchen* of the tantric vehicle has the benefit of subjective, trans-conceptual, innermost esoteric skillful means, to wit: highly efficacious, even blissful direct and innate clear light wisdom (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*), and mantra and deity practice meditation under the direct empowering guidance of a qualified *Dzogchen* master; and in the crucible of the loving *sangha* spiritual community. Such a practice program is said to expedite Buddhahood in several lifetimes, or if you're lucky, in this lifetime, over against "innumerable *kalpas*" of rebirth for even the superior Sutrayana practitioner. Not surprisingly, those who hold the View of the Great Perfection view it as the perfect Path.

This fruitional tantric distinction is perhaps the main difference between the more or less exoteric objective and dualistic conceptual dialectics of the Sutrayana (*Sautrantika*) vehicle, and the esoteric Tantrayana/Vajrayana (Mantrayana) with its Middle Way Madhyamaka Prasangika teaching, the foundation of innermost esoteric, monistic panpsychic/cosmopsychic nondual *Dzogchen* view and praxis (*Appendix C*).

We shall soon see that in the View of the Great Perfection the *essence (kadag)* of all appearing physical and mental spacetime reality is boundless *shunyata/emptiness*. But emptiness is not merely a negative void because its *nature* is spontaneous presence (*lhundrub*), fullness of radiant luminosity (*prabhasa, 'od gsal*). Its *energy* is the manifested spontaneous expression in time and space of boundless compassion (*karuna, thugs re*)—great cosmic gift (*jinlob, euengelion*) of absolute *bodhicitta* whence arises the two relative *bodhicittas* of aspiration, and of action. Essence/*kadag*; nature/*lhundrub*; energy as compassion/*karuna*. It is compassionate *bodhicitta* that is our secret of human happiness.

These three conceptual faces—essence, nature, energy—of the Perfect Sphere of *Dzogchen* are in all ways an omnipresent, indivisible prior and present unity that is revealed through stabilized, nondual non-meditation of *Dzogchen Ati Yoga* practice.

Such are the things we must know when approaching the *Dzogchen* path
The Fundamental Innate Mind of Clear Light in Sutra and Tantra

Buddha told it well 25 centuries past,

The mind is devoid of mind,
for the nature of mind is clear light.

H.H. Dalai Lama (2000) teaches that the whole spectrum of Buddhist philosophy, ethics, and practice may be understood in terms of this one famous verse of the Buddha.

The first line presents the wisdom of the First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma (the *dharmacakra*), the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, and the entire meaning of Buddhist Sutrayana—of emptiness/*shunyata*, and of *bodhicitta*. The first line also introduces the wisdom of Mahayana Middle Way Madhyamaka, the Second Turning of the Wheel of the Buddha's Teaching.

The second line of the verse—"for the nature of mind is clear light"—encompasses the meaning of the Third Turning of the Wheel, namely, Buddha's teaching on our innate indwelling Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*)/Buddha mind (*buddhadhatu*, *buddhajnana*), the nondual primordial innate clear light Buddha nature of mind. The nondual *Ati Yoga of Dzogchen*, the Great Completion, is the practice of accomplishing this fundamental "innate mind of clear light"—non-conceptual, pristine, naked, essential Buddha mind-stream, our indwelling open Presence of That!

For His Holiness, clear light mind nature may be understood at two levels, the Mahayana sutra teaching system, and the Vajrayana tantra teaching system. When the clear light nature of mind is understood in terms of both of these together there are two distinct references: 1) the "emptiness of the mind" which corresponds to the "objective clear light", and 2) "the essential cognizant luminous clarity and awareness" of the very nature of mind itself, which corresponds to the "subjective experience of clear light". In the clear words of H.H. Dalai Lama:

The fundamental innate mind of clear light is considered to be the nature of mind, or the ultimate root of consciousness... This is the same experience to which Mahamudra leads, to which Dzogchen leads, and to which the union of clarity and emptiness (Sakya) leads...If you analyse them, they all arrive at the same point...As soon as there is clear and aware consciousness it is said to be permeated by the clear light rigpa...indwelling clear light, essential rigpa...When this aware aspect of rigpa is directly introduced and recognized, it can be identified even in the very thick of arising thoughts...In Dzogchen, while thoughts are active, rigpa permeates them all, so that even at the very moment when powerful thoughts like attachment and aversion are arising, there remains a pervasive quality of clear light rigpa. That rigpa you make into your practice

High Dharma in a Cold Climate: *Dzogchen* View and Practice

In the ancient Nyingma tradition of Vajrayana Tibetan Buddhism *Dzogchen* (*Dzogpachenpo*, Skt. *Mahasandi*) is seen as the definitive, highest teaching of Gautama Shakyamuni Buddha—the "innermost secret" teaching that he taught only to disciples of the greatest capacity and most assiduous preparation.

We've seen that the *Dzogchen* (*Dzog*; complete or perfect; *chen*, great) teaching is said to have arisen from Samantabhadra (Tib. Kuntazangpo), primordial formless *dharmakaya* *Adi Buddha* in whom all spacetime reality form arises and appears. The teaching was then directly transmitted to Vajrasattva, *Adi Buddha* of the *sambhogakaya* dimension of light-form; then from Vajrasattva to the human *nirmanakaya* Garab Dorje (d. 55 C.E.), who recorded it for his disciple Manjushrimitra, who then classified it into the three *Dzogchen* teaching cycles—*semde*, *longde*, and secret *mengagde* or *upadesha*. This was then passed on to his disciple Shrisimha, then to Jnanasutra, and then in the 8th century to Tibet via Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava. In the 14th century "the omniscient" Longchen Rabjam or Longchenpa (1308-1364) synthesized the great teaching into a unified teaching Path. Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798) edited it into its present form as the *Longchen Nyingthig*. (For a more detailed history please see *Appendix B: "A Brief History of the Dzogchen Transmission"*.)

