Ways of the Spirit

Ways of the Spirit
CELEBRATING DIALOGUE, DIVERSITY AND SPIRITUALITY

M. Darrol Bryant, ed.

CIP information available at the Library and Archives Canada.

Book design by Christian Snyder.
Book cover photograph David J. Winn

Ways of the Spirit.
Copyright © 2013 by Pandora Press

All rights reserved Pandora Press

ISBN 978-1-926599-34-2

Dedication

To a new generation, especially Ethan Niwe Bryant, Sloane Berlin Bryant, Kayla Ann Dillon and Zoe Grace Dillon

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Many individuals and institutions contributed to the Ways of the Spirit project that is the background to the volume you are now holding in your hands. First, I want to thank Renison University College. Hired as a Professor of Religion and Culture in 1973, I spent thirty-four years teaching, learning from colleagues, and interacting with students. For that I am immensely grateful. Then, when I retired in 2007, Renison allowed me to establish a Centre for Dialogue and Spirituality in the World Religions. The mandate of the Centre includes a public forum, research, and public education. When asked if I wanted a "festschrift," I said no, but I would like to ask former students, colleagues, and friends if they would write about their area of study and passion, for a general audience. Thus was born the "Ways of the Spirit" project.

I want to thank three of my former students for their assistance: Dr. Vic Froese, my first student to pursue doctoral studies, who is now the Library Director at the Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Dr. Doris Jakobsh, now in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Waterloo, and Ms. Val Lariviere, now in the Costume Department at the Stratford Festival in Ontario. They helped me gather the nearly fifty contributions to the Ways of the Spirit project. I want also to thank contributors from around the world who have shared their expertise and passion with me – and with the readers of the volumes that will come from this project. Again, I am immensely grateful.

This first volume, *Ways of the Spirit: Celebrating Spirituality, Dialogue, Diversity and Spirituality* is a selection of pieces from our longer list. I want to thank those who commented on my selections for this first volume. You know who you are. I will name and thank Susan Hodges Bryant for her editing magic and for other gifts that remain unspoken. And a big thanks to our publisher, Christian Snyder at Pandora Press in Kitchener, for his sage advice and assistance. It is always a pleasure to work with such a gifted and helpful editor, designer, and publisher.

Introduction

On February 10, 2013, thirty million human beings came together for the Kumbha Mela outside the city of Allahabad in north India. They were pilgrims, nearly all Hindus, who had come from across India to be part of this event, the largest gathering of human beings on the planet. Most camped out in the vast tent city that had sprung up on the flood plain on the banks of the rivers Yamuna and the Ganges. It was my third Kumbha Mela. I had come in 1989 (16 million) and 2001 (20 million), but this was the *maha,* or great Kumbha Mela. This time, two of my children, Benjamin and Emma, had come with me. We stayed in the camp of the Goswami family from Vrindavan, an important centre of Krishna and Radha devotion in north India. I had met Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami in the mid-1980s. He invited me to join their camp at the Kumbha Mela in 1989. I was astonished to discover the depth of devotion to "Ma Ganga" that filled the hearts of the pilgrims gathered for this event, even more so in 2013. This great festival of faith became a crucial event in my own journey into the living religious traditions of humankind.

My journey into the many paths of living spirituality began in the late 1970s. Then I began to realize the need to deepen my textual and book knowledge with an experiential encounter with the many and diverse traditions of spirituality. Thus when I now reflect on these traditions of living spirituality, my mind is filled with memories of those I have encountered over the years. People rather than abstractions have become the bearers of these many pathways of the spirit. Hindus like Shivamurthy, Shrivatsa and Sandhya, Muslims like Syed and Naheed, Buddhists like Doboom, Nishiyama, and Chungkey, Sikhs like Mohinder and Mona, Thomas Christians like Paulos and Father Albert, Jews like Alon and Miriam, Jains like the Swamiji at Shravanabelagola and many others have become part of my inner image of the world of spirituality. They have been my guides into this wonderfully diverse world. It is these friends, colleagues and former students who have written the essays you will find in this volume.

Ways of the Spirit celebrates the dialogue and diversity of global spirituality. It brings together many voices from the astonishing dialogue of men and women from around the world over the past half century. The writings included here lead us into the kaleidoscope of spirituality in our time, with each turn of the page bringing that world into a new configuration.

The volume opens with a poem by Pam O'Rourke entitled "Setting Out." It comes from one of her diaries that she kept during a study tour of India with me. In fact, Pam has been to India with me four times. Each time, she creates wonderful photo diaries with a poetic commentary. I couldn't find a way to include her whole diary, so we included three of her poems here. When not traveling in India, Pam is involved in teaching the elderly.

The opening poem is followed by a wonderful piece on "The Way of Women: in Search of Love and Wisdom" by Dr. Ursula King, Professor Emerita of Theology and Religious Studies at Bristol University. Born in Germany, educated in India and France, and living and teaching in Great Britain, and now around the world, Ursula has been a colleague and friend since the 1980s. She has written extensively on Teilhard de Chardin and on Women's Spirituality, and has been deeply involved in the dialogue of religions

Dr. James Gollnick, author of "The Way of Dreams," began keeping a dream journal in the late 1960s and is still at it. A friend and colleague – we both taught in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Waterloo – he has taught courses on dreams, and has analyzed his dreams for more than forty years. Here, he recounts the history of dream interpretation from ancient times down to the present revival of interest in dreams and their meaning.

Jim's essay is followed by an insightful exploration of "The Way of Shinran" by Professor Dennis Hirota. Shinran (1173–1263) is one of the leading figures of Japanese Buddhism. Jodo Shinshu, or Shin Buddhism, is the most widely practiced stream of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. Dennis teaches in the Department of Shin Buddhism at Ryukoku University in Kyoto, Japan. I met Dennis at a conference on the Lotus Sutra sponsored by Rissho Kosei Kai in the 1990s. He has taught me much about Shinran,

a figure sometimes called the Martin Luther of Japanese Buddhism for his emphasis on faith, or what he calls *shinjin* or true entrusting.

Doboom Tulku, long-time Director of Tibet House (1981–2010), an institution of HH the Dalai Lama in New Delhi, now heads the World Buddhist Cultural Trust. He became my guide into the world of Tibetan Buddhism when I first travelled to India in the mid-1980s. "The Way of Tibetan Buddhism" highlights some central themes in Tibetan thought, especially its way of viewing "precious human life."

Doboom's contribution is followed by "The Way of Gobind Sadan." Gobind Sadan is a spiritual community located on the outskirts of New Delhi and the essay is by the noted author of the widely used world religions textbook *Living Religions*, Mary Pat Fischer. Founded by Baba Virsa Singh, a Sikh who taught the unity of all prophets, Gobind Sadan (House of God) has become a vibrant interfaith community that celebrates the major figures and festivals of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Jews, and Christians. Mary Pat Fischer introduced me to Gobind Sadan and her revered teacher Baba Virsa Singh in the 1980s. We have been friends ever since, and I often take students to Gobind Sadan when in India.

Little did I know that my college friend, Marcus Borg, would become one of the noted Biblical scholars of our time and that his writings on Jesus, beginning with *Jesus: A New Vision* (1987) and *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (1994), would become best sellers. A Professor of Religion and Culture at Oregon State University, Dr. Marcus Borg's "The Way of Jesus" is a masterful account of the transformative Jesus given to us in the sacred literature of Christianity.

We then turn East to the *Lotus Sutra*, one of the most significant *sutras* or sacred texts of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. Dr. Gene Reeves, whom I first knew as the Head of the Meadville/Lombard Theological School in Chicago, is our guide into "The Bodhisattva Way in Rissho Kosei-Kai and the Lotus Sutra." Since 1989 he has been in Japan pursuing his study of Buddhism with Rissho Kosei-Kai, a new Japanese Buddhist tradition, and teaching in Japan and China. Here, Gene unfolds his understanding of the way of wisdom and compassion (the Bodhisattva Way) as a practice that engages our "everyday actions and relationships."

Casey Clifford Rock, a long-time friend and the mother of my godson,

Jesse, now reverses the turn to the East and movingly explores "The Way of Yoga" as it has come to the West and enriched her life. Casey worked for the CBC as a librarian and researcher before pursuing a Master of Divinity degree in Toronto. But it was in yoga and meditation, especially in becoming a Yoga teacher, that she discovered her ministry: one of "homecoming."

Dr. Rory Dickson was a graduate student when we first met in the first decade of the new millennium. I was impressed by the maturity of his grasp of the Sufi way and asked him to write "The Way of the Sufi." Rory brings us into a dimension of the world of Islam that we hear nothing about in the popular media. The Sufi path, like that of the prophet Muhammad, involves "living fully in the world while being inwardly with God," and it takes diverse forms, including the Whirling Dervishes of Rumi. Whenever I go to India, one of the first places I visit is a Sufi Centre in New Delhi to hear the singing of the Sufis known as *qawwali*, songs in praise of the Beloved.

I met Professor Joseph Adler at an on-line event on world religions in New York City in 2011. I was speaking about Christianity and Prof. Adler about Confucianism. I had used one of his books in a course on East Asian religion, and I invited him to write on "The Confucian Way." Joseph Adler, who teaches at Kenyon College in the USA, takes us into the world of Confucius and those Confucian values of harmony that permeated "all levels of Chinese society" and, we might add, the societies of East Asia. Confucius lived 2500 years ago, and his teachings concerning social harmony shaped Chinese culture and education for two thousand years. During the Cultural Revolution in China, Confucian teaching was considered one of "four olds" that must be swept away, but in recent years we have seen a cautious resurgence of Confucian values.

My own piece on the "Way of the Dance of Dialogue" was first presented at a BIG I Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, in 2012. It is a personal account of my involvement in interreligious dialogue over the past nearly forty years. This dialogue, or meeting of men and women from all the world's traditions of spirituality, is a phenomenon that emerged only in the 1950s. Since then, it has become a world-wide phenomenon.

Another of Pam O'Rourke's poems – "Along the Way" marks the

midpoint of the volume and the reader's journey into contemporary spirituality.

The Nashville Conference brought me back in touch with Rabbi Rami Shapiro. We had met at an interfaith conference at a monastery in Colorado in the early 1980s, but our paths had not crossed since. He is one of the wisest and funniest human beings I know. The opening line of the "*Way of the Holy Rascal*" reads, "Holy rascality is an attitude, a mixture of the bold, irreverent, provocative, fearless, and funny." That says it all, except for one other thing: it is also full of insight. Besides being a rascal, Dr. Rabbi Rami Shapiro is an author, poet and educator, a professor at Middle Tennessee State University and director of the Wisdom House Interfaith Centre in Nashville.

My dear friend Yanni Maniatis and I worked together on interfaith projects for more than a dozen years in the 1980s and 90s. He now lives in Pennsylvania and runs InsideOutJourneys. His contribution to this volume grows out of his work teaching meditation, healing, and intuition development and is entitled "The One Way: The Sound of One Hand Clapping." As you read this piece you will learn the answer to the old Zen question, what is the sound of one hand clapping, and it will surprise you.

Val Lariviere now works in the costume department of the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario. In the early 1990s, she returned to university to finish her degree in Religious Studies and wrote a wonderful senior honours paper on the Tibetan Book of the Dead, before going on to do an MA in Religion and Culture. Her "Way of the Tibetan Book of the Dead" is a moving account of her journey into that text.

Nick Ruiter's "The Way of the Hospice" brings us into the world of being with those at the last stage of their lives. Nick was a student of mine in the late 1960s. After receiving an MA in Religious Studies, he worked for years as a carpenter before becoming a "spiritual care-giver" in the Dorothy Ley Hospice in Toronto.

Dr. James Duerlinger is a professor of Philosophy specializing in Buddhist Studies at the University of Iowa. We first met at a series of conferences in the 1980s on "God: The Contemporary Discussion," and we have run into each other in Dharamsala, the centre of the Tibetan community in exile in India. His "The Way of the Bodhisattva" takes a

traditional form and leads one into this way of wisdom and compassion. It reflects a life-long and personal encounter with the Buddhist Way.

Dr. Siobhan Chandler then turns our attention from the East to the West but finds links to an outlook that is deeply rooted in India. I first met Siobhan as a graduate student in the joint Wilfrid Laurier University/ University of Waterloo doctoral program. Her essay on "The Way of the Spiritual Seeker: Western Monism" grows out of her doctoral work and leads the reader into the monistic worldview that underlies the "spiritual but not religious" seekers of the West. It is a fascinating perspective on the contemporary "spiritual but not religious" movement.

In "The Way of Interreligious Friendship," Dr. Alon Goshen-Gottstein reflects on a friendship that emerged in his interfaith activity, one involving a Jesuit and a Jewish Rabbi. Alon is the founder of the Elijah School of Wisdom in Jerusalem, now known as the Elijah Interfaith Institute in Jerusalem, and we met in Turkey at a conference on the "Children of Abraham" in the 1990s. His reflection on his own spiritual path leads the reader into the world of the Hassidim and delineates Alon's interreligious friendship with Joep van Beeck.

"The Way of Aging: Liberation and the Later Years," by Dr. Kendra Smith, brims with irony, insight, and good humour. Kendra recounts her own story when her Unitarian/Universalist Church celebrated its "Doctors of Durability" day for those who had turned 80. Kendra has a doctorate in psychology, became a Buddhist in her teenage years, and tells her story in a poetic form, bringing the insights of a lifetime to her reflection on her father's and brother's later years. She has been a friend for thirty years.

Dr Jacob Olupona is a Nigerian who now teaches at Harvard University. I first met Jacob in the early 1980s at an interfaith conference, and he introduced me to the ways of African traditional religions. Both personal and scholarly, his account of "The Way of the Yoruba" takes us into this little-known African tradition that has in recent decades enjoyed a resurgence, leading to the founding of Yoruba "churches" in the USA.

Dr. Peter Phan's "The Way of Being Religious Inter-religiously: A Spirituality for Interfaith Dialogue in Asia" reflects Peter's upbringing in Vietnam. Now, he is a remarkable Catholic theologian teaching at Georgetown University in Washington where he is weaving the wisdom

of the East into his understanding of a spirituality suitable to this time of dialogue.

"My Way of Jihad: Joys and Struggles of a Muslim Woman in North America" is a moving account by Dr. Idrisa Pandit. Idrisa is currently the Director of Studies in Islam at Renison University College and a recent colleague and friend. She grew up in Kashmir and completed her studies in the USA, where she initiated an interfaith chaplaincy at Wellesley College in Massachusetts before coming to Canada.

My long-time friend and colleague Dr. Frank Flinn writes, as only Frank can, on the "Way of Ways." Recently retired from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, Frank continues his wide-ranging exploration of the world religions from Australian Aborigines to Rumi, St. Frances, and Lake Titicaca in this piece. I have known Frank since the 1960s, and he never ceases to surprise me with his knowledge and insight.

The volume concludes with another poem by Pamela O'Rourke. It is called "Gratitude," a good place to end this journey into the many ways, many voices, and many paths in global spirituality.

Setting Out*

Pamela O'Rourke

Just when does a journey begin?
When the thought enters the mind…
When the ticket is bought….
Or the plans finalized?
Perhaps it begins with our first journey
through the birthing canal.

Our journeys swim out with us,
pushed into life
waiting for us to realize them
embrace them
and begin…

Like the misty clouds
moving above the Himalayas
the glaciers the peaks
the journey is
in one instance
revealed and concealed.

*Ed. note: Pamela O'Rourke has come with me (MDB) on several of my study trips into "the living religious/spiritual communities of India." They have always involved journeys into Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain, Sufi, Tibetan Buddhist, Veerashivite, and Christian communities. I have always asked students on these trips to keep a diary. Each time we journeyed together in India, I would receive from Pamela O'Rourke marvelous diaries filled with lovely poems or lyrical prose and excellent photos of places and people and

moments from our encounter with the living religious/spiritual traditions of India. Some of those poetic words have been sprinkled in the midst of these other writings. These too are ways of the spirit.

The Way of Women
IN SEARCH OF LOVE AND WISDOM

Ursula King

This is a personal reflection to celebrate the life of Darrol Bryant in connection with his work at the Centre for Dialogue and Spirituality in the World Religions at Renison University College/University of Waterloo, Canada. I feel honoured to have been invited to write this contribution, since I cherish many happy memories of interfaith dialogue meetings and discussions in Darrol' s presence and under his leadership in years past, while I continue to cherish his friendship in the present.

I want to share some ideas about wisdom and love, but I would like to explore these universal themes especially from a very particular contemporary perspective. The royal road of wisdom has been pursued by countless different thinkers in human history, but is this wisdom still enough for living now, in the global world of our twenty-first century with its exponential opportunities and vast problems?

In most cultures and religions, great wisdom schools and teachings have often primarily been associated with eminent philosophical thinkers and extraordinary religious prophets and seers who have been mainly male, although we also know of some singular wise women and prophetesses in the different world faiths. Surprisingly also, the word "wisdom" is a grammatically feminine noun in many languages. So what is women's search for wisdom, especially the wisdom of love?

In our increasingly interconnected world, we are profoundly aware of our material and economic interdependencies, but we are also becoming more conscious of our spiritual interdependence as an evolving human species within the large history of life on planet Earth. This growing transformation of human consciousness makes many people much more aware of previously neglected sources of wisdom and love that we urgently need to draw upon much more effectively in order to ensure the continual

flourishing of all people and the planet.

In his seminal book *The Great Work* (1999), the well-known ecological thinker Thomas Berry speaks of the need to rediscover the spiritual sense of the universe and the necessity "to reinvent the human." For this to occur, we need to develop a new world vision that requires the fundamental restructuring of politics, governance, education, religion and the financial arrangements around the globe, and we have to refashion our communities and relationships. This task is simply impossible to achieve if humankind does not creatively draw on what Berry calls the "fourfold wisdom." In his view, these four streams of wisdom, which have to be in dialogue with each other, are the wisdom of indigenous peoples, the wisdom of women, the wisdom of the classical traditions (that is to say the wisdom of traditional religions and philosophies), and the much more recent, newer wisdom of science (which Berry, surprisingly, refers to as "The Yoga of the West").

All four resources are equally important, but the need for their mutual interaction and creative dialogue is rarely perceived and understood in the inspiring way in which Berry speaks about them. It is more usual that only the different faiths and worldviews are thought of as in a dialogue situation, whereas today humanity needs to work with a far larger vision and work toward a more pluralistically resourced synthesis to empower it for its own further self-evolution, creating more balance and harmony rather than violence and discord in the world. In addition to the growing dialogue between different faiths, philosophies and cultures, some people may be particularly interested in the wisdom of indigenous people or in the wisdom of science, whereas I am especially interested in the hitherto much neglected wisdom of women.

We know of great women of faith and wisdom in all the religions traditions, but by and large these rather exceptional women have wielded little spiritual authority in an overwhelmingly patriarchically structured world. This situation may well be changing now, for since the beginning of the modern women's movement, and even more since the rise of a critical feminist and gender consciousness, there are women in all religions involved with transforming traditional approaches to religious beliefs and practices. There is a real "silent revolution" going on, whether among Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist women or the women of

any other traditions. It is not sufficiently noticed by the world at large that instead of being defined *by* religion in their self-understanding and roles, as was customary in the past, women now help to define religion for themselves and for others. This revolutionary process of transformation has been aptly described as "gendering the spirit," and examples can be found all over the world.

Last September I took part with many other women in the joyful celebration of the 90th birthday of a well-known Dutch woman theologian, one of the first feminist theologians in Europe, who inspired many others with her teaching and writing. It was the exuberant celebration of a long, rich life, an affirmation of life itself, of its dynamism, growth, and unforeseeable transformations, as well as of the deep wisdom and love of a life that reached out to so many others. Together with all the others I felt that this celebratory event resonated with so many special celebratory moments in Catharina Halkes' writings.

For me, the theme of celebration related especially to Catharina Halkes' use of great dreams, her affirmation of life, and her perception of the closeness of the divine spirit in all of life. Her inspiring dreams, of which she speaks in her books, have woven so many connections, and her continuous search for a new feminist theological anthropology is poignantly expressed when she points to the powerful process that indicates more clearly now "die *Menschwerdung* der Frau," a German phrase that means "becoming human," noting the emergence of the full humanity of women in the world. That is what we all seek and desire so deeply.

I could mention the name of many women in different countries who have expressed or express today in practice, in social and political action, or in their writings a creative search for new approaches to wisdom and love that can transform the world. Space constraints limit me to a few brief examples. I think of the Burmese woman leader Aung San Suu Kyi with her courage, wisdom and love for her people. Or the extraordinary story of the young Jewish woman Etty Hillesum, known for her amazing works of compassion among the persecuted Dutch Jews at Westerbork camp, and the deep wisdom and love reflected in the diary that survived her death. Or the amazing life story of the more than 100-year-old pianist Alice

Herz-Sommer who survived two years in the Theresienstadt concentration camp giving concerts and bringing up her small son, one of 130 children to survive the camp out of the 15,000 children who were taken there. Her interviews speak of her deep love of music, her passionate mother's love for her child, and of the abiding love of life that stayed with her in spite of the extremes of suffering she experienced.

Love is relational in creating bonds between people. It brings forth strong connections between individuals, groups, and communities. Reflecting on the transformative power of love, Teilhard de Chardin wrote, "Love is the free and imaginative outpouring of the spirit over all unexplored paths." This statement anchors love in the dynamic action of the Spirit while implying that there still exist many unexplored paths of love that human beings can discover and follow. This is our great task today – a task that many women are deeply involved with.

For people who are religious, it is God, the Divine, the Ground of all being, who is the ultimate source, the very fountain of love, however named and experienced. The fourteenth century English mystic Julian of Norwich said that love *is* God's meaning. Her vision of divine motherly love, passionate and compassionate, accepting and supporting, helping and healing, can be a tremendous inspiration when meditating on the nature of love, especially from a woman's point of view. In a very affirming, positive way Julian expresses particularly well what many other religious sources proclaim: Love always exists, and it is always there to accompany, surround, uphold and comforts us. Love is a fire both human and divine. How can we spread it effectively today in a world so torn apart?

We need to awaken the energies of love to stir and transform the people on our planet. For this, the old ways of understanding and practising love are no longer enough. While making use of all the resources of knowledge and wisdom available to us, we have to push the boundaries of our understanding of love. It is no longer enough to think simply about love in the way our forbears did, or search in sacred scriptures, world philosophies and literature for the established meanings of love. We live in such a different world and have such a nuanced awareness of our own becoming within the cosmic epic of evolution and the grand web of life that all our assumptions need to be examined and assessed anew.

The energies of love reach out to everybody and touch on everything. They cannot be seen as something only personal and inward; they radiate outward; leap forward; overcome obstacles; move onward and upward. We can dream of *the ways and energies of love as new ways of living.* It is a dream that links up with so many other dreams; it goes beyond what existed and was possible in the past. It is the discovery of a new road, the seeding of seminal ideas, the crossing of a new threshold in the long history of our human species and the history of life, the revelation of a communal heart.

The American scholar, artist and spiritual director Beverly J. Lanzetta published in 2005 a daring, innovative book, *Radical Wisdom: A Feminist Mystical Theology* (Fortress Press, 2005) and two years later another study, *Emerging Heart: Global Spirituality and the Sacred* (Fortress Press, 2007), of particular interest for interfaith relations.

Lanzetta speaks of women standing on the borders of a new country as mapmakers of uncharted spiritual territory. Her reflections are grounded in a deep love of God and the world, in a profound sense of belonging and trust that make her challenge many aspects of traditional spirituality from a strong feminist perspective.

She points to a new *via feminina* in mystical spirituality, a feminine way not restricted to women alone, but open to both women and men, although it expresses itself differently in females than in males. She means by this feminine way a quality of religious consciousness and a mystical path that treads new ground. Thus she redefines the spiritual journey from the perspective of women, but not in an exclusive sense. Instead of seeking union with God through either a *via positiva* or *via negativa,* she sees the *via feminina,* the feminine mystical way, as a "third way", unveiling to us "the feminine heart of divinity and the spiritual equality of women". The *via feminina* is presented as a "radical mysticism" which seeks new forms of expression and engagement, while recognizing at the same time that some features of traditional mysticism reveal themselves as products of patriarchy that have to be dismantled and replaced by something new for the present world. This means transforming and in some cases even subverting the traditional spiritual journey, by turning in two directions, "inward toward the divine center of the self, and outward toward the world."

This must include the naming and eliminating of spiritual oppression as well as eradicating the many forms of violence and of economic, sexual and social abuse of women.

Turning inward, Lanzetta subtly traces the deep longing to love in the great women mystics of the past, especially in Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Avila.

Lanzetta also speaks of an "ethic of ultimate concern," an embodied engagement that moves out of contemplation into action in the human social sphere, thereby expanding into a deeply caring and transforming *love* for the world. She calls this a "mystical ethic" described as "in essence, a mothering one; it embraces the world as a mother's body surrounds and nurtures life within her womb. Metaphors of pregnancy and birth help convey how each day we bear – lay our bodies down for – the spiritual renewal of life."

Lanzetta's book *Radical Wisdom* celebrates the powers of a different kind of love by seeking the love of God through the transformation of the self, of women's lives, and of the world. Her vision of the organic wholeness and spiritual unity of humanity is strengthened by her comparative perspective in acknowledging the mystical richness of different faiths. Her reflections on sexual love as a type of contemplation, of embodiment as a writing of divinity into the world, and her critical stance on our material culture, "blinded to the unseen," are very challenging and deeply inspiring.

Another example of searching for the wisdom of love – for an altogether different kind of love - is provided by Anne Hillman, another American writer whose book *Awakening the Energies of Love: Discovering Fire for a Second Time* (Bramble Books, 2008) provides an extraordinary inspiration for learning to love in a new and different way. Steeped in rich personal experience as a musician, singer, poet and professional consultant on organisational development, Hillman is deeply interested in the internal aspects of social change, and how interior personal development can contribute to fundamental changes in our culture. Drawing on deep insights from mystics of all cultures, she traces the process of awakening – whether as gradual transformation or sudden mystical epiphany - to the ever-present powers of love that run like a current of fire through all of life. Full of passionate wisdom and a great love of life, her book invites

everyone to the great adventure of harnessing the energies of love for the transformation of the world and ourselves.

Hillman's pioneering work deserves close reading and meditation. Her emphasis is very much on the need for *a new awakening now*. She traces this process in an evolutionary framework by following the rise of consciousness within the development of humanity and within each person. We each carry two beginnings in ourselves, that of a child, and as a child of the human race. Reflecting on the evolution of our mind and the foundations of our soul, we discover a profound capacity for relatedness and for a qualitatively different love that can embrace differences. We need to discover our fundamental relatedness to everything that exists, not only to other persons, but to the whole natural world. Awakening the energies of love and learning to live with fire inside, "we learn to live in relationship – all relationship – in wholly new ways: to live as the greater community of life." For Hillman, those whose awakening makes them increasingly transparent to the mystery of love are lights, carriers of fire and conduits of power. She traces the different changes and learning curves that accompany this profound transformation into practising a different kind of love. At this evolutionary juncture of the human species, we are all called to awaken to a new kind of love, a love that is not a feeling, but a great power.

Animated and motivated by that tremendous evolutionary energy wave, we begin to see and hear things differently, learn to access life in a new way. Our sense of identity begins to change and we learn to live in a conscious communion with life, to live as relationship, and to be motivated in all things by love. To use Meister Eckhart's term, it is a "one-ing" in a deep mystical sense that helps us to overcome our misunderstanding of love, a "one-ing" lived in community. Hillman writes, "To put it another way, we experience the difference between having a relationship to *thoughts* about love…or to *feelings* of love…or *sensations* we associate with love – *and come into a quality of deep relatedness with Love, Itself.*" It means living in conscious communion with the larger Life.[1]

These few examples must suffice to show that contemporary women's search for new ways of wisdom and love point to the possibility of new connections and new communities. Women across different traditions

and cultures are in dialogue, seeking to work together with their hands, their heads, and their hearts. They seek a wisdom of love that is holistic, all-embracing and grounded in the deepest connections of trust, and in spiritualities for life. More and more people are recognising that a new spirit is abroad among us, nurtured by the wisdom and ways of women. This can give us ground for hope and strength. Even the Pope seems to have recognized this when, during his 2010 visit to England, he was quoted as saying, "I believe that women themselves, with their energy and strength, with their superiority, with what I'd call their 'spiritual power,' will know how to make their own space. And we will have to try and listen to God so as not to stand in their way…"

May the wisdom of love prevail and create new paths for the flourishing of all life now and in the future – the life of the Earth and of all living beings, including the human community. What we truly need is a "new creation," to quote Catharina Halkes once more, made possible by women and men working together in love and wisdom.

Endnotes

[1] Hillman's journey into "awakening the energies of love" was originally inspired by the saying of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: "Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides, and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, humanity will have discovered fire." This quotation is a slightly reworked translation of the final passage of an essay on "The Evolution of Chastity" written in February 1934. See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Toward the Future.* London: Collins, 1975, p. 86f.

The Way of Dreams

James Gollnick

The way of dreams has been an invaluable spiritual path in all of the world religions, with roots extending as far back as the earliest written records. This ancient respect for dreams and their spiritual value stands in sharp contrast to modern Western society's tendency to either dismiss dreams as nonsense or restrict them to the context of psychotherapy. In this essay, I want to examine why attitudes toward dreams shifted so dramatically from an original confidence in their capacity to guide dreamers' spiritual lives and connect them to the divine, to the modern view that focuses almost exclusively on the physiology and psychology of dreams.

Before exploring this central question about the changing attitudes towards the spiritual potential of dreams, I want to provide some context regarding my own experience of the dreamworld and my standpoint on dreams. I began working with dreams systematically as a graduate student at the University of Toronto in a religious studies seminar. There we examined J.W. Dunne's *An Experiment with Time*, which considered the possibility that dreams could reveal aspects of the future. Dunne, an engineer and aviation pioneer, discussed a number of his remarkable precognitive dreams that led him to keep a dream diary in order to investigate these strange dream phenomena. Intrigued by this work, I was eager to monitor my own dreams so as to test Dunne's observations and ideas. It took a few weeks to learn to recall and record my dreams in detail, but I was amazed that I could confirm a number of future references in my dreams, such as seeing a person in my dream whom I had never met a day or two before I first met them.

As I continued to catalogue my dreams, I became increasingly interested in their symbolic meaning as well as their ability to image future events. This curiosity led me to study two of the psychological perspectives that emphasize dreams in clinical work, namely Gestalt Therapy and Jungian Analysis. At the Gestalt Institute of Toronto, I received certification from

the International Gestalt Association after completing the three-year training program in psychotherapy. This training helped me to recognize the broad spectrum of feedback dreams offer on all aspects of the dreamer's body, mind and spirit. To further develop my understanding of the various functions dreams can perform I entered the training program at the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich and later underwent a three-year analysis with Frazer Boa, Canada's first Jungian analyst. The Jungian perspective emphasizes the historical and cultural roots of dream symbols, thereby providing a valuable framework for understanding the religious and spiritual dimensions of dreams.

My present view of dreams as a potential spiritual path grows out of these experiences as well as a decade of practicing psychotherapy and over thirty years of teaching courses on dreams and religion, first at the University of Toronto and then at the University of Waterloo. Over the last forty years I have recorded and catalogued over 6,000 of my own dreams, providing the personal basis for my observations in this essay. In the course of this extensive training, therapy, teaching and on-going dream-work, I have sought to understand the relative neglect of the spiritual aspects of dreams in the modern world. I also wish to call attention to late 20th-century developments that have signaled a renewed interest in the spiritual potential of dreams.

The dreams that most people consider to be religious or spiritual typically include well-known religious figures such as Moses, the Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, or gods and goddesses of various cultures. In other cases, religious symbols such as a temple, mosque, synagogue, church, Star of David, or cross point to a possible religious interpretation of a dream. Still other dreams contain no recognizable religious symbols, but wrestle with spiritual issues in terms of the dreamer's values, worldview, identity and quest for meaning. Such spiritual dreams address the fundamental questions at the heart of all religious and spiritual traditions, namely, What is the nature of God, the gods, or ultimate reality and what is the meaning of suffering, misfortune, death, and the struggle between good and evil? In order to underline the ancient origins of a religious/spiritual interpretation of dreams, I shall briefly consider some of the earliest examples of those dreams that make explicit reference to the divine. My main focus,

however, will be to indicate how certain spiritual dreams call into question mainstream scientific views about the nature of consciousness and the human being.

Historical Views on Religious and Spiritual Dreams

History is replete with examples of how dreams have connected human beings to a realm that transcends and gives meaning to the everyday world, thereby showing dreams to be an ancient path to the spirit world and the divine. Some of the oldest written evidence of dream interpretation is found in literary documents and inscriptions from ancient Mesopotamia, the first civilization to develop writing (Hughes, 2000), so we shall begin there to sketch the origins of the idea that dreams can provide spiritual guidance and connect human beings to the divine. The earliest of these texts relating to dreams refers to Dumuzi's dream, which is probably the first recorded dream in history (Hoffman, 2004: 240). In the poem, Dumuzi wrestles with a nightmare which symbolically prophesies his death. The literary tradition about Dumuzi is not entirely consistent; some scholars believe him to be a god of vegetation and fertility who annually died and rose again, while others see him as a central figure at the heart of a popular mystery religion.

Other dreams recorded in early inscriptions from Mesopotamia express the belief that the gods inspire human beings and direct their actions through dreams. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of the oldest stories on earth and now generally admitted to be the most significant literary creation of the whole of ancient Mesopotamia (Kramer, 1981: 180), shows that people in the ancient Near East considered dreams to be a highly valued portal to the divine realm. The dreams of Gilgamesh indicate that his rule and plans run counter to the divine will. Nightmares warn him against abusing his power as king, reveal anxieties that undercut his claims to have no fear of his enemies, and foretell the tragic death of his dear friend Enkidu. Such literary dreams as well as extant inscriptions testify the extent to which Mesopotamian society relied on divine dreams to guide human thought and action.

The spiritual and religious reverence for dreams in the ancient world

extended well beyond the region of Mesopotamia. For example, the ancient Egyptians held that dreams are messages from various divinities who predict the future, demand repentance, offer advice, answer important questions and heal the sick. At temples devoted to Serapis, the Egyptian dream god, people would fast, offer sacrifices, and pray before lying down to sacred sleep, wherein the god would appear in a dream and heal an illness or provide an answer to a pressing question or life problem. This process of dream incubation, i.e. going to a temple to receive a healing dream or an answer to an existential problem, spread throughout ancient Egypt, and temples of Serapis at Memphis and Alexandria became well-known for the dream messages received there (Jayne, 1962). Dream incubation also became an important practice in both ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. The Greeks, who wrote more about dreams than any other ancient civilization (Hughes, 2000), raised the practice of dream incubation to a highly developed art. Most of the Greek dream temples focused on healing and were dedicated to Asklepios, the god of medicine. Later, the Romans carried on this practice of seeking divine assistance to heal physical illness, and in the Roman temples of Asklepios, the incubant would experience the god either in a dream-like state between waking and sleeping or during sleep.

These early historical instances of the belief in a dream link between human beings and the divine call attention to the early origins, prevalence and endurance of this spiritual viewpoint. It appears from the historical record that almost all people of antiquity believed in some kind of divine revelation through dreams (Eliade, 1960). A number of factors contributed to the erosion of this early and widespread confidence in dreams as a potentially religious and spiritual path. Within Christianity, two major figures strongly influenced the declining interest in spiritual dreams, namely St. Jerome and St. Thomas Aquinas (Kelsey, 1974). Jerome's translation of the Bible into the Latin Vulgate, which became the standard version of the Christian scriptures in Western Christendom throughout the Middle Ages, equated dreams with witchcraft. This confusion arose because Jerome mistranslated Leviticus 19:26, "You shall not practice augury or *witchcraft*" into "You shall not practice augury *nor observe dreams*." Thomas Aquinas, who eventually became the foremost theologian

in Roman Catholicism, further diminished the spiritual stature of dreams in Christianity due to his heavy reliance on the philosophy of Aristotle to ground his theology. Thomas was unable to reconcile Aristotle's view that dreams have no divine or spiritual significance with the church's traditional appreciation of dreams as a primary mode of divine revelation and, consequently, Thomas mainly avoided the subject of dreams in his extensive theological writings.

Steven Kruger (1992) notes the ambivalence towards dreams that developed during the Middle Ages, a time when people treated dreams as both precious and dangerous. On the one hand, people continued to be fascinated by the idea of divinely inspired dreams, in particular those which foretold future events. On the other hand, they became increasingly fearful of those aspects of dreams that were associated with practices of divination and demonic seduction. Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, the most important and widely-known dream book in medieval Europe, intensified fears about sexual demons who were believed to seduce dreamers (Kelsey, 1974: 155). This book introduced into Christian writings warnings about the *incubus* (a male demon who seduces female dreamers) and the *succubus* (a female demon who seduces male dreamers) and thereby fueled the growing fear of demons and devils that tormented many dreamers by the end of the Middle Ages.

This fear of demons cast a long shadow over the dream-world and caused many to believe that everything associated with magic, including the seemingly magical aspects of dreams, belonged to the devil (Taylor, 2007: 88). This fearful attitude became so prevalent that even a towering historical figure such as Martin Luther prayed not to remember his dreams, so that he would not have to struggle with the question of whether God or the devil sent them (Van de Castle, 1994: 82, 84). Because a number of Christian writers stressed that dreams may originate from either God or the devil, church authorities became increasingly wary about relying too heavily on dreams. The church wrestled with the difficulty that dreams may present viewpoints seemingly irreconcilable with its official teachings as was the case with schismatics such as the Gnostics, Montanists, and Donatists in the early centuries of Christianity.