We've seen that for Nyingma school, the traditional three extant Buddhist teaching vehicles—Hinayana/Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana—have become the *Nine Vehicles* to liberation from suffering and the ultimate clear light full *bodhi* awakening to our already present Buddha mind (*buddhajnana*). That propitious Result is buddhahood itself.

H.H. Dalai Lama teaches that the first eight of these Nine Vehicles of Nyingma utilize our reflective, relative conventional ordinary obstructed mind working as the cause and effect Mahayana Causal Vehicle to accomplish the ultimate full *bodhi* enlightenment of buddhahood. The bad news: it is said that such a path of renunciation and transformation takes countless lifetimes.

We have also seen that in the *Dzogchen* Resultant or Fruitional Vehicle ordinary mind itself is recognized as already "primordially pure" Buddha mind "from the very beginning". This subtle, direct supreme vehicle—the *Ati Yoga* of *Dzogchen*, the nondual Great Perfection or Great Completion of the dualistic Mahayana Causal Vehicle—utilizes our already present indwelling dynamic intrinsic primordial awareness wisdom itself as the Path. And yes, this path is considered by most Vajrayana masters to be the pinnacle—with Essence Mahamudra—of all the Buddhist teaching vehicles, and may, under the most auspicious circumstances, be "accomplished" in a single lifetime. That's the good news.

This primordial awareness wisdom is the constant and "unchanging *rigpa* awareness" that is not other than Samantabhadra, primordial *Adi Buddha* of the all embracing aboriginal *dharmakaya* reality dimension. This *dharmakaya* Buddha is the "Supreme Source" (*Kenjed Gyalpo*), and represents our pristine fundamental nature, the "fundamental innate mind of clear light". It is utterly "primordially pure" and untainted by the karmic winds of dualistic conceptual thought and negative emotion and action.

In *Dzogchen* View and Practice luminous, numinous primordial awareness wisdom Presence—*rigpa*, *vidya*—is inherently present in all human beings, without a single exception. It is not something that happens conditionally—if we're good, kind, and helpful. Instant open Presence is already the case. Indeed it is who we actually are now.

Moreover, all of the physical and mental phenomena of relative spacetime reality arise, participate, and pass away within this vast unbounded primordial whole, by whatever name or concept. All arising reality is imbued with this primordial Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*). Just so, that same primordial essence is the "supreme identity" of each and every human being—bright compassionate Presence of That. On the accord of H.H. Dalai Lama:

The most important way to understand the Great Perfection is in terms of essence, nature and compassionate energy according to which the essence is primordial purity (*kadag*) and the nature is spontaneous presence (*lhundrub*)...

All the phenomena of samsara and nirvana and the path are, by their very nature, the *rigpa* awareness that is the primordial buddha Samantabhadra, and they are never outside of the primordial expanse of buddhahood...This is the fundamental innate mind of clear light.

—H.H. Dalai Lama, 2007, p. 78

In other words, according to 19th century Nyingma *Rimé* polymath Ju Mipham:

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

Thus it is, in the *Dzogchen* view, the fundament of clear light ground luminosity is the *Trikaya of the Base* or the three Buddha bodies—*dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, *nirmanakaya*—that is our "supreme source" (*cittadhatu*, *kunjed gyalpo*), ultimate reality itself (*dharmata*, *cho-nyid*), the very nature of mind (*sems-nyid*, *buddhi*): its *essence* is emptiness/*shunyata*; its *nature* is luminous clarity (*gsal-ba*); its *energy* continuously emanates as the compassionate *cosmic gift* (*jinlob*) of *ultimate bodhicitta* that is our home as guests of this spacetime phenomenal dimension of light/motion/form (*tsal*, *rolba*, $E=mc^2$).

This *jnana prana* wisdom energy naturally, selflessly expresses itself in human conduct as *relative bodhicitta*—compassionate wisdom (*thugs re*)—the thought, intention, and action to benefit living beings. Herein abides our own true happiness as individual/social beings.

Therefore, the infinite, empty boundless vast expanse of basic space (*chos ying*) that is the unborn, uncreated, unbounded whole (*dharmadhatu*) is our nondual ultimate reality ground itself—Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*)—*dharmakaya*. From that unbroken whole interdependently arises (*pratitya samutpada*) relative form—Relative Truth (*samvriti satya*)

from its ultimate emptiness "groundless ground". As Buddha told, "Form is empty; emptiness is form. Form is not other than emptiness; emptiness is not other than form".

Our Four Human Cognitive Dimensions

Ultimately considered, the Buddha's complementary Two Truths—Relative and Ultimate—of the vast formless primordial unbounded whole itself are recognized, then realized as a *one truth* prior and present unity. That utterly nondual unified one truth is invariant throughout our entire human awareness-consciousness processional—perceptual, conceptual, contemplative, and nondual.

The phenomenological pie of human experience of the appearing physical and mental forms of reality may be sliced in several different ways. Indeed, noetic (body, mind, spirit integration/unity) philosopher Ken Wilber has established his prodigious integral philosophy upon such human cognitive states and stages (Wilber 2006, 2017).

The following section represents what I intend to be an integral, essential, simplified schema of the four dimensional world of human cognitive formation and experience. The Reader may wish to add a few strata, or reduce the whole shebang to one or two cognitive dimensions.