Science and the Dreamworld

All of the above-mentioned factors contributed to the erosion of confidence in the religious and spiritual value of dreams, but none of these could match the impact of scientific thought on Western societies over the last five centuries. Already by the 17th century, science seemed to be reshaping almost every area of life. With the rapid development of experimental methods, more precise measurement, and greater means of mathematical analysis, people came to believe that science would overcome previous centuries of superstition and ignorance by providing more reliable ways to understand the world. This growing potential of scientific discovery appeared to call into question the importance of dreams as a possible source of future knowledge or divine guidance.

Over time, the dominant model of the world and the human being arising from this early period of rapid scientific and technological advancement in Western societies became increasingly materialistic and mechanistic. This newly emerging model of reality excluded the spiritual elements of existence, which seemed illusory because, unlike the physical elements, they cannot be precisely measured and quantified. From this mechanistic perspective, human beings are essentially biological machines composed of cells, tissues, and organs, and consciousness is strictly a function of the brain's physiological processes. This viewpoint has enabled substantial gains in our understanding of the world over the years, but it has been unable to account satisfactorily for many experiences and states of consciousness associated with spiritual dreams. Transpersonal research and theory provide an alternative model of the universe that takes into account extraordinary dream phenomena and challenge the mechanistic and materialistic viewpoint underlying much of present-day modern science and so-called common sense.

The developing transpersonal model is by no means unified or complete, but it does recognize the complex, and even paradoxical, nature of the human being as observed in certain extraordinary states of consciousness and in some religious and spiritual dreams, especially those involving telepathy and/or precognition. With the mechanistic model, such extraordinary phenomena are dismissed as mere anomalies or

exceptions that are so rare that they do not call into question the validity of the mechanistic model itself. However, the instances of spiritual dream phenomena as well as other types of extraordinary experiences reported in a host of related sciences have mounted to the degree that it becomes increasingly difficult to ignore them. Long-time consciousness researcher Stanislov Grof (1985) maintains that the significant body of data currently existing in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, medicine, parapsychology, thanatology, and anthropology is now too massive to be simply ignored or dismissed as mere anomalies.

The transpersonal view does not replace the human-being-as-biological-machine model, but reveals that earlier model to be a partial truth that now requires significant adjustment and expansion. Contemplating the religious and spiritual dream-world can help balance the current, one-sided materialistic view governing most mainstream science because it provides an experiential 'laboratory' in which we can experience directly and study for ourselves phenomena that go against cultural expectations and defy current scientific conceptions. The 'grassroots dreamwork movement' of the 1980s and 1990s encouraged dream appreciation among the general population and thus involved them in features of the dream-world they might have overlooked in a strictly therapeutic setting. This dream-work movement now represents a substantial number of people who regularly record their dreams in detail and note, in addition to other things, those phenomena which involve telepathy, precognition, and the spirits of the dead.

The 'grassroots dreamwork movement' is founded on two crucial developments in 20th-century dream analysis that led to a renewed interest in the spiritual potential of dreams. The first innovation was the gradual recognition that dreams provide feedback on many aspects of the dreamer's existence. Over the course of the 20th century, psychologists and psychoanalysts broadened our understanding of dreams beyond their initial use in psychoanalysis to provide a portrait of the dreamer's instinctual and psychological dynamics; researchers and clinicians came to see that dreams can illuminate a multitude of other personality factors as well, including the dreamer's interpersonal relationships, ego defenses, conflicts, identity, self-esteem, society, values, and worldview. In short,

dreams provide a multidimensional feedback system that sheds light on virtually *every area* of the dreamer's existence, including the dreamer's religious and spiritual life. The second key development in 20th-century dream analysis was to recognize that the dreamer, not the dream analyst, is the ultimate authority in dream interpretation. This shift in the locus of authority from analyst to dreamer underlined the ability of ordinary dreamers to understand their own dreams and eventually led to people paying greater attention to the role of dreams outside the clinical setting.

Deborah Hillman (1990) observes that the human potential movement, the feminist movement, and a renewed interest in spiritual development both inside and outside of organized religion led people to practice dream-work in contexts that were not primarily focused on psychotherapy. This dream-work outside the clinical setting allowed other previously-ignored dimensions of dreams, including the spiritual and religious dimensions, to emerge more noticeably. In the non-clinical context, people are able to notice and explore certain extraordinary dream phenomena which may also be present in the clinical setting but are frequently ignored because they have no direct bearing on the dreamer's psychological situation.

In the non-clinical setting, dreams offer feedback and spiritual guidance for both individuals and communities as they have done for centuries. As we saw in the opening paragraphs of this essay, from earliest recorded history people have believed that dreams can connect human beings to the divine or the spirit world. Beyond this valuable personal and social spiritual guidance, the dreamworld also has major implications for our view of the human being and the world. Those spiritual dreams involving telepathy and precognition, in particular, show human identity to be something like a web extended in space and time as opposed to the sense of being "isolated egos inside bags of skin" as Alan Watts (1966: 8) describes our typical sense of self in Western society.

Naturally, there is great resistance to altering such a fundamental sense of self which has been entrenched in, and shored up by, the worldview shaped by over three hundred years of mainstream science. When well-known medical researcher Larry Dossey (1993) experienced three striking precognitive dreams in one week, he began to consider how such phenomena might influence our understanding of medical science.

He adopted the term "non-local," which physicists use to describe distant interactions of subatomic particles to characterize these remarkable precognitive phenomena. In Dossey's view, these non-local phenomena indicate that consciousness is a fundamental aspect of the universe and is not restricted to brain activity or the body. He believes that the non-locality of consciousness is one of the most important discoveries ever made and a unique aspect of late-20th century science.

The history of science shows how difficult it is to overcome established ideas and theories acquired in the education of scientists (Kuhn, 1996). One of the foundational thinkers of modern physics, Max Planck (1949), held that science changes funeral by funeral because a new generation may grow up without the prejudices and assumptions of the old established model. Thus, it appears that it may take considerable time to broaden our conceptions of consciousness and the human being. The dreamworld can play a significant role in changing our view of these matters because dreams are the most frequent source of reported instances of precognition. Those who record their dreams in detail and communicate possible precognitive dreams to another person (or put them on the web) are establishing an invaluable bank of data that may eventually offset the weight of traditional scientific objections to the very idea of precognition (Gollnick, 2011). Not only does this mounting evidence call for a rethinking of our view of the human being and the world, but the imagery of some precognitive dreams may shed some light on the relationship between the dreamer and the spirits of the dead. In many precognitive dreams, the image of a deceased person is frequently the one who communicates the precognitive event or information to the dreamer. Studying such dreams may help us to appreciate why the dreamworld has traditionally been referred to as the "land of the dead."

In certain areas of psychotherapy, medicine and science, we have learned to draw upon dream images and stories to understand aspects of the dreamer's mind and body. In historical context, we can view these relatively modern developments in the study of dreams as an extension of the ancient belief that dreams are meaningful communications with the dreamer's world. As a spiritual path, dreams provide images and stories that grow out of our experience and often show possibilities in our lives

that our conscious mind and culture overlook. Powerful dream images express and help monitor our deep emotional life and the transcendent dimensions of our existence that are hidden in the ordinary stuff of everyday life. Our dreams constantly remind us that our usual conscious take on reality is but one way to look at and interpret our experience. Dreams offer other windows on the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of our unfolding and infinite universe.

References

Dossey, L. (1993) *Healing Words.* New York: HarperCollins.

Eliade, M. (1960) *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities.* New York: Harper & Row.

Gollnick, J. (2011) *A Time to Dream: Dreams, Religion, and Spirituality*. Saarbrueken, Germany: VDM Press.

Grof, S. (1985) *Psychology of the Future.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Hillman, D. (1990) "The Emergence of the Grassroots Dreamwork Movement," in S. Krippner, ed., *Dreamtime and Dreamwork: Decoding the Language of the Night.* Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, Inc. Pp. 13-20.

Hoffman, C. (2004) "Dumuzi's Dream: Dream Analysis in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Dreaming* 14/4: 240-251.

Hughes, J.D. (2000) "Dream Interpretation in Ancient Civilizations," *Dreaming* 10/1: 7-18.

Jayne, W. (1962) *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations.* New Hyde Park: University Books, Inc.

Kelsey, M. (1974) *God, Dreams, and Revelation: A Christian Interpretation of Dreams.* Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House.

Kramer, S.N. (1981) *History Begins at Sumer: Thirty-Nine Firsts in Man's Recorded History.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Kruger, S. (1992) *Dreaming in the Middle Ages.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Kuhn, T. (1996) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Planck, M. (1949) *Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers.* Trans. F. Gaynor. New York: Philosophical Library.

Taylor, C. (2007) *A Secular Age.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Van de Castle, R. (1994) *Our Dreaming Mind.* New York: Ballantine Books.

Watts, A. (1966) *The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are.* New York: Random House Inc.

The Way of Shinran

Dennis Hirota

Shinran (1173–1263) speaks of life in *nembutsu* – the utterance of the Name of Amida Buddha, "Namu-amida-butsu" – as "the single path free of all hindrances." Such life is meaningfully engaged within a world with others and the things around one and, at the same time, is pervaded and illumined constantly by that which is true and real. It is the arising of such a twofold world, or entry into this mode of existence, that is the focus of Shinran's Pure Land Buddhist path.

Shinran terms the emergence of life within such a world as "the attainment of *shinjin*." In his interpretation, *shinjin* is the buddha-mind, enlightened wisdom-compassion, awakened in beings who remain given to blind attachments and ignorance by Amida, the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life. The narrative of Amida in *The Sutra of Immeasurable Life* states that as a bodhisattva, he established and fulfilled the vow to lead all sentient beings to awakening by enabling all who say his Name to be born into his buddha-field. Although the term *shinjin* has been commonly used in Buddhist traditions to mean "trust" or "faith" in dharma, and although Shinran's Shin Buddhist tradition is, because of this, frequently regarded as a "religion of faith" resembling Protestant Christianity, we must keep in mind that for Shinran, having realized *shinjin* is not any sort of subjective act on the part of the practitioner. Instead, he characterizes it as the falling away of calculative thinking on the person's part. Thus, "no self-working is the true working" of Amida's wisdom-compassion. Further, "Other Power" – the Buddha's activity to lead beings from self-attachment – "is for the practitioner to be free of any form of calculative thinking."

Pure Land Buddhist Concepts and Mahayana Tradition

Shinran's path has been transmitted since the thirteenth century as the Shin Buddhist tradition (Jōdo Shinshū). It is a development of the Pure

Land Buddhist tradition, which arose in India against a background of teachings of celestial buddhas and their golden realms. Although it is sometimes assumed that such cosmic imagery emerged only gradually, through a process of popularization, from a more philosophical and meditative Mahayana tradition, recent research is finding that the roots of Pure Land thinking may be traced back to the very earliest records of Mahayana thought, near the beginning of the common era.

Pure Land concepts – or notions of countless buddha-fields filling the cosmos – may be seen to emerge directly from the central stance of the nascent Mahayana movement: a critical sensitivity to the subtle traces of ego-attachment in human thought and action, including even religious practice and aspiration. This critical attitude was articulated in two significant ways in Pure Land thinking.

The Goal of Buddhahood for All

First, this critical attitude took the view that existing institutions, five hundred years after the death of Sakyamuni Buddha, had lost a clear understanding of the aim of the Buddhist path that he had taught. According to Mahayana views, the tradition had fallen into a sectarian scholasticism and had come to articulate the path solely in terms of personal attainment of nirvana. The goal was taught not to be Buddhahood, with its cosmic role in the world of teaching and guidance, but rather individual release from samsaric existence and pain.

In the Mahayana view, such a notion of attainment remained tainted by forms of self-attachment, and therefore represented a retreat from authentic awakening. The true wisdom taught by the Buddha transcended the discrimination of self and other, and therefore was inseparable from compassion for all beings remaining in the pain of ignorance.

The early Mahayana Buddhists sought to articulate anew the nature of authentic realization and to rediscover a path by which it might be attained. In this sense, it was a genuinely radical movement, an attempt to return to the roots of the Buddha's teaching.

Out of their belief that the Buddha taught attainment of buddhahood and not merely personal liberation, the early Mahayana Buddhists developed the notion that since the beginningless past, innumerable

beings have in fact already achieved the exalted goal, so that the vast universe is actually filled with buddhas. Further, like monarchs of earthly realms, each buddha presides over a sphere of influence, a buddha-field in which wisdom-compassion works to guide the beings therein to the same awakening.

In this way, Mahayana practitioners evolved a vision of a universe filled with buddhas and buddha-fields in all directions.

Moreover, they delineated the way to attainment as the bodhisattva path, the career of the aspirant who resolves to persevere in practice, even through many lifetimes, in order to attain true wisdom and work for the liberation of all sentient beings. For such practitioners, genuine wisdom was oneness with and compassion for all beings in samsaric existence, so that their own attainment was inseparable from the attainment of all other beings.

Growing Distance from Buddha

Second, in addition to their critical discernment of the recalcitrant vestiges of egocentricity, Mahayana Buddhists possessed a profound awareness that they themselves lived in a world-era in which there was no Buddha to whom they might turn for support and guidance, and in an environment increasingly detrimental to their aspirations.

They found, however, that in the course of their practice, when successfully pursued, there came a point, perhaps in profound meditation, when they "touched" reality or suchness or "the abode of all buddhas." For Mahayana Buddhists, nirvana, or reality, or enlightened wisdom – these all being fundamentally synonymous – does not lie merely as an objective in the future. Rather, it transcends our ordinary temporal discrimination of past, present, and future.

The Mahayana practitioners discovered that, once they had reached this point in the path and touched reality, although they emerged from samadhi and returned to the everyday world of meals and conversation and daily life, they never again were severed from their initial realization. Thereafter, their practice progressed steadily and they were certain eventually to reach full enlightenment and buddhahood.

They therefore termed this attainment the stage of nonretrogression

and designated it a crucial milestone of the bodhisattva path.

The Pure Land tradition, which teaches birth into the buddha-field of Amida Buddha, emerges precisely at this point. It is not a path to a paradise in the afterlife; rather, as taught in early Mahayana writings, it is the quickest and most direct way to the attainment of the stage of nonretrogression, or contact with the real, through entrance into the sphere of the activity of buddha-wisdom. By being born into the nearness of Buddha, one at last overcomes the estrangement and remoteness that isolates one from enlightenment and fulfills one's deepest aspiration to carry on the work of wisdom-compassion.

Pure Land thought turns on the awareness developed in Mahayana tradition that wisdom or reality is active as compassion where unenlightened beings carry on their existence. The goal is not won through heroic self-assertion in practice but ultimately through becoming open to the working of wisdom-compassion from beyond the falsely imagined ego-self.

The Pure Land Buddhist Tradition in Japan: Probing Self-Attachments

We find in Shinran's Pure Land path both continuity with the fundamental concerns of the early Mahayana movement, and also what D. T. Suzuki has spoken of as "a major contribution the Japanese can make to the outside world and to all other Buddhist schools."

There are two elements in the Japanese tradition I would like to comment on. First, there is the sustained probing of lingering attachment to capacities of the reified self. This is thoroughly pursued in Japan, extending to the whole fabric of emotional life and to such basic religious attitudes as faith. Second, there is the sense of Buddha at work in the world and in all things.

Concerning the first, the critical sensitivity to self-attachment develops, through the Pure Land tradition, into an awareness of human existence as inherently situated in karmic and historical conditions which inevitably color one's perspective on the world, making the extraction of oneself from attachments through religious pursuits virtually impossible, even self-defeating.

We may see this development in concrete terms in the phenomenon

of a "doubled" or "second renunciation," from the Heian and Kamakura periods. A celebrated example is the figure Kyōshin (d. 866), whose story was circulated in collections of Buddhist tales and biographies from as early as the tenth century. According to legend, he had been an accomplished scholar-monk in the great Nara temple Kōfukuji, but grew dissatisfied with his practice. Awakening aspiration for the Pure Land of Amida, he abandoned his priestly status and monastic life and set out on a wandering quest, eventually settling near a village in present Hyōgo prefecture. There he built a thatched hut and took a wife. Eking out a living as a laborer, he passed thirty years in constant utterance of the nembutsu. One record states:

> Kyōshin . . . built no fence to the west [the direction of Amida's buddha-field]. Toward [Amida's] Land of Bliss the gate lay open. Nor, befittingly, did he enshrine an image of worship; he kept no sacred books. In appearance not a monk nor yet worldly, he faced the west always, saying the nembutsu, and was like one to whom all else was forgotten.

The phrase "neither monk nor worldly" concisely expresses the "doubled renunciation" I wish to note. Aspirants left householding-life in the world and took the tonsure, entering the grand, state-supported temples. But although pursuing learning and practice in a monastic environment, they found the powerful temple institutions infected with the greed and ambition of the secular world, and they turned a critical eye to the hypocrisy of temple life. Thus, they underwent renunciation anew, forsaking the temples and seeking the genuine wisdom-compassion of Buddha on their own, buoyed by the Pure Land teachings. There were many during the centuries when the Japanese Pure Land schools developed who expressly sought to emulate Kyōshin, including Shinran.

Gutoku Shinran

Shinran adopted the words used to describe Kyōshin, "neither monk nor worldly," to express his own mode of life, and further employed the phrase to explain the meaning of the name he chose for himself. In the postscript to his major work, he writes of the persecution of the nembutsu by the

temple establishment and court authorities that he, together with his teacher Hōnen and his fellow disciples, underwent:

> Master Hōnen, and a number of his followers . . . were summarily sentenced to death or were dispossessed of their monkhood, given secular names, and consigned to distant banishment. I was among the latter. Hence, I am now neither a monk nor one in worldly life. For this reason, I have taken the term Toku – "stubble-haired" – as my name.

For the nearly sixty years remaining in his life, Shinran used the name Toku, or Gutoku – roughly, "foolish/stubble-haired" – in signing his works and letters. *Toku* – a "stubble-haired" – was a term of derision used in Buddhist writings for lapsed or negligent monks.

Just one hundred years ago, the philosopher Nishida Kitarō wrote a brief essay on the name "Gutoku" that concisely conveys its meaning:

> "Gutoku" not only gives clear expression to Shinran's character, but further is a profession of the Shin teaching and a marker pointing to the fundamental nature of religion itself.
>
> Among human beings, some are wise, some foolish; some are virtuous and some not. But however great it may be, human wisdom is human wisdom, human virtue human virtue. It is no different from the angles of a triangle, however long its sides, equaling two right angles. Yet when a person, once undergoing a complete turnabout, abandons this wisdom and this virtue, he or she can attain new wisdom, take on new virtue, and enter into new life. This is the living marrow of religion.

We find expressed here a vision of the finitude of human existence itself and an awareness of the futility of attachments to human capacities that is cultivated in particular in the Pure Land tradition. As long as its roots lie in the fundamental ignorance of discriminative thought, no human ability can bring one to awakening or to highest fulfillment.

Transformed Existence

This is not, however, a dead-end, for "when a person, once undergoing a

complete turnabout, abandons this wisdom and this virtue, he can attain new wisdom, take on new virtue, and enter into new life." Nishida sees in Shinran's thought, in addition to the recognition of the inexorable situatedness of human existence, a "turnabout" or conversion in which insistence on the capacities of the self as knowing subject or as autonomous agent falls away, freeing the person for entry into "new life."

It is this arising of a transformed self and world that lies at the heart of the Pure Land tradition in Japan. Shinran terms it the "realization of *shinjin*." There are two aspects. One is a self-awareness that arises from *within* the emotions of ordinary experience, without an affirmation of self as an enduring, absolute subject that sees from a transcendent stance. To turn to Nishida's essay on "Foolish/stubble-haired" once more:

> The eye cannot see itself; the person on a mountain cannot know its entirety. The one adrift within human wisdom and human virtue cannot comprehend that wisdom, that virtue. Every person . . . must once let go from the cliff's ledge and come back to life after perishing, or he cannot know them.

This describes a falling away of our usual self-attachment and calculative thinking – not self-instigated but itself the work of Other Power – so that there arises a new self-knowledge. Here, we become aware, in Shinran's words, that:

> We are full of ignorance and blind passion. Our desires are countless, and anger, wrath, jealousy, and envy are overwhelming, arising without pause; to the very last moment of life they do not cease, or disappear, or exhaust themselves.

Even as we are given to these emotions of egocentricity that arise moment by moment in our engagement in the world, in the recognition of them, we find that they are defused and stripped of their force to govern our lives. Shinran speaks of this as an ongoing transformation that emerges of itself:

> Formerly you were drunk with the wine of ignorance and had a liking only for the three poisons of greed, anger, and folly, but since you have begun to hear the Buddha's Vow you

> have gradually awakened from the drunkenness of ignorance, gradually rejected the three poisons, and come to prefer at all times the medicine of Amida Buddha. . . . Since shinjin that aspires for attainment of birth arises through the encouragement of Sakyamuni and Amida, once the [Buddha's] true and real mind is brought to arise in us, how can we remain as we were, possessed of blind passions?

It is not that blind passions and ignorance are eradicated, but rather our lives cease to be seized and dominated by them.

The World of Things

In its opposite face, such awareness from within the human condition is also an apprehending of things in the immediacy and reality of engagement with them. In another essay written about the same time, Nishida speaks of such apprehension in terms of an objectivity without subjectivity. By "subjectivity," he means the imposition of the self's judgments and valuations on things. Thus "It is when the delusional thinking of the self is eliminated, when the so-called subjective element is completely extinguished and we become one with the true reality of things . . . that we can know things truly for the first time." Further, according to Nishida, such knowledge is also love:

> To love a thing means that we discard the self and become one with the other. . . . The more we abandon the ego-self and become purely objective – that is, attain no-self – the more love grows and deepens. Love advances from love between parent and child or husband and wife to love for friends; love for friends advances and becomes love for all humankind. The Buddha's love extends to animals and grasses and trees.

Nishida's identification of acts of knowing and loving with pure objectivity delineates a realm where the insistent affirmation of the self as self-governing subject has fallen away and a transformed self and world have arisen together. For Nishida, this is the essential message of the Pure Land path and may be paraphrased using the Pure Land terms of "self-power," for the cherishing of the capacities of the self, and "Other Power,"

indicating the wisdom-compassion of Amida Buddha. He states:

> Subjectivity is self-power, objectivity is Other Power. We know and love things by abandoning self-power and entrusting ourselves to Other Power. For us to know things and to love things means that we discard self-power and enter into the genuine entrusting that is Other Power.

Moreover, he gives a hint of a way by which we may understand the cultural force of the Pure Land tradition in Japan: "If the work of a human life is none other than to know and love, then we pass our days laboring out of the entrusting that is Other Power." Here, the firm barriers one tends to erect to distinguish and magnify the self become porous and fluid. One sees one's existence as not only interfused and interrelated with others around one, but as constantly enabled by one's fellows. For the Shin Buddhist, even the falling away of self-power is the working of Amida Buddha.

The Life of the Shin Buddhist

The person of *shinjin*, looking to the past, perceives the immense burden of his or her own existence, lived solely in the delusion of self-attachment. At the same time, he or she realizes that Amida's Primal Vow to liberate him has been fulfilled in the infinite past and has always been working to grasp him. Looking to the future, he recognizes that his samsaric existence in the past and present can lead only to further wandering in ignorant clinging to self; he is one whom Sakyamuni describes as "difficult to cure," one destined for hell, as Shinran said of himself: "I am one for whom any practice is difficult to accomplish, so hell is to be my home whatever I do" (*Tannishō*, 2). At the same, his attainment of birth in the Pure Land in the future has been settled, and looking toward it, he "rejoices beforehand at being assured of attaining what he shall attain."

This past and future, each with a dual, contradictory structure that includes both samsaric existence and the working of the Vow, is established in the present with the realization of *shinjin*. At that moment, the Primal Vow fulfilled in the infinite past, while remaining in the past, enters the temporal flow of his life, so that "all his past, present, and future evil karma

is transformed into good." Further, his attainment of birth in the Pure Land in the future, while remaining in the future becomes completely settled in the present; Shinran states that he "immediately attains birth." The fulfillment of the Vow in the past and birth in the Pure Land in the future are aspects of the transtemporal working of the Vow that, while continuing to encompass the practitioner's entire existence from the directions of the past and the future, becomes one with it in the immediate present and radically transforms it.

The present that we ordinarily experience is no more than a fleeting instant, a barely perceptible point at which the past extends itself into the future, or the promise of the future fades and turns into the past. Such a present is not the authentic present in which we live and act, but a present robbed of all significance by the framework of objective time we construct. By clinging to the imagined self, we forge its identity and permanence against the flow of time into the past, and look anxiously to a future plotted by self-centered hopes and designs. Here, there is only repetition. True time, however – time as self-aware, impermanent existence free of the domination of the egocentric will – holds the potential for life that is new and fresh. Such time emerges as the present when the fulfillment of the Vow and birth in the Pure Land fuse with and transform the samsaric past and future. Although samsaric time merely stretches on endlessly, the time experienced in the awareness of *shinjin*, while flowing, does not flow, and while moving, is still. It is time, and it is timelessness.

In the present, one still has one's existence as a human being possessed of blind passions and devoid of truth and reality. But because one has realized *shinjin* and entered the ocean of the Vow, one's life has fundamentally parted from the world of birth-and-death and come to be pervaded by immeasurable light and life.[1]

Endnotes

[1] Ed. note: To pursue the quotations found here, turn to Yoshifumi Ueda and Dennis Hirota, *Shinran: An Introduction to His Thought* (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1989), especially the chapter entitled "The Structure of Shinran's Thought," pp. 137-182.

The Way of Tibetan Buddhism

Doboom Tulku

As human beings we are blessed with a precious human body, whose faculties are very rare among sentient beings. Human life is also rare numerically speaking: we cannot imagine how many millions of tiny insects may exist underneath the area one human covers.

Let me now go into the Tibetan way of perceiving human life.

In Tibetan Buddhist scriptures, human life is referred to as precious. This is because it has special powers of accomplishment. One often comes across mention of three things in the context of human life: the body, the enjoyments and the virtuous roots. We offer these to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the mandala-offering practice. We are also expected to dedicate these to the well-being of sentient and non-sentient beings.

The body refers not only to the biological body but to the whole psycho-physical existence of human life. The capacity or skill of humans takes both positive and negative forms. On the positive side, we can achieve immense benefits to ourselves and to fellow humans through the wonders of science and technology. The negative capacity is still more striking. One person may burn a whole country by spreading hatred towards other people; one single madman may embroil a whole region by burning the sacred book of a religion.

When we look at the animal kingdom, some creatures may seem, in some ways, more skillful than humans. Without any instruments, they build such beautiful nests, and they know how to protect their near and dear ones from various dangers. Yet we humans have learned to create much more wonderful things. This evolution of geo-physical and intellectual culture is not known in non-human sentient realms.

The main capacity of human beings lies in the discriminating power: discriminating between good and bad for oneself, between good and

bad for others. Similarly, human beings have the ability to discriminate between good and bad in the short term, on one hand, and good and bad in the long term, on the other. This faculty is called in Sanskrit *vivekvigyan*.

Enjoyment refers to the objects of enjoyment required in life. A Buddhist scripture says clearly, "Happiness in human life is not possible without satisfying material requirements." In the same line it says that "the satisfaction of requirements come from generous activities." It does not say requirements can be attained by aggressive efforts. If you get something, it becomes your responsibility to give something back to its sources, sentient or non-sentient. Material attainments, money, property and so on, if they have come to you by your honest efforts, are well within the realm of "right livelihood."

The phrase "generous activities" may be seen as covering not only the giving of material substances but also the exchange of material and other things beneficial to others, so it is a give-and-take idea. Basically, it refers to the "non-attachment" aspect of spirituality. Non-attachment rises from "renunciation." From the term "renunciation" one may get the idea that you must first leave society, leave your family and go somewhere else, instead of starting from where you are. Well, if you look at the life of the Buddha, he was a prince, and, after seeing certain things in the capital of his kingdom, he left the palace and became a wanderer and spent a long time in solitude in the forest. There are so many similar stories about great saints in Tibet as well, such as the well-known stories of Milarepa. These demonstrate to us the extent to which one can go if one develops a strong determination. This does not mean that when we start practising renunciation we have to abandon everything, because if you are not one hundred per cent ready from within, even if you go to a solitary place, it may not be renunciation from within. You may be staying apart from people physically, but if your mind is occupied with worldly things, it is not renunciation. So renunciation has to take deep roots in the mind through sustained meditation and reflection on the whole predicament of cyclic existence.

The practice of generous activity may also be done mentally. For example, many Tibetan practitioners, both lamas/monks and laypeople,

carry out a daily morning ritual called *chutor*, or "scattering water" to the hungry and thirsty ghosts. The ritual involves pouring sanctified water from one pot to another along with balls of barley flour. The practitioner imagines spirits gathering around to share the food and water, and also receives spiritual messages from the Buddha's teachings. One can accuse Tibetan practitioners of being generous to invisible spirits but not so generous to needy fellow humans. Well, that is certainly a point, but on the other hand there is also a valid point that when throwing some coins to a beggar in the street, you should not feel superior in some way to the beggar. As long as we live in the human realm, we should be engaged in generous activities, and should at the same time be pragmatic, instead of following fixed theories, ideas or rules.

The Buddha taught us that there are three roots of virtues. Non-attachment, non-hatred and non-ignorance are the qualities from which all other spiritual qualities grow. These are not the mere absence of the three negativities but the antidotes to these. These can be understood respectively as:

1) renouncing selfish desire, the focus of Buddha's first sermon at Sarnath;

2) loving-kindness towards all, the message from the Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma at Vaishali and other places; and

3) the power of the special insight into Emptiness, the direct teaching contained in the second Sermon delivered at Rajgir near Nalanda (Bihar).

And the very basis of roots of virtues is the pure nature of the mind.

The elaborate ceremonies associated with various tantric rituals, and the ritual arrangement of implements and paintings, mudras and dance, are meant as an aid to understanding and imbibing the teachings of the Buddha. They are not to be mistaken for the essentials.

From all we have said, the points to be noted are: renunciation is necessary, but does not imply denunciation of worldly life; loving-kindness is a must, while pretentiousness must be abandoned; special insight is the

most important of the roots of virtues, and can never be accompanied by showmanship.

II.

I now want to add some of my reflections on the Way of Tibetan Buddhism that arose in response to some questions posed to me in 2008 when I was visiting North America. Is *Vajrayana* (Tantric Buddhism or the Diamond Vehicle) unique to Tibetan Buddhism? No, Vajrayana is a part of Mahayana Buddhism. Hence to count Vajrayana as separate from Mahayana or unique to Tibetan Buddhism is incorrect. Shinto is pre-Buddhist Japanese religion, and cannot be counted as part of Buddhism. My knowledge of Zen Buddhism is almost zero. Therefore, I cannot comment much on this subject, except to say that the Zen tradition's emphasis is on meditation rather than on philosophical speculations.

In both Hinayana and Mahayana philosophy, the individual, self, and person are synonymous and refer to the same thing. The difference between Buddhist and non Buddhist philosophy in ancient India on this point is that Buddhist philosophy denies the existence of an eternal singular and independent Self which continues throughout the migrations in the cyclic existence. One's self is the doer or the agent of one's acts, which is termed as *karma*. One's self is also the receiver of the consequences of the acts one committed. We do not consider the self as a creation of a supreme power owing obligations to that being. But we do have a responsibility to function as useful instruments for the well being of all others because all of them are directly or indirectly connected to me. As an individual human being, I am a part of whole and must behave as such.

What is the role of meditation in Tibetan Buddhism? In monastic or lay community life, meditation is expected to help expand the sense of responsibility. This arises especially through contemplation of the law of karma and its consequences, through contemplation of loving thought, compassion and emptiness. When this is properly carried out, then a genuine sense of universal responsibility will be generated.

No one particular aspect of us as human being or any sentient being for that matter is reincarnated. Just the continuum of the *being* of a creature is transformed into another being. This continuum is not an eternal or

independent entity. The force behind this transformation or change is not a supreme being but it is the law of karma.

Is Buddhism an ethic-based religion? It is correct to say that Buddhism is an ethic-based religion. Visual artists who have been drawn to its ethical principles and apply them to their lives and to their art can be referred to as *Buddhist oriented spiritual artists*. If their art depicts a Buddhist object, that is, a Buddha or Buddhist image, then that will be Buddhist art irrespective of the artists' faith.

Spirituality should be understood to mean an inner science looking into one's own being rather than external phenomena. Religion, on the other hand, is in my understanding, a structured system of belief and practice following a particular founder or scripture such as the Bible or the Qur'an.

In many religions there is the practice of silence. This practice is also found in Buddhism in general and in Tibetan Buddhism particularly. It is especially important in the Vajrayana dimensions of Tibetan Buddhism.

We consider the body, speech and mind as the three doors of action. We act through these doors. The idea is to close these doors to non-virtuous acts and open them to the virtues. When one engages in the practice of silence, then acts of lying, slander, harsh words and gossiping are automatically stopped.

Mahayana in general and Vajrayana in particular have many ritualistic aspects although they are not the essential aspects of either Mahayana or Vajrayana. Generally, Buddhist believers are expected to take refuge three times in the day time and three times in the night. Among the many ways and phrases for taking refuge is one found in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*. It may be mentioned here: *I go for refuge to the Buddha as far as the quintessence of enlightenment; I go for refuge to the Dharma and the community of Bodhisattvas.* Taking refuge essentially means reinforcing one's commitment to follow the path shown by Buddha.

I hope that this gives you some awareness of the Way of Tibetan Buddhism. These are my observations, based on a lifetime of Buddhist practice, of some of the aspects of the Tibetan Buddhist Way.[1]

Endnotes

[1] I would like to pay tribute to how Prof. M. Darrol Bryant has, over the many years of his work in inter-religious dialogue, developed a special skill for pinpointing the essentials of the religious cultures of the world and evolving these into practical projects. I always have considered him a model blend of noble human and spiritual qualities.

The Way Of Gobind Sadan

Mary Pat Fisher

On the outskirts of New Delhi, a unique spiritual community has grown up organically around the revered teacher Baba Virsa Singh. Born into a family of Sikh farmers, from childhood he had a truly universal vision of the harmony of all prophets. As people gathered around him for his blessings and his teachings, he encouraged them to find God through their own prophet but also to appreciate all other messengers of God. This interfaith message blossomed into the community known as Gobind Sadan, "House of God." It is a house without walls, without any sectarian agenda. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and Buddhists of all castes live, work, and worship together here as members of one human family, all understanding that they are worshipping the same God, the same Ultimate Reality.

Baba Virsa Singh left his physical body on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2007. Afterward as I was speaking to him inwardly, as many of us do, I asked him if we should celebrate Christmas. "Yes, passionately!" he responded. So we cremated his body on Christmas morning and celebrated the birth of Jesus the same night with thousands of candles lit throughout the garden where Jesus had appeared to him in 1983. Thus his great encouragement of appreciation of all religions continues, and this living interfaith community – Gobind Sadan – continues to offer sincere prayers around the clock, in many forms, addressed to many manifestations of the same One.

Under Babaji's directions, places of worship according to many religious traditions had been built. The Guru Granth Sahib, the universal scripture revered by Sikhs, is read around the clock in Darbar Sahib, and the daily devotions follow the pattern begun by Guru Nanak, starting at 2 a.m. every morning and ending with putting the Guru Granth Sahib to bed and saying the final evening prayer. Nearby, offerings, prayers, and scripture readings at a sacred fire continue 24 hours a day, following the

ancient Indian tradition of *havan*. Offerings of *ghee* (clarified butter oil) and *samagri* (mixture of grains, dried fruits, and flowers) are continually doled onto the fire on a large scale, in gratitude to the One who cannot be seen, and to spiritually purify the atmosphere. Gobind Sadan's *havan* has been burning constantly since 1968, so it has become a very powerful place of prayer and healing. A volunteer named Hardip Singh was blessed by Baba Virsa Singh to pray and make offerings at the *havan* every hour, around the clock. Doctors say it is not medically possible for one person to carry on like this without sustained sleep, but where God is constantly being remembered, anything is possible, by God's grace, so the hourly prayers continue.

At the same time, five Namaz are performed daily at Gobind Sadan's own mosque. It has become such a magnet for Muslims of the area that thousands worship there on special holy days. Those who come for Friday prayers also overflow the mosque into the garden that surrounds it. Gobind Sadan's imam preaches that Islam is a religion of love – and that in fact, all religions are based on love – and encourages a spirit of brotherhood and sincerity in worship. Thus for Eid celebrations, Hindu and Sikh men worship shoulder to shoulder with their Muslim brothers.

Near the mosque is "Jesus' Place" – the peaceful garden where a life-sized statue of Jesus has been placed on the spot where Baba Virsa Singh saw Jesus standing with arms outstretched in 1983. Jesus told Babaji that everyone who would come to that place would be blessed. It was not a garden at that time. Rather, it was a place behind the dairy where the manure used to be kept. By Babaji's order, the dairy was shifted so that the holy place where Jesus appeared could be kept sanctified. When I first came to Gobind Sadan in 1990, we had to walk barefoot across rough thorny ground to reach the sacred place. A simple stone enclosure for divas had been made there, and two young women went there every evening to light the divas in honour of Jesus. According to Babaji's directions, the area was slowly turned into a lovely garden. Now children of the area happily play on the grass, and every evening hundreds of people gather for nightly prayers before Jesus. They are not nominally Christians, but they love Jesus very much. They touch his feet reverently, put their head in his hands for blessing, and sometimes even hug him. Every day he is bathed

and dressed in fresh robes by a Hindu man. Near him is a beautiful statue of Mother Mary, donated by a devotee of Mother Teresa who was very touched by Gobind Sadan. Mother Mary is cleaned and dressed daily by a volunteer from Siberia. People bring flowers, incense, and robes for Jesus and Mother Mary, and come to lay their problems before them with faith that they are living presences.