I have for the sake of simplicity glossed over important differences between *cognitive states* and *life stages*. Cognitive states do not neatly map onto life stages resulting in a bit of intellectual untidiness. Broadly construed, cognitive states are attentionally fluent and nonlocal—here now experience. Life stages have location and duration in sociocultural space and time. Nonlocal cognitive states much less so.

Evolutionary individual life *stages* are constituted in part by our present dominant cognitive *states* which condition and inform them; and in which we live for a period in time. In this way do the cognitive states upon which we *choose*—consciously or not—to place our attentional awareness define the phenomenal world in which we live. *Awareness management: From the cognitive states you choose arises the life world you deserve.*

For example, the waking consciousness of a professional theoretical physicist may be engaged primarily in cognitive state 2)—objective/conceptual (see below). As he/she is perhaps cognitively biased against entering spooky contemplative state 3), that mind state remains taboo, and closed. Still, incursions into state 3) occur during petitionary prayer, deep dreamless sleep, and the *kosmic* bliss of playing with the grandkids. Still, our physicist abides for a time in a life stage defined by mostly state 2) objective cognition.

Now, the Tibetan Buddhist Lama and *Dzogchen* master whose on-campus teaching our scholarly physicist decides to attend due in no small part to curiosity arising from a stage 3) recurring dream about preachers in red robes—that Lama abides mainly in state/stage 4)—the prior all-subsuming unity of a continuity of experience of all four cognitive states at once.

That very "advanced" Lama can dwell in the luminous mindstream of all the Buddhas in early morning prayer and meditation; jog on a treadmill at noon; engage formidable ontological conceptual Buddhist dialectics in the afternoon; teach students at any and all levels of understanding in the evening; and sleep four hours at night, while

never departing state 4) cognition. Such a one abides mainly in a life world state we might call nondual life stage 4).

Should our physicist choose to establish a cognitive state 3) contemplative practice with our life stage 4) Lama; and as he/she enters the primordial love-wisdom mindstream of the Lama, that person may indeed, in due course, enter a subtler, perhaps happier life stage, namely, state/stage 3).

Let us now further consider the four mind states of our human cognitive evolutionary capacity.

Our four cognitive dimensional states: 1) Pre-conceptual ordinary direct perception, prior to conceptual imputation, reification, and naming. 2) Exoteric, dualistic, objective, conceptual cognition. We spend most of our waking lives here. 3) Esoteric, subjective, mostly non-conceptual contemplative cognition (meditation). 4) "Innermost secret" perfectly subjective nondual cognition—beyond the subject-object split—timeless, buddic, direct yogic perception (yogi pratyaksa) and complete cognitive rest in the nature of mind.

As to evolutionary cognitive development, each ascending cognitive state transcends and embraces the previous state. For example, post-empirical state 3) understands and includes perceptual state 1) and conceptual empirical state 2); but not the utterly trans-conceptual nondual subtlety of state 4) experience—like the mother's loving embrace of the mind of her child, but not the other way round.

Ascending human evolution through this multi-dimensional awareness-consciousness continuum beyond or above state 2) is largely a function—always with our compassionate *bodhicitta*—of our ongoing attentional awareness commitment to state 3), which perforce, in due course and by grace, opens the heart and mind into the nondual clear light luminosity of state 4). Clearly, recognizing and entering in the *Perfect Sphere of Dzogchen* is a stage 4) post-empirical, non-logocentric act of nondual state 4) cognition.

Moreover, early in state/stage 3) the requested intervention of a qualified meditation master is required to "introduce" via direct spiritual transmission the prepared aspirant to his/her own "self-perfected state of *Dzogchen*"—"innermost secret" wisdom mind *buddic* Presence; and to tame and guide the egocentric "wild horse" of the student's mind through its prodigious mostly unconscious cognitive biases, excuses, and ego-defensive strategies of avoidance of psycho-emotional-spiritual growth.

A secure, stable, intelligent and cognitively fluent ego-I is required by the student for the process to bear fruit. *Lama Khen*. The Lama/Guru mirrors to the student his/her own innermost Lama/Guru. "Lama walks with Loma". But what self-respecting secure and intelligent ego-I with intellectual or spiritual "success" at state/stage 2) desires to become a student again? You can see the problem. Yes. It takes a bit of humility, and courage.

Although these four cognitive states appear linear in time, the Buddhas, *mahasiddhas*, sages and saints of our Primordial Wisdom Tradition—embodied or not—who abide in the unity of the timeless and eternal dimension of state/stage 4) experience all four states more or less simultaneously and continuously as a nondual prior and present unity. This is then the potential of the practitioner at any level.

Yes, the perfect "self-perfected state of *Dzogchen*" is always already present and awake at the Heart of the human being. But it takes a bit of guided practice to awaken the untrained mind to realization of that great truth.

Just so, practitioners at state 3)—upon entering in ever so briefly our state 4) nondual state of Presence (*rigpa, vidya*)—also experience all four cognitive states at once. As state 3) established practice begins to stabilize the hitherto untrained distracted mind, we connect as we will, "brief moments, many times", to the peace and the yogi's bliss of lucid state 4) awakening. All of the Buddhas and *mahasiddhas* of the three times—past, present, future—have told of this multi-dimensional awakening process.

Clearly, the wondrous, sometimes scintillating human conceptual virtuosity of state 2) in no way exhausts the many mansions of this great whole that is our intrinsic human intelligence. That it does, demonstrates the inherent, natural cognitive bias of state 2). Our collective sociocultural life *stages* are an out-picturing of our individual cognitive *states*.

The pragmatic and wonderfully productive Western scientific paradigm—Scientific Materialism—may well be the pinnacle of state/stage 2) development. The Λ CDM (lambda cold dark matter) Standard Model of Physics and Cosmology with its relativistic quantum electrodynamics (QED) is arguably the greatest *intellectual* achievement of humankind.

Yet, such valorization and idealization of Science has a cost. We have seen that the price paid for this obsessively objective/conceptual habit of mind is the colonization of Western mind and culture by the monolithic monistic metaphysic of Scientific Materialism/Physicalism. The unhappy result is a profound materialist/physicalist deep background cultural bias—our materialist/physicalist "global web of belief" (Quine 1969). This problematic global cognitive bias closes William Blake's "doors of perception" to subtler or higher state/stage 3) and state/stage 4) human cognition. Buddhist philosopher-practitioner Alan Wallace has labeled this sad mind-state of affairs the "taboo of subjectivity". The destructive effect represents a profound cognitive limit upon human happiness—psychological, emotional, and spiritual.

The good news? Humanity now dwells upon the cusp of our next global knowledge paradigm—the 21st century integral Noetic Revolution in Matter, Mind, and Spirit that is now upon us (Boaz 2021b). Our collective human consciousness now bestrides an uneasy cognitive gap between the self-satisfied naïveté of state/stage 2) and state/stage 3) which transcends and includes 2).

Just as our four cognitive states are an ultimate unity, the Buddhist Two Truths—Relative and Ultimate—share a relation of identity. How is this so? The all inclusive nondual formless dimension of Ultimate Truth—non-conceptually cognized at state/stage 4)—embraces, subsumes, and pervades the dynamic dualistic spacetime form dimension of Relative Truth (state/stages 1, 2, 3) arising therein. Just so, cognitive state/stage 4) transcends yet embraces the less inclusive first three cognitive states and respective stages.

It is our always already present open awareness Presence (*vidya, rigpa*)—fully present to that *ultimate* primordial wholeness ground state (*gzhi rigpa*)—that knows and feels the truth of this great unified reality process. The practice of the Path with the living *Dzogchen* master and the *sangha* spiritual community opens the heart and mind of the yogi

and yogini to receive the love, wisdom and deep inner ease and peace of it. And that is the very secret of both relative and ultimate human happiness. Pragmatic soteriology indeed.

Great 14th century *Dzogchen* master Gyalwa Longchen Rabjam (Longchenpa, 1308-1364), synthesizer of the entire previous *Dzogchen* wisdom transmission (*Appendix B*) speaks of this, our conceptually unelaborated, "innermost secret" state of awareness Presence of the great unbounded whole itself. Longchenpa's homage to the "primordial purity" of awareness state 4):

Naturally occurring timeless awareness—utterly lucid awakened mind—is marvelous and superb, primordially and spontaneously present. It is the treasury from which comes the universe of appearances and possibilities, whether samsara or nirvana. Homage to the unwavering state, free of conceptual elaboration.

—Treasury of the Basic Space of Phenomena (2001)

Please consider Longchenpa's mind to mind transmission to us of this primordial awareness love-wisdom (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*), the "fundamental innate mind of clear light", the very Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*) of mind (*citatta, sems nyid*), *dharmakaya* emptiness ground of the great whole of all our arising realities (*dharmata, cho nyid*):

Self arising wisdom is *rigpa* that is empty, clear and free from all conceptual 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 nondual self-arising wisdom...Like a reflection in a mirror, 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, *Treasury of the Dharmadhatu* (Commentary), Adzom Chögar Ed.

The Supreme Source

What is perhaps the primary *Dzogchen* tantra, *The Kunjed Gyalpo* (*The Supreme Source*), must surely be considered one of humankind's great spiritual treasures. According to 20th century *Dzogchen* master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, this prehistorical supreme nondual teaching—by whatever name—has been transmitted from master to disciple directly, heartmind to heartmind, for thousands of years.

However, historical *Dzogchen* wisdom dates from the teaching of Garab Dorje (d. 55 CE), as we have seen. The *Kunjed Gyalpo* tantra arises in the 8th Century and is the fundamental tantra of the *Dzogchen semde* (mind) teaching cycle. This reading of the great nonlocal, nondual primordial *Dzogchen* teaching is derived from Buddhist

Vajrayana/Tantrayana understanding of the ultimate clear light nature of mind, yet its truth essence runs like a golden thread through the grand tapestry of humankind's great nondual Primordial Wisdom Tradition.

Kunjed Gyälpo, The Wise and Glorious King is Samantabhadra (luminous clarity) and Samantabhadri (boundless emptiness) in inseparable *yab-yum* embrace—androgynous skylike primordial *Adi Buddha*—the union of luminous clarity and emptiness that is none other than our original Buddha nature, supreme source, basis, primordial womb of everything. Samantabhadra, formless *Dharmakaya* Buddha descends into the realm of light and speaks to the *Logos, Vajrasattva, Buddha* of the *Sambhogakaya* reality dimension:

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

—Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, 1999

Thus do the sutras and the tantras of Buddha's teaching, and all of the bivalent dualities and dialectics of the Buddhist path—objective-subjective, existence-nonexistence, form-emptiness, self-noself, observer-data, true-false, relative truth-ultimate truth—abide "utterly free of the defects of dualistic thought", in the prior unity of the interdependently arisen *Perfect Sphere of Dzogchen*, the Great Perfection. This perfect all-embracing sphere of ultimate reality is nothing less than our ultimate *buddic* mind nature, luminous innate clear light wisdom mind that is always already the unity of awareness and emptiness, of clarity and emptiness, and of bliss and emptiness.