Babaji gave me the duty to pray for people before Jesus, and by His grace, many of the prayers are answered. Every evening we light 125 candles around Jesus as Babaji told us to do. We say the Lord's Prayer in various languages, plus a passage from Psalms and the Sh'ma Israel, and sing a song about Jesus written by one of the Sikh women of Gobind Sadan. The children also recite in Hindi a prayer given to us by Babaji, which seems very real in our lives:

> Dear Lord, please bring us Your happiness, Your love to the earth that exists in heaven. Take away the sorrows and the suffering in the world. Take away thoughts of rich and poor, high and low. Let us all sit together, eat together, live and work together in Your grace and harmony.[1]

In the same garden as Jesus is the "Sh'ma Place." This is an open-roofed stone enclosure with the Sh'ma Israel engraved in stone in Hebrew, English, and Hindi. Rabbi Hillel Levine of Boston University, who helped to develop the concept of Gobind Sadan's place for Jewish worship, said that there are three essential features defining Jewish spirituality: the Torah (represented by the Sh'ma stone), worship (represented by a tall menorah), and acts of charity. To give true form to the latter, a stone-walled storage place was built, for donation and distribution of clothes for the poor. From time to time, Jewish holy days are celebrated at the Sh'ma Place by the whole community.

Around the hillside there are small shrines to various Hindu deities – Lord Krishna and Radha, Hanuman, Kali Mata, Lord Shiva with his son Ganesh, Sita and Ram. A pandit from Nepal offers traditional prayers to the deities morning and night, keeps the shrine areas clean, and tends their gardens. Every Tuesday night, thousands of poor people come to receive offerings of large rounds of sweet bread – *rot* – made by the women of

Gobind Sadan in honour of Hanuman.

A semi-open stone pavilion in a forest clearing with life-sized statues of Buddha and Mahavir offers a quiet place for contemplation, including morning meditation by guests staying at the foreigners' guest compound nearby. Stone plaques have been mounted in the wall behind the statues. Behind Buddha is his saying,

> *Beware of the restless mind,*
> Learn to discipline it.

Behind the statue of Mahavir is his teaching,

> *If the self is conquered you shall be happy*
> In this world and hereafter.

In addition to the constant round of devotions at all these holy places, Gobind Sadan celebrates the holy days of all religions with sincere enthusiasm. Be it Christmas, Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Zuha, Janamashtmi, Navaratri, or the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh, Buddha, or Mahavir, Gobind Sadan will be celebrating with flowers, lights, food offerings, and myriads of candles and divas. Speakers will tell the community about the greatness of the day and the prophet or avatar, in this spirit of celebration that God sent this particular messenger or message to the earth to help us all. Babaji urged all holy places and institutions to follow this same model as the simplest way to develop interfaith appreciation among the people. He once explained,

> Why do we celebrate all holy days? As Guru Gobind Singh Ji says, all forms of worship are the same, all religious places are the same, and all of humanity should be considered as one human race. Guru Nanak Dev Ji says, 'There is one Father, and we are all His children.' Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Nanak, and Jesus all call God their Father. Despite differences in language and ways of worshipping, all the prophets have brought the same message. Jesus says to us, 'Love my Father and love the people also, for my Father is Love. Don't hurt anyone's feelings, don't deprive anyone of their rights, speak truth, do justice, serve others.' Abraham,

> Moses, Noah, and Hazrat Muhammad all say the same thing. Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavir say 'Do no violence,' for they see life in everything.
>
> Jesus never told people to make boundaries. He says, 'Love trees, animals, flowers – see Me in the very earth.' Jesus speaks of the kingdom of his Father, in which there is peace, justice, and truth. He calls it heaven and prays to his Father to bring this kingdom on earth. Guru Nanak refers to *sach khand*, the realm of truth where justice prevails, and he speaks of *swarag*, heaven on earth. Prophet Muhammad calls it *bahisht*.
>
> There is only one eternal message of religion, and it has always come from the same Source. However, religious 'authorities' have divided the prophets into different religions. The priests have made Jesus a Christian, Moses a Jew, Guru Nanak a Sikh, Krishna a Hindu. The Master is so wide, but humans have made Him so small. They have made the Creator of all Creation just the leader of a sect. . . .
>
> These exclusive ideas propagated by the religious authorities have been repeated so long that it will take some time for people to change their thinking. . . . But as people gradually learn to accept the truth that all prophets are equal, that God is one and God's message is one, our nervousness and angry conflicts between sects will cease and we will all recognize each other as brothers and sisters. . . .
>
> If a person asks why Babaji celebrates Jesus's birthday, the answer is that Babaji has come from a place where there is neither friend nor enemy, where there is no opposition. For us, Jesus is our life. Hazrat Muhammad is also our life, our love. I deeply love Jesus and all the prophets. I am not celebrating their holy days to please the people.[2]

Whenever he spoke, Babaji always wove together teachings and stories from all prophets and all religions quite naturally, further educating

people to disregard the man-made boundaries between religions. He had a visionary relationship with many prophets and avatars, and therefore spoke of them all with sincere devotion. This open attitude was naturally communicated to all who heard him.

We cannot imitate Babaji's enlightened wisdom, but we can carry on his heritage of genuine appreciation for all messengers of God. Thus we continue daily devotions in all the places of worship and celebration of many religions' holy days at Gobind Sadan. We have also started a new initiative: weekly interfaith education classes for children. About fifty children from the community and the surrounding area come voluntarily each week, for they love the activities and the teachings. With high spirits and genuine devotion, the children put on plays ranging from the stories of Guru Nanak, Bhagat Nam Dev, and Moses to the Jataka Tales of Buddha. Teachers also tell stories about the lives of the prophets and even of their great forbears, such as the ancestors of the Prophet Muhammad. Videos of stories from all religions are also very popular with the children. When discussing the plays and stories, the children express a deep and natural understanding of their spiritual messages, as well as an astonishing ability to remember and recount the details. They know how to worship the same God in many ways, such as the inner meanings of the actions of Namaz, as taught to them by Gobind Sadan's imam. By heart they can recite the Mool Mantra of Guru Nanak, the prayer of Jesus, the Sh'ma Israel, the Gayatri Mantra, a passage from Psalms about brotherhood, and sing various Indian songs about the Oneness of God.

This interfaith appreciation comes very naturally to children. Why, then, isn't it the norm everywhere? Other places tend to belong to some organization, rather than to God. Organizations need to perpetuate themselves; they need to have money to survive. Religious organizations typically try to convince people that theirs is the best path, to enhance their membership. They develop creeds, rules, and power structures by which they distinguish themselves. How, then, can they encourage appreciation of all ways to God?

By contrast, Gobind Sadan is free of any institutional constraints. Babaji used to say, "This is our home. We can do whatever we want in our home." He also said that he was trying to keep alive the ancient spiritual

traditions of India, in which many different strands of spirituality once existed side by side, without any monolithic religion called "Hinduism." He said, "If you ask us what is our religion, it is the religion of Guru Granth Sahib," which reflects this intertwining of many mystical paths.

Since childhood, Babaji was taught in visions by Baba Siri Chand (elder son of Guru Nanak) and Guru Gobind Singh (the Tenth Sikh Guru) to respect all prophets. He asked God if it was necessary to become a Christian in order to love Jesus, or a Muslim in order to love the Prophet Muhammad, and he was told, "No – only love." Baba Siri Chand told him to conduct *havan* wherever he would go, and so he did, introducing people of all religions to its sacred power. Guru Gobind Singh's eternal teaching is "Let all humanity be recognized as one human race," and so Babaji worked constantly to overcome the barriers that had been erected by humans, dividing the human family into different sects. His communities do not belong to any religious institution which might try to curb their freedom, nor was he beholden to anyone for the sake of money. His communities strive to be self-supporting. From his young manhood, when people discovered his spiritual power and wisdom and started to gather around him, Babaji determined that he and his followers should not ask for charity to support themselves. Being the son of a farmer, he began working very hard to develop barren lands into productive farms whose income helps support his work. He forbade his staff to take any money for spiritual services. At Gobind Sadan, people speak about God and sing to God for love rather than money, and everything is free.

Thus people who come to Gobind Sadan are welcome to worship God in whatever way they choose. "The mission of Gobind Sadan," Babaji said, "is to help everyone draw closer to God." Nobody has to change his or her religion in order to find God; Babaji encouraged everyone to find God through their own prophet.

As we try to continue Gobind Sadan's mission, it is our hope that people everywhere will pick up Babaji's simple but very effective programme of celebrating all holy days in all places. If religious institutions are too exclusive to allow this within their walls, and professional priests too afraid of losing their jobs to adopt such a programme, then may sincere people find their own ways of sharing with their brothers and sisters of

other faiths. And thus may we all draw closer to God and to each other.

Endnotes

[1] Baba Virsa Singh, *Loving God* (New Delhi, Sterling Publications/Gobind Sadan, 2006) p. 83.

[2] Baba Virsa Singh, quoted in *Gobind Sadan Times*, International Edition, January 1995, p. 1.

The Way of Jesus

Marcus Borg

Christianity is often thought to be more about "faith" and "believing" than about following a "way." I thought so for the first three decades of my life. I grew up in a traditional Protestant denomination that emphasized believing in Jesus, including believing that he died for our sins so that we can be forgiven and have everlasting life. Our theology proclaimed that we were justified by faith; the absolution ended with, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved"; and the creed we said every Sunday began, "I believe…."

Of course, we also heard "way" language, especially that Jesus is the only way. According to John 14.6, one of the best-known verses in the gospels, Jesus said of himself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." The text continues: "No one comes to the Father but by me." For most of us, that meant Jesus was the only way of salvation. If people didn't know about and believe in Jesus, they couldn't be saved. This reinforced that notion that being Christian was foundationally about believing, even as it was also about more, including seeking to live a different kind of life. But salvation came only through believing in Jesus.

Though I began to be skeptical of this by my late teens, I didn't know much about other religions until I was in my early 30s. Neither in college nor graduate school did I take a course in world religions. It wasn't required in those days, and my focus was the study of Christian origins. Only when I began to teach in a religion department that required every professor to teach one section of world religions a year did I need to study them.

Teaching that course opened my eyes in many ways. In particular, I was struck by how central imagery of "the way" is in other religions. I learned about "the way" of Lao Tzu and "the way" of the Buddha. To say the obvious, the way is a path to be followed, and its purpose is transformation. To cite one of my favorite brief definitions of religions, *they are practical means – that is, ways - of ultimate transformation* (from an introduction to

world religions written by Frederick Streng around 1980).

This realization radically changed my understanding of Jesus, Christianity, and the Bible as a whole. I began to see that "the way" is as central to the Jewish Bible, Jesus, and formative figures in early Christianity as it is the other enduring religions. Without the lens provided by them, I might have missed it. It led to a conviction (which, I trust, is not dogmatic): being Christian is not about *believing* in Jesus and the doctrines of Christianity and the truth of the Bible. Rather, it is about following the way, the path of transformation disclosed and revealed in them.

Though many Christians think that Christianity is foundationally about "believing," it is not, at least not in the modern sense of "believing" – which commonly means believing statements to be true even if they're not completely persuasive. Rather, Christianity is about a way, a path of transformation – a path that is "the way." But "the way" it is not exclusive to Christianity; rather, it is known in the enduring religions of the world.

The Way of Jesus in Mark

The earliest gospel is Mark, written about 70 CE. At least seven of letters attributed to Paul are earlier than Mark. But though Jesus is foundational for Paul, his letters do not tell the story of Jesus.

Mark's first verse is the title of his gospel. The next two verses state its theme as "the way." Verses two and three use "way" imagery three times and echo language from Isaiah 40:

> *I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare* ***your way****; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare* ***the way*** *of the Lord, make his* ***paths*** *straight.'*

Thus Mark announces that the story of Jesus, the gospel, is about the "way."

That Mark is about Jesus as "the way" is confirmed by the structure of his gospel. It has three parts, beginning in Galilee and ending in Jerusalem. Part one is set in Galilee: most of Jesus's public activity and teaching occur there (chapters 1 through much of 8). Part three is set in Jerusalem: the story of Jesus's last week, death and resurrection (chapters 11 through 16). In between is part two: Jesus's journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (the latter part of chapter 8 through the end of 10).

Part two is thus the center of Mark. It separates and joins parts one and three, Galilee and Jerusalem. Mark's structure has been compared to Roman triumphal arches whose sculpted side panels tell the beginning and end of the story they commemorate. In the middle, in the center of the arch, is what the story is about.

The central section of Mark narrates Jesus's journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (8.22 through the end of chapter 10). Note that "journey" and "way" are part of the same linguistic family. Three times in this section, Jesus speaks of what will happen in Jerusalem: he will be killed by the authorities and then rise again.

Often called "the three predictions of the passion," they are found in Mark 8.31, 9.31, and 10.31. After each, Jesus speaks of what it means to follow him on the way: 8.34-36, 9.33-35, and 10.35-39. To illustrate with the first:

> *Then he [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man [Jesus] must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again . . . . He called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (8.31, 34).*

Note the twofold use of the image of "following" Jesus, and that it consists of taking up their cross. The way of Jesus leads to Jerusalem and the cross. For Jesus, that was literally true. For his followers, it became a metaphor for what it meant to follow him. Luke as he takes over this passage from Mark makes this clear by adding "daily" to the cross-saying.

The way of Jesus as the way of the cross is not about a substitutionary sacrifice for sin that is to be believed in, but a path to be followed. Neither in Mark nor anywhere else in the New Testament is the cross understood as payment for sin. Seeing the cross as payment, satisfaction, substitution was first articulated by Anselm of Canterbury a thousand years later in 1098. But in Mark and the New Testament as a whole, the cross is not about payment; it is a way, a path, a pattern, an archetype of transformation.

Mark ends his story of Jesus's journey to Jerusalem by again emphasizing "the way." In Jericho, the last stop before Jerusalem, Jesus

heals a blind beggar named Bartimaeus (10.46-52). In the last verse of Mark 10, we are told that Bartimaeus "regained his sight and *followed him [Jesus] on the way.*" In the next verse, we are in Jerusalem (11.1). Strikingly, Mark's central section began with another story of a blind man regaining his sight (8.22-26). Mark framed his story of Jesus's journey to Jerusalem with two stories of people seeing again. The framing suggests that Jesus' journey to Jerusalem is about "seeing" – seeing that "the way" leads to Jerusalem and the cross.

Jerusalem as the destination of Jesus's journey has a twofold significance in Mark and the other gospels. First, it is the place of confrontation with the authorities – the religious and imperial powers that ruled his world. Second, it is about death and resurrection as the way, an archetype of transformation.

The Way as Confrontation. In Mark (followed by Matthew and Luke) Jesus's final week in Jerusalem begins with his provocative anti-imperial entry into the city on what Christians call Palm Sunday. It continues with his equally provocative anti-temple act on Monday. On Tuesday, representatives of the authorities engage Jesus in public verbal conflict designed to discredit him with the crowd. On Wednesday, one of his followers betrays him to the authorities. On Thursday, he has a final meal with his followers and then is arrested. Friday, he is executed by crucifixion, a Roman capital penalty. On Sunday, women find his tomb empty and are told by an angel that they and Jesus's disciple will see him.

The Way and the Kingdom. This first meaning of Jerusalem – confrontation with and execution by the authorities – links "the way" of Jesus with the other central theme of Mark: the kingdom of God (and also in Matthew and Luke). After Mark announces that the story of Jesus is about "the way" in his first verses, Mark reports that the first words of Jesus's public activity are about the coming of "the kingdom of God" (1.15).

The "kingdom of God" is about this world, not about an afterlife. It is about "this world" and not about "heaven." As the Lord's Prayer says, "Your kingdom come *on earth*." To echo John Dominic Crossan: heaven is in great shape; earth is where the problems are. It is about the transformation of this world, not about an afterlife. In the broad sense of the word "politics,"

it is political. Politics in its broad sense is about the shape and shaping of societies. The English word comes from a Greek word that means "city." Politics in the broad sense is about the shape of the city, and by extension the shape of human organizations from the small to large: family, tribe, petty kingdoms, nations, empires. How are they put together and how fair or unfair are they? That is the question of politics.

In that world, "kingdom" was a political image. It was the most common form of political and economic organization. His hearers knew about the kingdom of Herod and the kingdom of Rome (in the eastern Empire, Rome referred to herself as a kingdom, not as an empire). The kingdom of God would have meant a different kind of world from what they experienced under the kingdoms of Herod and Rome.

If Jesus had wanted to avoid the political connotations of kingdom language, he could have spoke about the family of God or the community of God, but he didn't. He spoke of the kingdom of God – what life would be like on earth if God were king, and the rulers of the domination systems of this world were not. The kingdom of God is about the transformation of this world into a world of justice and peace.

It was Jesus's passion for "the kingdom of God" that led to his journey to Jerusalem, confrontation with the powers, and execution. Thus "the way" of Jesus includes a passion for "the kingdom of God" – a political passion to change this world. Unless we take that passion seriously, it is impossible to understand why he was killed by the authorities. He didn't simply die, but was executed.

The Way as Pattern/Archetype of Dying and Rising

Jerusalem as the destination of Jesus's journey has a second significance. It is not only the place of bold challenge to the authorities but also the place of death and resurrection. In Mark (and in much of the New Testament, as we will see), death and resurrection become a central metaphor for "the way" of Jesus as personal transformation.

Metaphorically, death and resurrection refer to dying to an old way of life and being raised into a new way of life, dying to an old identity and being raised into a new identity, dying to an old self and being raised into a new self. The way of Jesus leads through death to life. It is an image of

radical personal transformation.

Matthew and Luke preserved the same pattern and understandings. Though John's gospel tells the story of Jesus quite differently, he also highlights radical transformation with the language of being "born from above" in the story of Jesus and Nicodemus (3.1-10). Nicodemus comes to Jesus "by night"; he is still in the dark, and does not yet "see." Jesus tells him, "No one can see the kingdom of God without being born *from above*" (sometimes translated as "*born again*" or "*born anew*"). The words mean the same as the pattern/archetype of death and resurrection: To be born again/anew/from above means dying to an old way of being and beginning again as a new-born. Perhaps this is also the meaning of passages in which Jesus spoke of becoming as a child in order to enter the kingdom of God.

The Way of Jesus in Paul

The way of Jesus as the path of death and resurrection is central to Paul's letters. Written in the 50s and thus earlier than the gospels, they tell us what Paul thought following Jesus was about. As noted earlier, his letters do not include a narrative of Jesus's life and death. That was not their purpose. He wrote to communities that already knew about Jesus. Paul's letters have Jesus as their foundation, even as they don't tell us much about him.

The foundation includes the death and resurrection of Jesus. Repeating phrases in his letters refer to Christ crucified, dying and rising with Christ, being crucified with Christ; life in Christ, life in the new creation, life transformed into the likeness of Christ. This is death and resurrection as transformation.