Who is it, that I am? All the Buddhas and *mahasiddhas* of the three times have told it. This infinite vast expanse of the primordial awareness wisdom tantric continuum, "supreme source", boundless all-inclusive whole itself—bright indwelling Presence of That—is who we actually are!

Recall our ancient Vedic locution, *Tat Tvam Asi*. That, I Am! *That* is our "supreme identity"—by any name—the *Dzogchen* Great Completion of our always present Buddha nature, deep heart-seed Presence of ultimate happiness that is both origin and aim of all our urgent, dualistic, happiness seeking strategies. All the wisdom masters of the three times have told it: that which we seek is already present, deep within us. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu on this primordial supreme source:

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 (conceptual) view, the nature shines clear. Understanding the essential unborn condition is not an object to observe dualistically. This is the great understanding!

—Chögyal Namkhi Norbu, 1999

Basic Space: Our Innate Mind of Clear Light

Recent Tibetan *Dzogchen* ecumenical *Rimé* master Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche teaches that the two innermost principles of *Dzogchen* are basic space (*dharmadhatu*, Tib. *chos ying*) and primordial awareness presence (*vidya*, *rigpa*). Basic space is fecund luminous boundless *shunyata*/emptiness, the innate clear light luminosity (*'od gsal*) itself. In the *Dzogchen* View the "innermost secret" realization of basic space is *klong*, infinite vast expanse of all embracing primordial reality itself, transcending any conceptual elaboration or limit, judgment or bias, beyond even the subtlest subject-object duality, beyond objective and subjective 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, and *Rainbow Painting*, 1995)

Therefore, basic space (*dharmadhatu*, *cho ying*) and primordial awareness wisdom (*jnana*, *yeshe*, *gnosis*) are an indivisible prior ontological, and present epistemological and phenomenal unity. Emptiness and our innate clear light Buddha love-wisdom mind share this *kosmic* nondual relation of identity.

On the accord of the Third Dordrupchen, Jigme Tenpe Nyima (quoted in H.H. Dalai Lama *Dzogchen*, 2000): "The *rigpa* taught in the Nyingma *Dzogchen* approach and the wisdom of clear light (Kagyu and Gulug school *Mahamudra/Anuttara-yoga-tantra*) are one and the same":

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 of 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 anything 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* (arising 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 (your mind).

This poetry of the nondual *Dzogchen* View was beautifully expressed by a great Tang Dynasty Chan/Zen Chinese master who likely had never heard of *Dzogchen*. His name was Haung Po (d. 850 CE):

All the Buddhas and all sentient beings are nothing but the one mind, beside which nothing exists. The one mind alone is Buddha. There is no distinction between Buddha and sentient beings....This one pure mind, the source of all things, shines forever with the radiance of its own perfection...like the sun rising through empty sky illuminates the whole world...Still your mind and it is here....Human beings are attached to forms and so seek externally for Buddhahood. It is by this very seeking that they lose it (*Ch'uan-hsin Fa-yao*).

Lovely dharma poetry. Beautiful words indeed. And how shall we ordinary folks directly connect to and know this always already present Presence of our innermost clear light love-wisdom Buddha mind? How indeed. That is the question that the *AtiYoga* of *Dzogchen* answers directly—for those courageous souls who choose to engage it.

We first establish an effective "real practice" under the guidance of a qualified *Dzogchen* meditation master (*Appendix A*), and in the loving context of the *sangha* community. We must ask for direct transmission if we truly desire it. If we have already done this, we make the *goal* of this precious gift of all encompassing practice, not seeking enlightenment in some divine future mind state, but our ordinary, difficult everyday path itself—step by mindful step—"brief moments many times". This natural continuity of clear light love-wisdom awareness is already present deep within us, here now. It is That great trans-conceptual truth to which we awaken through the relationship of the Lama.

Verily, everything, all of our cognitive experience—physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual; objective, subjective, contemplative, and perfectly subjective nondual; every thought, intention, and action—is the practice of the Path. All of that is our already present Buddha mind Presence. Let it be so.

The Three Vajra Verses

Here are H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche's luminous Comments on Garab Dorje's *Three Vajra Verses* or *The Three Essential Points* that are the *Dzogchen* Base, View, Path, Meditation, Result, and Conduct (translated by John M. Reynolds):

Verse I: Recognize your own true nature—through direct introduction/transmission by the *Dzogchen* master (The Base/Ground and the View). "This fresh immediate awareness of the present moment, transcending all thoughts related to the three times (past, present, future), is itself that primordial awareness wisdom (*yeshe*) that is self-originated intrinsic awareness (*rig pa*)."

From this Base and View arises the *Dzogchen Semde* (mind) teaching cycle.

Verse II: Choose the state of presence, beyond doubt (The Path and Meditation). "Whatever phenomena of *samsara* or *nirvana* may manifest, all of it represents the play of the creative energy or potentiality of one's own immediate intrinsic awareness presence (*rig pa'i rtsal*). One must decide upon this unique state for oneself, and know that there exists nothing other than this."

From This Path and Meditation arises the *Dzogchen Longde* (space) teaching cycle.

Verse III: Continue in the state with confidence in liberation (The Result and Conduct). "Whatever gross or subtle thoughts may arise, by merely recognizing their nature, they arise and self-liberate simultaneously in the vast expanse of *Dharmakaya*, where Emptiness and Awareness are nondual and inseparable (*gsal stong gnyis med*)."