In Galatians, most likely written in the early 50s, Paul refers to himself as having undergone an internal crucifixion, an internal death. The old Paul has died and a new Paul whose identity is now in Christ has been born: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (2.19b-20a). Later in the same letter he repeats the theme: "May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Paul's identity was no longer in "the world," meaning the humanly created world of culture; he had died to that world and now lived in a new world.

In I Corinthians (also from the early 50s), Paul reminds the Christ-

community in Corinth of what he had emphasized while he was with them in person:

> *We proclaim Christ crucified. . . . When I came to you, brothers and sisters, . . . I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (1.23, 2.2)

Note the centrality of the cross as the heart of Paul's gospel. Note also Paul's emphasis on the form of Jesus's death. Paul did not write, "Jesus died for us," but "Christ crucified." In Paul's world, a cross was always a Roman cross: only the empire executed by crucifixion. Done in a public place, it was reserved for those who defied Roman imperial authority. They included chronically defiant slaves and those who subverted Roman rule, violently or non-violently, especially if they were creating a following. Paul's emphasis on Christ *crucified* unambiguously indicates that his message about Jesus was an anti-imperial gospel. The domination system had killed Jesus. But the gospel is not just about Jesus being killed. Rather, as the rest of Paul's first letter to Corinth proclaims: God has raised Jesus. Jesus is Lord – the system that killed him is not. That system is a pretend lord.

The way of Jesus as a path that leads through death to resurrection is also central to Paul's letter to the Christ-community in Philippi in northern Greece. Paul is in prison as he writes (probably in Ephesus in the mid-50s) and uncertain whether he would be executed. Thus this letter has the flavor of a "farewell address" to a community that he loved. He tells them what he most wants them to hear and remember.

Philippians 2 is one of the richest chapters in Paul's letters. It begins with what would make Paul's "joy complete." "Be of *the same mind,* having *the same love,* being in full accord *and of one mind*." A set of contrasts follows: do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but humbly, regarding others as better than yourselves; look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Then Paul defines the mind they are to have: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (2.5). What is that "mind" that we see in Jesus? In 2.6-11, which may have been adapted from a very early Christian hymn, it is a path that leads through death to resurrection. Jesus "emptied

himself," took "the form of a slave" and "humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross." Then God "exalted" him, giving him "the name that is above every name": namely, Jesus "is Lord - to the glory of God the Father."

For Paul, this is the way of Jesus, the mind seen in Jesus: the path of death and resurrection. Dying and rising, emptying and humbling and being exalted, is the path of personal transformation.

The use of "Lord" and "Father" in this text gives it a political meaning as well, an anti-domination meaning. In the first century, "Lord" and "Son of God" were titles of the Roman emperor (as were "savior of the world" who had brought "peace on earth"). They had become so beginning in 31 BCE when Octavian defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra and ended a decades-long civil war. Octavian became "Caesar Augustus" ("augustus" means the one to be worshipped) and was heralded as "Son of God," "Lord," the product of a divine-human conception. His successors retained the titles, some taking them more seriously than others.

When Paul (and early Christians generally) proclaimed that Jesus was "the Lord" whose "Father" was God (and thus he was "the Son of God"), they challenged Roman imperial theology. The issue: who was the true revelation of God's will for the world? Is Jesus lord? Or is Caesar, the ruler of "this world," lord? "Jesus is Lord" is one of Paul's (and the New Testament's) most frequent affirmations.

Finally, the way of death and resurrection is central to Romans, theologically probably the most important of his letters. It is the longest and also the only one written to a Christ-community that he didn't know in person. It is also probably the last of the seven letters that scholars universally agree were written by him.

Paul's purpose in Romans was to introduce himself and how he saw things to followers of Jesus in Rome, probably in a number of small communities. He was planning to visit them on his way to Spain and wanted to enlist their support. He may have known about issues facing them – in particular, the relationship between Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles. The former (along with other Jews) had been expelled from Rome in 49 CE. Then, in the mid-50s, they were permitted to return. During their exile, Christ-communities in Rome had become completely Gentile, or

almost so. Now Christian Jews were returning. And so a major theme of Romans is about Jews and Gentiles and life "in Christ."

Noteworthy is what Paul can take for granted as shared in common with the community in Rome – and probably by early Christians generally. In chapter six, he asks a rhetorical question, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" The question presumes that of course they know that. Then Paul writes about baptism as the ritual embodiment of dying and rising with Christ.

> *We have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.… You also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus….Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death of life* (6.4, 11, 13).

In Romans 12.1-2, Paul returns to the theme of transformation through death. The text begins with "therefore," a word Paul uses to conclude and crystalize an argument, a line of thought. He urges his hearers to present themselves as "living sacrifices." Sacrifice involved a death. It is a metaphor, of course: they are to offer up their lives as "living sacrifices," a gift to God, which is the root meaning of "sacrifice." The passage continues: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds." "This world" in Paul is virtually a technical term referring to dominant culture, the world of convention and domination. Do not be conformed to "this world" – but be transformed through the renewing of your mind. "Mind" does not refer simply to the intellect, though it includes that; it refers to the self in a more comprehensive and deeper sense. As in Philippians, "psyche" captures the meaning better. It is about the transformation of selves at a deep level of being. And it is about not being conformed to "this world" – the world of convention and habituated perception.

Thus the earliest documents produced by the post-Easter Jesus movement – the letters of Paul and the gospel of Mark - portray Jesus and his significance with "way" imagery. So also in Acts 9.1: the earliest name for followers of Jesus was those who "belonged to the Way." The way

according to early Christian testimony was both personal and political: it meant dying and rising with Christ as the path of personal transformation; and it meant following Jesus as "Lord" and challenging the lords who killed him.

Jesus as Incarnation of the Way

The New Testament not only affirms that Jesus shows the way, reveals the way, but also embodies the way. To embody means the same as to incarnate: to make something flesh.

Incarnation is especially a theme in the gospel of John. John is the incarnational gospel. In John, Jesus is "the Word of God" become flesh, incarnate, embodied in a human life. He embodies what God is passionate about. He is also "the Light of the World" become flesh. And "the bread of life," "the gateway," "the resurrection and the life," "the way, the truth, and the life." In Jesus, John affirms, we see all of this embodied. In Jesus and the cross, as the path of death and resurrection and as the path of resistance to the way things are, we see God's passion for the transformation of us and the world.

Thus Jesus not only taught but embodied "the way." As the path of dying to an old way of being and being born into a new way of being, it is archetypal and known in the enduring religions of the world. He incarnates perhaps the most powerful archetype of all: the archetype of transformation. This claim is not about Christianity being better than other religions. It is a recognition that the power of the story of Jesus is that it is about the incarnation of "the way" – a universal way known elsewhere as well. Christians can affirm that he is "the way" without needing to deny that there are other ways of transformation.

The Bodhisattva Way
IN RISSHO KOSEI-KAI AND THE *LOTUS SUTRA*

Gene Reeves

Climbing the stairway to the Great Sacred Hall of Rissho Kosei-kai in Tokyo,[1] glancing up you can see magnificent paintings of three of the most familiar Mahayana bodhisattvas. On the right, riding on his lion and symbolizing wisdom, is Manjushri. On the left, mounted on a cow and symbolizing compassion, is Maitreya. And in the center, riding his white elephant with six tusks, is Universal Sage Bodhisattva, symbolizing embodiment of wisdom and compassion in everyday life.

The wisdom of Manjushri is to be understood not as something highly esoteric and abstract, but rather as something closer to intelligence. It includes practical knowledge, knowledge of how to do things that can be helpful to others, including highly developed skills such as brain surgery or psychological insight into the behavior and motivation of others. The wisdom of a bodhisattva, in other words, is useful, practical wisdom.

But a bodhisattva needs to be more than just wise. One could be wise sitting in a cave somewhere, not utilizing wisdom at all. A bodhisattva is moved by compassion for others. Bodhisattva wisdom is not cold and detached, but driven by a genuine, deeply felt, desire to help others that is rooted in a profound sense of togetherness with others.

Still, if intelligence and compassion are not embodied in some concrete ways, they don't amount to much. Universal Sage can be called a "sage" because he is both wise and good. He represents the ideal of bringing the bodhisattva way to life in everyday actions and relationships.

There are, of course, many ways to symbolize such things. If you go around or through the Great Sacred Hall and enter the great hall of the Horin-kaku, the Dharma-wheel Hall, you will find yourself in the presence of still another of the great Mahayana bodhisattvas – Guanyin, called

Kannon in Japanese, the Regarded of the Cries of the World.

This magnificent statue of Guanyin, a so-called "Guanyin of a thousand hands," was introduced to me on my first visit to Tokyo by the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, Nikkyo Niwano. Each of the thousand hands, usually represented by forty-two hands, holds a symbol of some skill or special ability. Sometimes Guanyin is treated by the devout as a kind of god, and the powers she holds in her hands are understood to be powers with which she can help those in trouble. But, Niwano told me, a bodhisattva should not be treated as a god who can do favors for us; rather a bodhisattva should be seen as a model of what we can be. If Guanyin has a thousand different skills with which people can be helped, this means that we should develop a thousand skills for helping people!

Like Manjushri, Maitreya and Universal Sage in the front of the Great Sacred Hall, Guanyin is understood to have deep compassion, intelligent wisdom, and, since this statue is standing, to symbolize the embodiment, the putting to work, of intelligence and compassion in our everyday lives.

Rissho Kosei-kai's "Members' Vow" says, "*We pledge ourselves to follow the bodhisattva way, to bring peace to our families, communities, and countries, and to the world.*"

Helping Others

In the West it is often said that a bodhisattva is someone who is able to enter the bliss of nirvana but postpones his own happiness in order to return to the world to help others selflessly. Such an idea of postponement is definitely not found in the *Lotus Sutra*, or in any other Sutra of which I am aware. In the *Lotus Sutra*,[2] a bodhisattva is one who is wise enough to know that he or she cannot be saved unless everyone is. A bodhisattva is well aware of the inter-connectedness and interdependence of all things. He or she is not completely selfless, but is intelligent and compassionate, and, therefore, continues to work in the world to help others.

Helping others, however, should not be taken to be only a matter of helping individuals with their personal problems, though that is very important. The *Lotus Sutra* repeatedly speaks of bodhisattva practice as two things: transforming individuals and purifying lands. In other words, we should recognize that people are profoundly affected by their social

and natural environments. This, I believe, is why Founder Niwano gave so much importance to working for world peace and became a founder of Religions for Peace.

Today, thanks to Thich Nhat Hanh, Sulak Sivaraksa, and others, we have an internationally engaged Buddhism movement in which Buddhist teachings and practices are related not only to individual issues but also to issues of common or social or political import. From the perspective of the *Lotus Sutra*, this is as it should be; but we should not assume that we can first have a Buddhism that is not socially engaged and then add social engagement as a kind of secondary or tertiary matter. From the perspective of the *Lotus Sutra* and that of Founder Niwano, Buddhism is necessarily socially engaged.

Buddhist Practice

Somewhere along the way – I don't know where and how – for many people, Buddhist practice came to be closely associated with meditation, or even defined as meditation. Meditation is one of India's great gifts to humanity. It can do wonders for all sorts of human conditions. Probably most people could benefit from practicing it. And because it was during meditation that the Buddha became awakened, it has special importance for Buddhists. However, there is nothing peculiarly Buddhist about meditation. The vast majority of Buddhists never meditate. For them, Buddhist practice may be many things, but it is not primarily meditation.

Meditation and concentration are important in the *Lotus Sutra*, but they are not given special prominence. It is also said that even a million eons of meditating does not produce as much merit as hearing about and accepting, even for a moment, the everlasting life of the Buddha, which means embodying the Buddha in one's own life.

If meditation is not the primary Buddhist practice in the *Lotus Sutra*, what is? Many practices are recommended, especially receiving and embracing the Sutra, chanting it from memory, copying it, teaching and explaining it, and living in accord with its teachings. But preeminent among the practices advocated by the *Lotus Sutra* is the way of behaving toward others, generally termed "the bodhisattva way." This bodhisattva way is the Lotus Sutra's encompassing vision of Buddhist practice.

A Way of Action

In a key passage we find this:

> Distinguishing the real Dharma,
> The way of action of bodhisattvas,
> [The Buddha] taught this Dharma Flower[3] Sutra
> In verses as numerous as the sands of the Ganges (202).[4]

We see here that the bodhisattva way is a way of doing, of action. What kind of action? Basically it is whatever action works to save or liberate or even help living beings.

For the Sutra, the most important way of serving others is by leading them to embrace the *Lotus Sutra* itself. The Buddha says,

> Medicine King, though there are many people, both lay people and monks, who walk in the bodhisattva way, if they are not able to see, hear, read, recite, copy, embrace, and make offerings to this Dharma Flower Sutra, you should know that they are not yet walking well in the bodhisattva way. But if any of them hear this sutra, then they will be able to walk well in the bodhisattva way. If any living beings who seek after the Buddha way either see or hear this Dharma Flower Sutra, and after hearing it believe, understand, and embrace it, then you should know that they are nearer to supreme awakening (230).

But it would be a mistake to understand this Sutra as teaching that leading people to itself in any narrow sense is the only way to save others. The *Lotus Sutra* is replete with parables, used in part to illustrate the use of appropriate means in practicing the bodhisattva way. A father gets his children out of a burning house by promising them a reward. Another father gets his kids to take an antidote for poison by pretending to be dead. Still another father guides his unambitious son toward greater and greater responsibility. A tour guide conjures up a city in order to give people a needed resting place during a hard journey. A man sews a valuable jewel into the garment of his poor friend. A very powerful king holds back an extraordinarily precious and unique jewel which he keeps in the topknot of his hair until he sees a soldier of great merit.

A Way of Appropriate Action

What the stories illustrate is practical, appropriate help for others. What we are told over and over again in the Sutra is that these acts need to be skillful, appropriate to the condition of the hearers. It is because people are different and their situations are different that, just as the rain nourishes a great variety of plants according to their different needs, the buddhas give the dharma to people according to what is needed.

What is it that makes an action appropriate? In the parable of the carriages, a father manages to get his kids out of a burning house by promising to give them carriages, but actually rewards them with a much more luxurious model. At the end of the story, the Buddha asks Shariputra whether the father has lied or not, and Shariputra responds that the father had not lied, and would not have been lying had he given the children even very tiny carriages. Why? Simply because the strategy worked. It got the kids out of the house in time to save their lives.

Two things are relevant here: the action worked, and it worked to save lives.

Some people apparently think that Buddhist ethics is primarily a matter of what's inside oneself; that it is primarily a matter of internal consciousness and/or compassion. But there is hardly a hint of this in the *Lotus Sutra*. The ideal, in the *Lotus Sutra* too, is a combination of wisdom or insight, compassion, and practice. But, in contemporary jargon, this Sutra is also very results oriented. Of course it is important that the fathers in the Sutra's stories are concerned about their children and want to save them, but it is more important that they are smart enough to figure out ways to be successful at doing so. Skillful, appropriate action is effective action.

The story of Devadatta found in Chapter 12 of the Sutra is very instructive. Even our enemies, regardless of their intentions, can be bodhisattvas for us if we regard them as such. Devadatta, the embodiment of evil in so much Buddhist literature, in this Sutra is thanked by the Buddha for being helpful. "Thanks to my good friend Devadatta," the Buddha says, "I was able to become fully developed in the six transcendental practices, in kindness, compassion, joy, and impartiality" and so on. (249)

The Buddha, we are told, learned from his experiences with Devadatta, making Devadatta a bodhisattva, but it is not suggested that this was in any way a function of what Devadatta himself intended. Good intentions may be good in their own right, but they may not always be what is most important. Often what's more important is effectiveness, effectiveness in helping, or saving, others.

Buddhism as Skillful and Appropriate Means

There is much ambiguity in the *Lotus Sutra* about the nature of salvation. We are told that the Buddha has vowed to save all the living. But the nature of that state, variously termed becoming a buddha, supreme awakening and so on, is not unambiguously clear. But if we look at the stories in the text, the matter is not, or at least not always, so complicated. Lives are saved. Sometimes they are saved from fire or poison, literally from death. In other cases, they are saved from a mean existence, from poverty and from an attitude which is complacent about poverty. In all cases, what is involved is overcoming a failure to achieve one's potential to become a bodhisattva and buddha.

Basically, in the *Lotus Sutra*, being a bodhisattva means using appropriate skillful means to help others. And that, finally, is what Buddhism itself is. It is an enormous variety of means developed to help people live more fulfilling lives, which can be understood as lives lived in the light of their interdependence. This is what most of the stories are about: someone – a father-figure, or a friend, or a guide – helping someone else gain more responsibility for their own lives. "Even if you search in all directions," it says, "you will find no other vehicles – except the skillful means of the Buddha."(128)

As Founder Niwano puts it, "The fundamental spirit of the bodhisattva practice is [unity] between oneself and others."[5] Though the unity is never perfect, there are times when the mind of a bodhisattva is not one of compassionate giving but rather one of spontaneous empathy. Though disputes and quarrels arise because people don't realize that even though we seem to be independent of one another, at a basic level there is unity of all human beings, and a unity of all living beings.

Thus, bodhisattva practice through appropriate skillful means is at

once both a description of what Buddhism is, or what Buddhist practice primarily is, and a prescription for what our lives should become, a teaching about how we should behave in order to contribute to the good. It is prescriptive not in the sense of being a precept or commandment, but in the sense of urging us, for the sake both of our own salvation and that of others, to be intelligent, imaginative, even clever, in finding ways to be helpful. The *Lotus Sutra*, accordingly, is a prescription of a medicine or religious method for us – and, therefore, extremely practical.

As I understand the *Lotus Sutra*, it would be a serious mistake to think that skillful means are lesser teachings that can be replaced by some higher teaching or truth. There is, of course, a larger purpose that they serve. They are, after all, means not ends. But the encompassing purpose or truth that they serve is not another teaching. It is a Dharma that can only be found embodied in concrete teachings, including actions that are instructive, just as the Buddha can only be found embodied in Shakyamuni and in people, in you and me.

World-affirming Practice

This teaching of bodhisattva practice is radically world-affirming. By this I mean simply that it is this *saha* world of suffering which is Shakyamuni Buddha's world. It is in this world that he is a bodhisattva and encourages us to be bodhisattvas. This world is our home, and it is the home of Shakyamuni Buddha, precisely because he is embodied in it, not only as the historical Buddha, but as the Buddha in all things. Thus, things, ordinary things, including ourselves and our neighbors and the trees that are out neighbors, are not primarily to be seen as empty, though they are; not primarily to be seen as phenomenal, though they are; not primarily to be seen as illusions, though in one sense they are; not primarily to be seen as evil even though they may be in part. It is only in things, "conventional" existence, that the Dharma exists at all. It is in transient, changing things that the Buddha lives. This whole world, therefore, is to be treated with insight and compassion and respect.