From this Result and Conduct arises the *Dzogchen* "innermost secret" *Upadesha* (*Mengagde*), or heart essence (*nyingthig*) teaching cycle.

The Six Vajra Verses of Vairochana.

These *Three Essential Points* (*The Three Vajra Verses*) of the essence, nature and energy of the Base, and of the Path, and of the Fruition/Result is contained in *Dhyani* Buddha Vairochana's early *Dzogchen* tantra, the *Six Vajra Verses*, or "Cuckoo of the State of Presence" (*Rig-pa'I khu-byug*), luminous Buddha mind Presence (*vidya, rigpa*) of intrinsic awareness that each human being is.

The cuckoo is the sacred bird of *Bönpo* founder Shenrab Miwo and is considered in the aboriginal *Bön* tradition as the king of birds, harbinger of spring and bearer of the primordial wisdom from vast empty space of *dharmakaya*. These early *Six Vajra Verses* of Vairochana, and the hundreds of *Dzogchen* tantras and texts that issue from it are but commentaries on Garab Dorje's above *Three Vajra Verses* or *The Three Essential Statements* (*The Three Points That Strike the Essence*).

The Six Vajra Verses (translated by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu):

Verse 1 & 2: The Base (View): The nature of phenomena is nondual (*gnyis med*), and each one, its own state, is beyond the limits of the mind (*Dzogchen semde* or mind meditation cycle).

Verse 3 & 4: The Path, Way of Practice (Meditation): There is no concept that can define the condition of “what is,” but vision nevertheless manifests: all is good (*Dzogchen longde*, or space meditation cycle).

Verse 5 & 6: The Fruit, Result, Way of Being in Action (Conduct): Everything has already been accomplished, and so, having overcome the sickness of effort (spiritual seeking), one finds oneself in the self-perfected state: (*Dzogchen mengagde/upasheda*, or secret essence meditation cycle).

And from 18th century *Dzogchen* master Jigme Lingpa—great unifier of Longchenpa's syncretic corpus, and author of the *Longchen Nyingthig: Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse*—on the nondual Great Perfection *Dzogchen* view:

No Buddhas, no beings, beyond
existence and non-existence
intrinsic awareness itself is absolute
Guru—Ultimate Truth. By resting
naturally, beyond fixation in that
inherently free perfect innate *Bodhi-*
mind, I take refuge and actualize
Bodhicitta.

—Jigme Lingpa, *Longchen Nyingthig*

“The perfect explanation of *Dzogchen*”, according to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu is voiced in these perfect words of Gautama, our historical *Nirmanakaya* Buddha:

All that arises
is essentially no more real
than a reflection,
transparently pure and clear,
beyond all definition
or logical explanation.

Yet the seeds of past action, karma,
continue to cause further arising.
Even so, know that all that exists
is ultimately devoid of self-nature,
utterly nondual.

Nondual Non-Meditation: Undistracted Ordinary Mind

Please consider this: In the luminous, numinous space between, and within, and throughout our relative perceptions, thoughts, feelings and beliefs already abides our ultimate primordial innate clear light love-wisdom mind—profound innermost Presence of That. Connect to That, moment to moment. Mindful mantra wisdom breath (*pranajana*) is the skillful method. *OM AH HUM*. That is the great happiness *Dzogchen* teaching.

We've often seen in these pages that our Buddha mind Presence is transpersonal/trans-ego, non-conceptual and trans-rational; that is, it utterly transcends our deep cultural background realist/materialist "scientific" paradigm,—our reality constituting Western "global web of belief" as to its objective existence or nonexistence. Yet, our Buddha mind is always right here now, upon each mantra breath! Even when we forget. All the masters of the three times have told it: your *bodhi* mind wisdom mind Presence is always already present! But don't *believe* this. It's beyond belief. As Buddha told, "Come and see".

Undistracted Ordinary Mind. In the most subtle nondual view and practice of Vajrayana *Dzogchen*, and of definitive Essence *Mahamudra*, mindfulness meditation practice is already simply present now in "undistracted ordinary mind"; the "primordially pure" natural "self-perfected state" of spontaneously aware Presence—conceptually empty luminous awareness that is always present right here and now, in the midst of all kinds of thinking, feeling, and physical distractions. "Without past, present, future; empty awake mind" (Ju Mipham).

This nondual, innermost esoteric teaching on the nondual primordial nature of mind unfolds "from the top" as the "immediacy of the View", while the dualistic Path ascends from below. Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava teaches: "Keep your view as high as the sky; and your deeds as fine as barley flour...It is most important to practice these two as a unity".

Thus is confidence and certainty of the *View* established through the nondual *Meditation*, and the compassionate *Conduct* of the *Path*: View, Meditation, and Conduct/Action.

Recall the *Dzogchen Three Vajra Verses*: 1) Recognize your own true nature (via direct introduction/transmission from the *Dzogchen* master); 2) Choose the state of Presence beyond doubt; 3) Continue in the state with confidence in liberation". That is the already self-perfected unity of *Dzogchen* View and Meditation.

As Lord Buddha's teaching enters the West the immediacy of the nondual View, along with the Lama's "pointing out instruction" is introduced directly by some Vajrayana Tibetan Lamas at the beginning of the process of the Path, before the student's accomplishment of the daunting preliminary practices of *ngöndro*, and "development stage" practice, which may or may not be done later as the View and Path become more established, and the unruly mind more stabilized. Why do *Dzogchen* Lamas do this?

A basic working understanding of the View—and the profound relative, conventional everyday peace and happiness that arises from it—is always here now, from

the very beginning! Our immediate happiness is already present! Happiness—bright Presence of That—is already the case. It is not at all dependent upon later "advanced practice". Human happiness is always right here now in our *undistracted ordinary mind*. It follows the *pranajana* wind of mantra breath. We simply breathe consciously and open the heart and the mind to receive it, this eternal present moment now. That is the simple miracle of radical, "self-perfected" *Dzogchen* truth. Jesus the Christ has told it well: "That which you seek is already present within you; and it is spread out upon the face of the earth, but you do not see it" (*Luke 17*). Now we can see it.

So, having direct happy experience of Presence, we gradually learn to manage distractions. That is the *Dzogchen* View. There is no need to believe this. Ultimately, it is just more words. And it is assuredly beyond belief. Thus do we open to receive it *directly* (*yogi pratyaksa*). As Buddha told so long ago, "O monks, do not believe what I teach out of respect for me. Come and see."

That said, we must, through the Buddha's basic "mindfulness of breathing", and with basic mantra prayer (*OM AH HUM*) begin to "bracket" our deep cultural background skepticism and doubt—our dubious materialist "global web of belief"—and open our heart-mind to receive. That is how we manage the natural endless painful distractions.

But the goal is not to block or to end the distractions. The goal is not to end life's inevitable adversity. Adversity happens! It's how we *choose* to respond that matters; is it not? So once again, we simply connect to our already present Presence—moment to moment—through mindful mantra breath. Anxiety, impatience, and harsh judgementalism lose a bit of their power. We learn to go easy on and forgive ourselves, and through this we forgive others—especially those we love most.

We've seen that the outer and inner seeking strategies for such happiness doesn't work. So, we stop seeking and simply relax into, and then rest in our already present love-wisdom mind Presence—"brief moments, many times". Our relief need not be some mystical "advanced practice". Our immediate touchstone is here upon the mindful mantra breath—our ongoing instant connection to that.

Hot Tip! If you have not already done so, get a Lama in your life. If you have done so, remember again and again that you are always already now that Lama/Guru Presence. The outer Guru always mirrors your inner Guru. Bright Presence of That. "Lama walks always with *loma*".

Most surprising to our concepts and beliefs *about* the path of meditation—with the introduction by the Lama of *undistracted ordinary mind* to the prepared "ripe" student—there is no need to change anything! No need to seek some paradigmatic ideal "perfect meditation", or contemplative accomplishment. No need to try to do something, or not do something. No need to block thoughts and feelings; nor to indulge frustration about such distractions. No need to worry; to feel guilty and regretful. No need to *fix* this natural process of primordial arising of appearance from its emptiness primordial Buddha "groundless ground", the *Perfect Sphere of Dzogchen*; the perfect imprint/seal of *Mahamudra*.

Buddha told, "Leave it alone; it's perfect as it is". You can't improve it! Connect to that Buddha mind love-wisdom through mindful *shamatha*, and through your stainless, if less than perfect, *bodhicitta* conduct. It will make you happy now. That is the Path.

The Lamas tell that in this nondual view and spontaneous non-meditation practice, all arising unfolding appearance already enfolded in vast unbounded whole that is nondual reality itself is always untainted, undefiled, and perfect just as it is. This basal aboriginal emptiness "groundless ground" is inherently "primordially pure" and uncontaminated by distracting dualistic thought or existence of any kind. The really good news? We now already know this.

Just so, the spacetime forms which arise and exist within and through the formless primordial ground, because there is never a whit of separation from it, is equally inherently perfect just as it appears. Radical teaching indeed. And fortunately, utterly beyond belief. So, it must be *directly* experienced as self-perfected state of *Dzogchen*, now.

Therefore, wonder of wonders, distractions—thinking, feeling, perceiving—negative or positive, are but mere appearances—waves of the primordial natural state upon the vast ocean that is present luminosity of our *undistracted ordinary mind*. There is no *essential* difference! "Form is empty; emptiness is form".

Hence, once again, as Buddha told so long ago, "Rest your weary mind and let it be as it is; all things are perfect exactly as they are". This is the radical nondual View, Meditation, and Practice of the *Dzogchen* path, whether it is introduced at the beginning, or after years of dualistic "development stage" practice. It is this beautiful, simple yet difficult practice that makes it so.

Yes, *undistracted ordinary mind* is simply letting natural mind be as it already is, here now, without adding judgments about distractedness. It's pristine and perfect just as it is, distractions, imperfections and all. That is the radical nondual *Dzogchen* teaching. So we still have to show up for work, take out the trash, and be kind even to "difficult people".

Far from an idealized vacant and void state of mindlessness, undistracted ordinary mind is lucid, awake, vivid, and clear. This again, is nondual, uncontrived, unelaborated *Dzogchen* "non-meditation". As *Dzogchen* founder Garab Dorje told twenty centuries ago, "It is already accomplished from the very beginning", deep within *your* heartmind. It is that profound truth to which we awaken—step by mindful step—upon the mindful mantra breath.

And yes, it takes a bit of peaceful, lucid undistracted mindfulness meditation practice—foundational *shamatha* and mantra prayer, under the guidance of a qualified Lama—to recognize and sustain this state of Presence in the not always so quiescent presence of *samsaric* spacetime reality.