It is something of an irony that a sutra that affirms a cosmic Shakyamuni Buddha, one who is in every world and every time, does so, not to reject the historical Shakyamuni or the temporal world, but precisely to affirm their

supreme importance, as Nichiren saw so clearly.[6] And their importance is nothing more or less than that this world is where we, having been taught by the historical Buddha, are called to embody the life of the Buddha in our own actions and lives. This is why a part of the everyday liturgy of Rissho Kosei-kai is the so-called *dōjō-kan (Contemplating the Place of the Way):*

> You should understand that this place is the place of the Way. This is where the Buddhas attain supreme awakening. This is where the Buddhas turn the dharma-wheel. This is where the Buddhas reach complete nirvana.[7]

It is relevant in this connection to notice that there is not much use of the notion of emptiness in the *Lotus Sutra*. Of course all things are empty of independent existence. But it is because they are empty that there is space, so to speak, for the development of their potential to be a buddha. If things were substantial, they could not truly grow or change. But because they are without substantiality, they can be influenced by and have influence on others. Undue emphasis on emptiness is rejected because it can easily become a kind of nihilism in which nothing matters, while in the *Lotus Sutra* everything matters. The Buddha works to save all beings. Even poor Never Disrespectful Bodhisattva, going around telling everyone that they are to become buddhas, though initially not very successful, eventually "*transformed a multitude of tens of millions of billions, enabling them to live in the state of supreme awakening.*"(339) And this is to say nothing of the account that he later became the Buddha Shakyamuni!

Hoza[8]

So, from the perspective of the *Lotus Sutra*, full Buddhist practice is necessarily action oriented and social. Everything else – the chanting, the ceremonies, the preaching, the meditation, the institutions – everything else is instrumental to saving others and to creating a kind of peaceful and beautiful world in which all are buddhas.

Of course followers of the *Lotus Sutra* believe that they should practice the bodhisattva way all the time. Always being kind and helpful to others should become a habit. But the practice of *hoza* is a special, and especially

intentional, application of the ideal of the bodhisattva in religious practice. In *hoza*, Rissho Kosei-kai members and guests sit in relatively small circles in order to help one another with very ordinary but very important issues and problems of everyday life, often of an interpersonal nature such as one's relationship with one's mother-in-law, or with one's boss, or with one's spouse. Whatever the issue brought to the *hoza*, people in the group, as they are able, become bodhisattvas for each other, with genuine caring and practical help.

Bodhisattva as Becoming a Buddha

Sometimes "bodhisattva" is understood to be a kind of position or rank, the rank just below buddha. And very often in the *Lotus Sutra* and elsewhere, a bodhisattva is an attendant of a buddha. These ideas can be useful, but it is more important, I think, to see that being a bodhisattva is much more a kind of activity, a way of being and acting, than it is an achieved status. Just as a teacher is not really a teacher unless he or she is teaching and someone is actually taught, a bodhisattva is not really a bodhisattva unless he or she is actually practicing the bodhisattva way. Being a bodhisattva, in other words, involves a reciprocal relationship; it is a relational activity, something done only with others.

When Shariputra is assured by the Buddha that in a distant time he is to become buddha with his own buddha-land and era, Shariputra realizes for the first time that he is not merely a shravaka but also a bodhisattva (p 101-10). Here, "bodhisattva" is not a rank, but a way of being and living indicating that one is on the way to becoming a buddha. Thus the *Lotus Sutra* often uses the term "buddha way" as an equivalent alternative to "bodhisattva way."

> What you are practicing
> [the Buddha says to his disciple Kāśyapa]
> Is the bodhisattva way.
> As you gradually practice and learn,
> Every one of you should become a buddha. (168)

This is entirely consistent with the earliest uses of "bodhisattva," where it

meant Shakyamuni Buddha before he became a buddha. But in the *Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha says that he has lived in this world for innumerable countless eons, from the beginning practicing the bodhisattva way (193).

It is absolutely central to the *Lotus Sutra* that Shakyamuni Buddha is, first of all, a bodhisattva, one who has been doing bodhisattva practice, helping and leading others for innumerable eons. Whenever the enormously long life of the Buddha is described in the *Sutra*, it is not meditation that he has been doing, at least not primarily, but teaching and leading others, thus transforming them into bodhisattvas, followers of the bodhisattva way.

Never Disrespectful Bodhisattva

But practice of the bodhisattva way certainly is not limited to buddhas, or even to bodhisattvas in the conventional sense. Six of the last chapters of the *Lotus Sutra*, generally believed to have been added last, as a kind of appendix, in the compilation of the *Lotus Sutra*, are fairly self-contained accounts of individual bodhisattvas, including Guanyin. In a sense, these bodhisattvas, though not exactly models for us, are understood to be suggestive of what we can be as bodhisattvas ourselves.

Among them is one not well known outside of the *Lotus Sutra*, a monk named "Never Disrespectful."[9] Why was he named Never Disrespectful? That monk bowed humbly before everybody he met, whether monk, nun, layman or laywoman, and praised them saying, "I deeply respect you. I would never dare to be disrespectful or arrogant toward you. Why? Because all of you are practicing the bodhisattva way and surely will become buddhas"(338).

Here, then, everyone is, to some degree, practicing the bodhisattva way. Thus *shravakas* are also bodhisattvas. Most, of course, don't know they are bodhisattvas, but they are nonetheless.

And, of course, most importantly, you and I are bodhisattvas. No matter how trivial our understanding or merit, no matter how trivial our practice, we are, to some extent, perhaps tiny, already bodhisattvas. And we are called to grow in our practice of the bodhisattva way by leading others to realize that potential in themselves.

The Buddha Way

Thus the bodhisattva way is the Buddha way in at least two senses: it is both the way in which one becomes a buddha and it is the practice of the buddhas. These two senses, however, are two in appearance only. That is, the Buddha is always at work, in every time and place, seeking to fulfill his "original" or "primordial" vow to save all living beings. But how he is at work in the world is not through supernatural intervention, but rather by being embodied in the concrete actions of bodhisattvas.

Being respectful to others, not merely in the rather superficial way of Never Disrespectful Bodhisattva but in ways that are more effective, involves genuine listening to others and attending to both their sorrows and their opportunities, helping them in whatever ways are appropriate to develop their Buddha-nature, but equally importantly, learning from them, being open to their being a bodhisattva for us.

In Chapter Twenty-five of the *Lotus Sutra*, Guanyin Bodhisattva is said to be able to take on many forms according to what is needed to help others. For example, if someone needs someone in the body of a buddha in order to be saved, Guanyin appears to that person in the body of a buddha and teaches. Likewise, Guanyin may appear as a king or general of heaven, as the Indian gods Indra or Ishvara, as a rich old man or wife of a rich old man, ordinary citizen, government official, priest, monk, nun, layman or laywoman, boy or girl, or heavenly being of any kind.

This means not only that we have to adjust our approach to those we want to help, but, just as importantly, that anyone can be a bodhisattva for us – if we have the eyes to see. If we can, even for a moment, put on the eyes of a buddha, we will see buddhas everywhere, we will see that the world is full of bodhisattvas, beings from whom we can learn, who can help us in countless ways. Thus, we can understand the bodhisattva way as both helping others and being open to being helped by others.

The Buddha does many things in the *Lotus Sutra*, but perhaps most important among them is his ability to see the buddha in others. Thus, the Buddha way is not only a matter of being a bodhisattva for others: it is to recognize the bodhisattva in everyone we encounter.

Endnotes

[1] Rissho Kosei-kai is among the new Japanese Buddhist organizations founded in the 20th century based on the *Lotus Sutra* and Tendai and Nichiren interpretations of it.

[2] The *Lotus Sutra* has been central to east Asian Buddhism from the very beginning of the reception of Buddhist teachings in China, Korea, and Japan. It is a tradition whose historical and contemporary importance is so great that to claim to have an understanding of Buddhism without taking it into account is to make extremely light of the empirical realities of Buddhism, of what Buddhism actually is. The *Lotus Sutra* perspective is only a perspective, but it is an extremely important, even essential, one for understanding Buddhism as a whole.

[3] Though usually called "*The Lotus Sutra*" in English, this text never calls itself that, nor is that term used in Chinese or Japanese to refer to the Sutra. The full name, in the most widely used Chinese version, word for word, is "*Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*," *Miao-fa-lian-hua jing*, pronounced in Japanese *Myō-hō-ren-ge Kyō*. The shortened version most often used in the text is *Fa-hua jing, Hō-ke Kyō* in Japanese. In English this is "*Dharma Flower Sutra*."

[4] References to the *Lotus Sutra* are taken from my own translation: *The Lotus Sutra: a Contemporary Translation of a Buddhist Classic* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008). Specific page references are indicated in brackets in the text.

[5] *Buddhism for Today: A Modern Interpretation of the Lotus Sutra*. (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Company, 1976) p. 330.

[6] See "The Selection of the Time" in *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* Vol. 3 (Nichiren Shoshu International Center, 1985) 79ff. or in *Selected Writings of Nichiren,* Philip B. Yampolsky ed. (Columbia U.P., 1990) pp. 181ff.

[7] *Kyoden: Sutra Readings* (in Japanese and English) Tokyo: International Buddhist Congregation, 2009.

[8] The term "hoza" is composed of two Chinese characters literally meaning "dharma sitting."

[9] The name of this bodhisattva is a curious matter. In the Sanskrit versions we have now he is called Sadāparibhūta, which means "always held in contempt" or perhaps "always despised." But in the Chinese translation he is called Ch'ang Pu-ch'ing, meaning "never treated lightly." By itself this name could be taken to mean "never despising," which is why his name is sometimes translated into English as "Never Despise." But few people despise one another, and the clear intention of the chapter itself is to teach that we should never disrespect others, never put them down or make light of them.

The Way of Yoga

Casey Clifford Rock

In the Spring of 2002, I was coming to the end of six years of part-time study leading to a Master's of Divinity. One of my favourite professors, the esteemed Canadian theologian Margaret O'Gara, strongly encouraged me to apply for the vacant Chaplaincy position at St. Michael's College, to work with an undergraduate cohort numbering about 5000. Flustered and not wanting to denigrate choices made by my classmates to work within the institutional setting, I answered that I felt more called to work with the un-churched. "Casey," she said, "they are most certainly the un-churched." We laughed. I knew what she meant. Unlike my experience a generation earlier, these students appeared to have only a nominal relationship to their Catholicism. There was an enthusiastic contingent that planned liturgies, worked on social outreach and hosted lectures – but that had been also true thirty years earlier. However in 1972, we undergraduates, in our non-participation, were quite aware of having *left something*, i.e. the pre-Vatican II church. My sense in 2002 was that very few students feared telling their parents that one of their new-found freedoms was not attending Mass. Both they, and their parents, had been not attending church for years.

So there I found myself – a Roman Catholic woman with a degree in ministry who had no interest in working for the church: in parishes, in schools, in hospital or prison. That I had gone back to school for a theological degree was a mystery in itself. On a whim (one of the names of the Holy Spirit) I took a course. Then I took another one. After the fifth I knew I was hooked and applied for the degree program. But why choose ministry over a Master's of Theological Studies, or Religious Studies or some other specialty devoted to research if I didn't want to go into "the field"? Did I think the studies themselves might convert me, that eventually I myself would be evangelized into becoming an evangelist? Might I be exposed to some person or some situation that might inflame, or at least mime, a "call"? I still am not sure. I just went on. (I *do* know that part of

me wanted to be as knowledgeable as the "boys"; that's been true since my days on the sandlot.) What my professors were not aware of was the fact that I was at the same time seriously studying yoga. My yoga teacher training and the M.Div. were completed within one month of each other.

The history of my relationship to yoga started with the not uncommon dabbling of the 1970s but became more focused in the early 90s after I left the "workforce" of my own volition. For twelve years I was a librarian and researcher for the CBC. "I'm going to go find myself," I said to my colleagues. This was said, and received, ironically. Considering what transpired afterward, it is hard to imagine that I thought I was being facetious. But I did. While at home, with children at school and time on my hands, needing to stay in shape and loathing aerobics, (on another whim!) I wandered in to the nearest, literally the nearest, yoga studio. God bless the woman who was my first true yoga teacher. I had the chance many years later to tell her of her impact on me in those early classes. She seemed bewildered but pleased. It was a good reminder to those of us who speak publicly that you never know the impact your words may have. If you are authentic, if you are doing what you are meant to do with love and humility, your word is scripture and your presence ministry.

The first thing I found in that space was Space. I am not being facetious this time. We removed our shoes at the door (holy ground) found a spot on the floor, lay down and breathed. Then we began to move in smooth, flowing, thoughtful ways (not the strenuous competitive "boot camp" yoga so often pedaled now). We were encouraged to listen to the responses this movement unleashed in our minds and our bodies, for example, to become witnesses to resistance or relief. At the end we would lie down again, and breathe. "Give away the weight of your body to the floor," she said. "Let go. You will be held. When thoughts float in let them float away again." Occasionally mysterious tears leaked from the corner of my eyes. I became a regular. As time went on and I attended other classes and listened to other teachers, I noticed I was engaged in reflecting on the pedagogy, noting what worked, what didn't and how I might do it differently. I began teacher training.

Yoga comes from the Sanskrit word "jug", loosely translated as "union," related linguistically to the root word for "yoke." What is being

brought together, or bridged, is humanity's separation from its true home in the divine. In the classic formulations set out in sutras by the ancient sage Patanjali, yoga has eight stages, or "limbs" on the path to Union or Liberation. What we in the West commonly know at the physical practice of yoga (those pretzel postures one sees on the covers of magazines or lead by impossibly svelte teachers on cable TV) is properly termed *asana*. *Asana* practice can be highly detailed, encompassing some say as many as 900 prescribed movements. But it is only one of the limbs. The other seven involve external disciplines (*yamas*), internal disciplines (*niyamas*), breath control, (*pranayama*), withdrawal of the senses (*pratyahara*), concentration (*dharana)*, absorption, (*dhyana*) before reaching, finally, union (*samadhi*). When I looked around at my fellow yogis and yoginis at graduation (the great majority a decade or more younger than I), I wondered how audacious it was that we were purporting to now be teachers, not just of *asana*, but of the whole path, the Way of Yoga, to a destination: Divine. You won't find that much talked about at your Thursday night class at the YMCA.

Like the Ganges, the sacred river of India, the spiritual journey has confluences and bifurcates. Journeying to India twice, in 1993 and in 2007, I was able to immerse myself in the culture wherein yogic practices arose, but neither time was I involved directly in learning more of its philosophy or intensifying the body work that we have come to call "yoga." I anticipated and enjoyed my sojourns, very much, but both times I was focused, under the inspiring leadership of Darrol Bryant, on learning of the various religious traditions. I resided at or visited several ashrams: observing Krishna worship at Jaisinghera in Vrindban, the Tibetan Buddhist settlement at Byllakuppe, at Taralabalu Jagadguru Brihanmath in Sirigere and at the Christian-founded Anjali Ashram at Mysore. There I came to better understand the complexity and diversity of the many paths. Those visits supplied much-needed information, but the crux of the experience, on both trips, was the exposure to the seamlessness of religious experience in the day-to-day life of the people. In dress and adornment, daily ritual, at weddings and funerals, on rickshaw rides, from train windows, in the enormous hospitality shown to us in private homes, I was constantly informed of the Holy as is it lived out – tangible, overt and

unselfconscious. Had I been sequestered in an intensive yoga centre along with other North Americans in Mysore or Chennai, I might have acquired more yoga proficiency, become a true "yogini," learned more of Sanskrit, chants, subtle anatomy, and sutra, but I am not sure I would have received the benefits dialogue bestows: a mirror to hold up to one's own experience. As Charles Taylor so aptly states, " Our attachment to our own faith cannot come from a universal survey of all others from which we conclude that this is the right one. It can only come from our sense of its inner spiritual power, chastened by the challenges which we will have had to meet from other faiths."[1]

The "inner spiritual power" of my own faith in conversation with yoga was further stimulated by my discovery of, and mentorship by, Thomas Ryan, a Paulist priest whose own journey through yoga and to India resonated strongly with my own. In the preface to his *Prayer of Heart and Body*, I was astounded to discover that his preparation as a yoga teacher took place at the same site in Massachusetts that had trained my heaven-sent first teacher. (It would eventually become the site of my certification as well.) The renowned and still popular centre, Kripalu, was a former Jesuit seminary. Ryan's reflection on that irony and his insights about the appeal of Eastern religion to the West hit solidly home: "Christianity, by contrast (to Kripalu's emphasis on the body's innate wisdom) is in the awkward position of trying to affirm the goodness of creation without ever having delighted in human bodiliness. One would think that between our two central doctrines of the Incarnation and the Resurrection…we could do better at helping people to embrace and relate positively to their enspirited flesh."[2]

Over the course of several years, I attended many retreats offered by Tom Ryan at which he expanded and refined his understanding of what the yogic tradition had to offer the Christian one. In addition to emphasizing the centrality of the path of meditation, Ryan retreats incorporated teaching on fasting, chant, and *seva* (or labour, as in the monastic tradition). I was also privileged to attend summer sessions involving other yoga teachers and "helping professionals" who were interested in exploring the intersection of yoga with their lives as Christians. Out of these workshops came Ryan's *Reclaiming the Body in Christian Spirituality*

to which I contributed an article. It should also be mentioned that Tom's "other hat" as Ecumenical Director for the Paulists has proven to be a tremendous benefit to those who wish to learn about the encounter of Christianity with world religions, especially Buddhism and Hinduism. He also ably addresses the differences within various Christian denominations that might have particular concerns with orthodoxy as it bumps up against the world of yoga.

But returning once again to the image of the Himalayas where Mother Ganga begins, there is an important underground stream in my story. In my fortieth year (that all-important wilderness number), I started listening to cassette tapes called Twelve Talks for Meditators, by the Benedictine monk Dom John Main. The tapes were given to me out of the blue by a colleague of my husband's, an accountant in the film business, and a bitterly lapsed Quebecoise. She says," I just want to be chopping the carrots when I'm chopping the carrots." She likes the tapes but finds them "too Jeezely" (an expression I find myself using when uncomfortably confronted by Christian fundamentalism).

John Main is an example of the truth of the Buddhist proverb "when the student is ready, the teacher will appear." Though not yet re-confirmed in the faith I had left for twenty years, not at all thinking of theological study, before practicing yoga, John Main's voice touched my heart. He addresses the stress and the compartmentalization of modern life – of my life – how the activities of the day run in parallel lines, lacking a centre or a "ground." He suggests that we have lost contact with something deep and important in the mad rush to achieve and to be productive. Even if, in our confusion, we are inclined to grope for answers through a spiritual practice, our former ways of prayer often no longer satisfy. We find ourselves addressing a dimly lit God remote from experience. Some of us carry wounds and baggage from a meaningless, unhappy or repressive religious upbringing, and carry it negatively to the extent that we cannot connect with "religion" at all. The Jesus that Main speaks of is one who taught the putting away of anxious thoughts, who referred to a peace "that passeth all understanding." Main believed that meditation (in his method, the silent repetition of a mantra) was the way a modern person could develop absolute trust. Without words, without dogma, doctrine, or creed,

the simplicity and fidelity of sitting in silence brings us "home" to our true selves, to an inner knowing. It is there that we come to recognize the One who not only created us, but who sustains us, in Beauty, Truth and Love – from moment to moment.