So now, settle into and rest in your familiar state of mindful *shamatha* upon the breath as you receive these kind words of sixteenth century great *Mahamudra* Master Dakpo Tashi Namgyal:

Look directly into your conscious mind. It is a wakefulness for which no words suffice. It is not a definable entity, but at the same time, it is a self-knowing aware emptiness that is clear, lucid and awake. Sustain this without distraction... Next, examine a particular thought or perception...look into it directly and investigate...No matter what kind of thought

occurs, its experience is, in itself, something unidentifiable— it is unobstructedly aware and yet not conceptualizing... As for perceptions, they are a mere impression of unobstructed presence, which is insubstantial and not a clinging to a solid reality. Without distraction then, simply sustain this aware emptiness that is unidentifiable awareness, also referred to as a perceiving emptiness that is perception devoid of a self-nature.
—Namgyal, *Clarifying the Natural State*, 2001, p. 29 ff.

Now, naturally aware mindful Presence and your very own natural mind are one and the same (*samatajnana*). There is no separation. It has always been thus. Open your heart and *feel* that! Then rejoice in this miraculous non-meditation of your *nondual undistracted ordinary mind!* *Emaho!*

What "Undistracted Ordinary Mind" is Not. It is not total quiescence wherein the gross and subtle phenomena of sense perception utterly cease. Nor is it a mindless inert state ("blank Zen") that excludes both sensory input, *and* discursive discriminating wisdom. It is not a vacant mind state between the arising of thoughts; not empty of sensory experience; not empty of all thinking; not an aversion to perceptual and conceptual experience of any kind.

In short, wonder of wonders, this mildly spooky nondual "non-meditation" meditation of undistracted ordinary mind does not exclude the dualistic experience of ordinary mind! Perceptual and conceptual experience is not the enemy of mindful meditation. Thoughts and feelings, negative or positive, are not the antagonist in this *kosmic* comic play of the mind. And non-thinking is not the goal. Let's not complicate it. Relax a bit and "Let it be exactly as it is". That is the *Dzogchen* non-meditation. Let it be so.

The Witness Presence. So now, just for a moment, place your attention upon your breath, and simply witness your awareness. Be meta-cognitively, reflexively aware of your present awareness; just as it is now. Observe what arises. No need to change it, direct it, evaluate it, think about it, grasp at or reject anything at all. And when grasping/rejecting thinking naturally arises, just witness that. Let it be as it is. Relax and settle into this bright space. Now rest here this moment. Simply feel it. *Feel* the feeling of being you being present here and now. Feel the deep *I Am prana* life current flow of *buddic* Presence of you upon your breath, in this precious moment now.

This primordial Presence cannot be created or fabricated. Why? It is always already present—whether you choose to believe it, or like it, or not. What is, just is. So, feel your connectedness to it, and to all living beings, and to everything that is. That is who *you* are. Rest in That, and be happy now. You are now in good company. All the masters of the three times have told this.

Although the waking state of the untrained mind is brimming with relentless concepts, beliefs and feelings, this undistracted ordinary mind of ours excludes any *distraction* from the "primordial purity" of *bodhi* mind Presence, always present to any and

all arising distractions. All embracing primordial wisdom mind Presence is always "primordially present" throughout our myriad distractions. No need to believe this. Let it be as it is.

That direct experience is, Dear Reader, the actual nondual nature of mind; Buddha nature of mind—beyond your concepts and beliefs *about* it. As thoughts and feelings arise, without judgment, return to the bright undistracted state, always upon the mantra breath (*OM AH HUM*), again and again. Or, momentarily shatter a troubling constellation of thoughts/feelings by shouting out *PHAT* to return the mind to its peaceful natural state. "It's perfect just as it is". *That* is human Happiness Itself. Rest a few moments in *That*! You can think about it later.

Yes, the pristine, undistracted mind state that is liberated from discursive thinking is the moment to moment non-meditative meditation. But a *goal* of utter non-movement of thought, and of perceptual and feeling experience is itself a distraction. As we have seen, seeking a goal of contemplative, meditative happiness as an antidote to suffering is a form of suffering. Wisdom mind/Buddha mind seeks nothing at all. It is complete in itself. And that is who you are. That is the meditation. Thus do we "Make the goal the Path" in this present moment now. Your practice makes it so.

Thus it is, for human beings being here in time, the origin of our discontent is not distracting thoughts and emotions. This is not the real problem. The origin of our suffering is, as Buddha told long ago, primal ignorance (*avidya, marigpa, ajnana, hamartia/sin*) of our always present selfless Buddha nature/Buddha mind.

Thoughts are only thoughts. Emotions are just emotions. They have no inherent power over us that we do not *choose* to give them. So we learn to fine tune our moment to moment choice of where we shall place our attention—on a distraction, or on love-wisdom mind Presence.

Everything is already embraced by clear light undistracted ordinary mind. "Leave it alone and let it be as it is....This cannot be taught" (Gautama the Buddha). So, relax the desire to understand it intellectually. As Lao Tzu told so long ago, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step". Step by mindful step, each moment we arrive.

Thus is the nondual *Dzogchen* View and Meditation the Result/Fruition of both relative human happiness (*eudaimonia*, human flourishing), and ultimate human happiness (*mahasukkha, paramananda, beatitudo*)—liberation/enlightenment—Happiness Itself. "It is already accomplished from the very beginning". It's too simple to believe; but to present to deny. Please consider well this nondual *Dzogchen* View and Practice.

We have seen that the *goal* of the practice of the spiritual Path is not the yogi's bliss, nor some future perfect nondual happiness mind state; nor is it liberation from suffering. Goals can be future-looking distractions. And the future never shows up! It's too busy becoming the present moment. So surrender your happiness seeking strategies. The goal is simply the practice itself, just as it, and you are now. Abiding in this clear light basic space of vast empty unbounded whole that is the already present all embracing *Perfect Sphere of Dzogchen* is always only here now. It's like coming home.

Thus it is. So be it. May all beings be happy.