I began to meditate. I did not initially do the twice daily thirty minutes as recommended. But I began, and I returned often enough that the practice slowly built. I experienced beginner's luck. Then I could not sit still. Sometimes there was enormous calm. There was distraction and despair. There were teenagers. There was distaste. There were tears. But slowly and steadily the hallmarks of practice began to emerge. A peaceful spirit began to emerge that was noticed by others but very rarely by me. (If you could only see inside my crazy brain, I felt like responding!) By the time I completed my theological and yoga studies, the regular practice took hold and has, for me, become that which Jesus spoke of to Mary and Martha, "the one thing necessary." That was the journey that underpinned the two key principles that have informed my life and teaching in yoga. First, that meditation, in its essence and from its origins, was the raison d'être of yoga.[3] And two, that the Christian tradition has, as Tom Ryan says, a "treasure chest" of contemplative, silent prayer, dating back centuries. What we can learn from yoga that might assist us in laying out those jewels is nothing but a blessing. I am so convinced of the relationship between the two practices that I really prefer, wherever possible, to include silence in my classes. Currently, seventy-five per cent of them end with twenty minutes of seated meditation.

So for me, "the way of yoga" has not been about a detailed inquiry into the "science" yoga: of *chakras* (energy centres) and *mudras* (seals) or *pranayama* (breath practices) for example. I don't attend fairs or conferences, certainly nothing having to do with the "business" of yoga. I can't imagine starting a clothing line. I am very wary of the celebrity yoga culture and the unending supply of media about technique. (We Westerners must get right and in the shortest time possible!) I welcome any information and exposure that comes my way, of course. But I am old enough now to trust experience. Practice the postures and you will learn what *asana* teaches. I repeat to myself and to my students the steps of bodily awareness taught at Kripalu. When you enter a pose, BREATHE, RELAX, FEEL, WATCH,

ALLOW. Such attention both strengthens and heals us, but it also leads gracefully to the doorway of meditation. (However, John Main said there were only two essentials for meditation: 1) begin 2) return.)

The testimonials about yoga from the Western medical community that have grown exponentially over the past few years are definitely to be welcomed. The Mindfulness Stress Reduction programs of Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts, and the lifestyle programs of Dean Ornish to curb coronary heart disease have brought body awareness and meditation to populations that might never have considered these remedies on their own. General practitioners routinely recommend yoga, though the "hard numbers" they value so highly are in fact difficult to come by. Neuroscientists are fascinated by the brain waves of contemplatives and theorize about the relationship to longevity. The mind/body split so pervasive in our North American medical culture and our religious tradition has indeed been "chastened" by the influence of yoga. Despite our penchant for capitalistic responses, it is overall a marvelous thing that what was esoteric fifty years ago has been part of the mainstream acceptance of holistic health.

The comedian Ellen DeGeneres once remarked in a stand-up routine that she knew why yoga was so popular - people are so stressed these days that they are willing to pay to have a quiet place to lie down. That contains a lot of truth, as real wit does. I have two favourite bible stories about peace and quiet. The first is that of Samuel,[4] how he lies down in the temple and thinks his teacher Eli is calling him. Three times he gets up and runs to the other room, declaring: "Here I am." Eli hasn't called him. We are told, "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him." Eventually Eli realizes that the Lord is calling the boy: "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" The other is the story of Elijah, a prophet exhausted by and afraid of the antics of the decadent world around him. He'd like to die. In a last ditch attempt for clarity, he goes up Mount Horeb. Despite the pyrotechnics that are unleashed before him (wind, earthquake and fire), it is only when he becomes aware of sheer silence that the voice comes to him saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"[5]

I have found my un-churched. They may be people who have no

knowledge of or little care for Samuel or Elijah. They might be more engaged by the Buddha or by Gaia or even by Ellen DeGeneres. I have found and made space for people to come in and lie down. In their own way and in their own time, they may come to know a still, small voice calling them home.

Endnotes

[1] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p.680.

[2] Thomas Ryan, *Prayer of Heart and Body* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1995), p.7.

[3] "Few are aware that…Pantajali's system predates the development of most hatha yoga by many centuries and offers a radically different program, primarily addressing the meditative approach to insight and liberation." Chip Hartranft, trans. *The Yoga Sutra of Pantanjali* (Boston: Shambala, 2003), p.115.

[4] 1 Samuel 3: 1-9

[5] 1 Kings 19:11-12

The Sufi Way

W. Rory Dickson

Introduction

Sufism can be a remarkably difficult phenomenon to make sense of. Jay Kinney, in his introduction to *Gnosis* magazine's issue on Sufism (1994), describes the "Sufi Conundrum." Kinney recalls first encountering "Sufi dancing" in the early 1970s among San Francisco's counter cultural set. Years later he read some of Idries Shah's popular works on the subject. In *The Sufis* (1964), Shah suggests that the Sufism is "an ancient spiritual freemasonry whose origins have never been traced or dated."[1] Kinney would later meet traditional Sufis from the Middle East who seemed "*very* Islamic" in comparison to the Sufi dancers of the Bay area.[2] He describes being beset by questions on the nature of Sufism: Was Sufism a part of Islam or beyond any religion? Was it the purview of hippies or Islamic preachers? "What, in short, was going on?" he asks.[3]

The best answer just might be 'all of the above.' Sufism is an inherently diverse, dynamic tradition that has taken on a variety of forms throughout history. In one sense, Sufism is the esoteric or mystical aspect of Islam, based on the Qur'an and spirituality of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632). Much of Sufi terminology is drawn from the Qur'an, and all major Sufi orders trace their lineage to the Prophet Muhammad, usually through his cousin and son-in-law 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661). Sufism was integral to the development of Islamic civilization, especially between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries, when Sufis and Sufi orders were pillars of Muslim political, religious, and social life.[4] Sufis were responsible for some of the best poetry, music, and philosophy of the classical Islamic tradition. And yet Sufis frequently suggest that their path existed long before the seventh century. Many regard it as the essence of all genuine religion, regardless of form.[5] Though exceptional, there have been Jewish, Christian, and Hindu Sufis.[6] We can perhaps begin to make sense of Sufism by considering the term itself. "Sufism" is the English correlate of the Arabic *tasawwuf*. Unlike

the English word, which, with the suffix "ism," indicates an ideology or doctrine, *tasawwuf* is a verbal noun that refers to a process, the process of becoming a Sufi.[7] At its most basic then, Sufism is a process or path of transformation.

The Arabic word for "path," "road," or "way" is *tariqah.* Sufis use the word *tariqah* in reference to the spiritual path as such, and in reference to the Sufi orders that emerged over time, such as the Mevlevi, Naqshbandi, or Qadiri orders, to name just a few. Each Sufi order, or *tariqah*, developed a unique method for diving below the self's surface to encounter its vast and hidden depths. Some orders utilize music, others the chanting of God's names, while others advocate periodic retreats. As such, we can refer not only to the Sufi way but also to the ways of Sufism. This is appropriate culturally as well in that Sufism is a tradition that has flourished in a wide variety of cultural climates. There are uniquely African, Middle Eastern, European, Persian, and South Asian forms of Sufism. Following the famous Sufi dictum that "water takes on the color of its container,"[8] Sufis have shaped their practice along the contours of local contexts. Historically, Sufis are found in all walks of life: Sufis have been staunchly orthodox theologians and wild wandering ascetics who flout social conventions. They have been frontier warriors and famous court musicians and poets. Contemporary Sufi teachers include university professors, window cleaners, psychologists and military generals. In most cases, Sufis have followed the Prophet Muhammad's example of living fully in the world while being inwardly with God. Sufism is a contemplative tradition marked by an absence of monasticism or sustained traditions of celibacy. Most Sufis have had families and careers, seeking to integrate spirituality with everyday life.

There is a Sufi tradition that "there are as many paths to God as there are human souls."[9] Each person's way back to the source of life is unique to that person. No two people travel the same road, just as no two begin in precisely the same place. Though each person is unique and each travels a profoundly individual path, the deep structure of the self is universal, and hence each individual must traverse the same basic terrain. Although the paths are many, the Way is one.[10] Over the centuries Sufis have developed a remarkably sophisticated psychological map of the varied landscapes of

the inner world, relaying back reports of the ground to be covered on the journey. According to Sufi theory, the self, or *nafs*, has seven levels, each of which must be encountered and transcended along the way. Sufi writers frequently divide the spiritual path into three broad stages: *shariʿah* (law), *tariqah* (path), and *haqiqah* (reality). In what follows I will discuss the Sufi journey through the valleys and vistas of the human self in terms of these three stages of the path.

Shariʿah: The Law

Shariʿah means literally "a path to a well." It is a road that takes one to a water source. Although commonly translated as "Islamic law," *shariʿah* refers to the ideal Divine law, the primordial justice and balance revealed in all the world's scriptures, guidelines that humans interpret and live imperfectly.[11] The *Qurʾan* proclaims, "To each of you we prescribed a law [*shirʿa*] and a way" (5:48). Islamic jurisprudence, *fiqh*, represents the efforts of Muslim jurists to approximate this ideal in history. Islamic law is thus the imperfect, human attempt to apply God's law in particular times and places. Acknowledging this, Muslims have traditionally accepted the existence of different schools of Islamic jurisprudence, allowing for a range of legal opinions on a given issue.[12]

Unfortunately, the word *shariʿah* has predominantly negative connotations in the West. Conservative Americans protesting at sites of proposed mosques around the country, whether in Manhattan or Murfreesboro, Tennessee, are frequently pictured with placards saying "no" to *shariʿah*. Similarly, Muslim protestors in Pakistan and other parts of the Muslim world carry signs saying "yes" to *shariʿah*. In both cases, many have only a vague notion of what the *shariʿah* might be. In such contexts *shariʿah* is often reduced to the more sensational criminal punishments prescribed by traditional Islamic jurisprudence: amputating the hand of a thief, or stoning an adulterer. These punishments, collectively known as the *hudud* or "limits," were certainly a part of the historic legal tradition of Muslim societies, though they were rarely carried out. These traditional punishments make up only a small part of the broader Islamic legal tradition, which consists of both laws governing social affairs, *muʿamalat*, and those regarding matters of worship, *ʿibadat*.[13]

Sufis tend to interpret the *shariʿah* broadly, as consisting of principles of individual and social balance. Shaykh Ahmed Tijani Ben Omar, a West African leader of the Tijani order, now based in Chicago, is a scholar of Islamic law and accomplished reciter of the Qur'an. He described *shariʿah* to me in the following manner:

> Everything that is in harmony with human life is shariʿah. Everything that causes disharmony in life is against shariʿah. You don't have to be a Muslim to exercise that aspect of the shariʿah. There are human beings who in fact, without declaring themselves Muslims, have been living almost the full and complete principles of the shariʿah, without defining themselves. Such people when you see them, they are full of compassion for all humanity.[14]

Shaykh Tijani suggests that, at base, the *shariʿah* is the principle of harmony in human life. It is a principle that is first established within the self, from which it can radiate outward to larger circles of influence.

Harmonizing the self is rarely an easy task. According to Sufi theory, one first encounters the self as a commander, not a servant. In the Qur'an, the prophet Joseph proclaims, "Surely the human self commands evil, except for those on whom my Lord bestows mercy" (12:53). Drawing from this verse, Sufis have titled the first level of the self the *nafs al-ammara*, the commanding self. The commanding self has complete control over the human being. The commanding self is also referred to as the tyrannical self, as living under its rule is analogous to suffering a petty tyrant. To reverse the condition of dominance by the commanding self is the first task on the Sufi path, and it is where *shariʿah* comes in.

Refik Algan, a contemporary Turkish Sufi teacher, describes *shariʿah* as that part of religion that deals with "the structural necessities of the human being," like wearing a coat in the winter, or avoiding substances that harm the body.[15] Living according to *shariʿah* means living a life marked by sanity, balance, fairness, conscientiousness, and courtesy: all things that the commanding self disregards in its efforts to get what it wants. Robert Frager, founder of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology and *shaykh* (teacher) within the Halveti-Jerrahi Sufi order, describes the tyrannical self

as one's inner Pharaoh, who can only be defeated by one's inner Moses.[16] Just as Moses freed the children of Israel from slavery under the Pharaoh, so we must discover our own spirit of guidance, and with God's assistance, free ourselves from the commanding self's enslavement. Just as Moses was given the Ten Commandments, so we must subject the self to the basic laws of fairness and equity (*shari'ah*). We must restrain the excesses of the self within guidelines of balance and compassion.

In attempting to hold the self to account, we begin to develop greater self-awareness, and Sufis mark this awareness as the shift to the second of the seven levels of the self, the *nafs al-lawwama*, the reproachful or blaming self. Once we are aware of the mechanical way in which we obey the dictates of the commanding self, we begin to reproach ourselves. We feel imprisoned by our pointless habits and destructive addictions. The difficulty at this stage is that the aspirant is still very much under the command of the lower self. Though there is an awareness of the difficulties imposed by this condition, the battle at this stage is not yet won. This second stage of the self is marked by a cycle of inspiration to change, followed by failure and continued struggle.[17]

Tariqah: The Path

Sufi teachers frequently liken the *shari'ah* to the circumference of a circle, drawing the boundaries within which one makes the spiritual journey. [18] In this sense it is also a container, or shell, protecting the esoteric truth contained within. The *tariqah* then is the path from the circumference of the circle (*shari'ah*) to the truth at its center (*haqiqah*). The *tariqah* is the means by which one moves from the outward to the inward, from the relative to the Absolute. Sufis have developed a wide range of practices with which to make this move, including spiritual conversation with a Sufi teacher, working with dreams, silent meditation, listening to music, and invoking or chanting God's names, a practice known in Arabic as *dhikrullah* - literally, the "remembrance of God."[19]

The Qur'an says, "Call upon Allah or call upon the Merciful. By whatever name you call, His are the most Beautiful Names" (17:110). The Islamic tradition holds that God has 99 Beautiful Names. These names

represent the qualities of God manifest throughout the universe and within ourselves. God's names are divided into two categories, the *jamal* and *jalal*. The *jamal* are God's qualities of mercy, beauty, love, and immanence, while the *jalal* are those of rigor, majesty, power, and transcendence. These have also been described as the feminine and masculine qualities of God.[20] A Sufi teacher might give a student a particular name of God to invoke, based on the peculiar qualities of the student's self that require transformation. A student prone to arrogance for example, may be given the practice of invoking one of God's names of power or rigor. It is generally thought that God's names of mercy and love are safer for beginners, as invoking God's more powerful or even wrathful names may lead to psychological difficulty if the student is not sufficiently advanced. This is also why a guide is thought to be necessary: invoking the wrong name or using a particular name too much may lead to psychological imbalance.[21] As such, Sufis emphasize the importance of learning how to be a student, of "learning how to learn." Hazrat Inayat Khan (d. 1927), the first Sufi teacher to land on American shores in 1910, said on this topic:

> The difficulty in the spiritual path is always what comes from ourselves. Man does not like to be a pupil, he likes to be a teacher. If man only knew that the greatness and perfection of the great ones, who have come from time to time to this world, was in their pupilship, and not in teaching![22]

Entrance into the *tariqah,* with its methods of spiritual transformation, only becomes possible when the struggle against the self has achieved some victories, and one's intention towards the spiritual becomes more consistent. It is at this point that the aspirant reaches the third level of self known as the *nafs al-mulhama*, the balanced or inspired self. Kabir Helminski, an American Sufi teacher of the Mevlevi order, suggests that this third level of the self, the stage of balance, is the goal of most religion and psychology.[23] The *nafs al-mulhama* is marked by a loss of fascination with the desires that occupied one at the previous two levels of selfhood. A genuine renunciation is possible at this stage, as old habits begin to fall away, and the attractions of worldly status and power begin to lose their appeal. Correspondingly, as the draw of the outer world falls away, the pull

of the inner world increases: one is ever more led by the dictates of the heart. Prayer and meditation bear spiritual fruit, and the realities spoken of by religion can be tasted for oneself, not simply taken on faith. Helminski notes that although this is only the third stage of Sufi psychology, it is in itself a major accomplishment that can take years of effort to achieve.[24]

There remain dangers however, as one is not yet free of the lower self, despite gaining an advantage. At this stage of the *nafis al-mulhama*, the practitioner is especially prone to the deception of believing she has already reached human perfection and that one need not travel any further. If the experiences that result from the spiritual practices engaged in at this stage are interpreted in an ego-oriented fashion, one may consider oneself a great spiritual figure. Sufi teachers suggests that it is here, when the ship of spiritual development runs aground on the rocks of ego, that we find a plethora of spiritual charlatans and self-appointed gurus.[25] If the aspirant can maintain the necessary humility to recognize what progress has been made and what remains to be done, the victories gained previously can be profoundly consolidated with the self's fourth stage, the *nafs al-mutma'inna*, the tranquil, or serene self. The Qur'an says about this self, "O self at peace. Return to your Lord" (89:27-28). This is the stage wherein the previous spiritual gains become genuinely stabilized. It is only at this stage that the danger of the ego hijacking the entire spiritual process subsides, and one is positioned to return to one's Lord and encounter the nature of reality itself.

Haqiqah: Reality

The Arabic word for reality is *haqiqah*. Reality is the goal of the Sufi path. A favored name of God for Sufis is *al-Haqq*, meaning "the Real." According to Sufi metaphysics, God is in fact the only reality, the only truly existent.[26] At the stage of reality, then, the illusion of a separate self dissolves. One dies to the illusion of separation, fulfilling the Prophet's command to "die before you die." An eleventh century Sufi, Abdullah Ansari (d. 1088), summarized the path concisely when he said, "Know that when you learn to lose yourself, you will reach the Beloved. There is no other secret to be learnt, and more than that is not known to me."[27] The final stages of the Sufi journey through the self, then, involve its dissolution or death.

The fifth level of the self is the fulfilled self, the *nafs al-radiyya*. It is the point where the move towards God becomes irreversible. The fulfilled self is marked by surrender and equanimity. Here the wayfarer accepts whatever befalls him, whether ease or hardship: gain and loss become equal, as one is completely satisfied with whatever God chooses to bestow. Some suggest that it is at this stage that the power of healing may manifest. This is also described as the stage of *fana'*: the annihilation of the self in God. Following the self of fulfillment, one enters into the self of complete submission to God, the *nafs al-mardiyya*, where one is not only satisfied with God, but God becomes satisfied with one as well. At this stage, the wayfarer descends from the bliss of annihilation in God, returning to the world with an individuality that subsists (*baqa'*) in God. This individuality is no longer ego-centered, but acts as a vehicle through which the qualities of God, including protection, wisdom, and compassion, can manifest in the world. It is the self that lives, "not my will, but Thine" (Luke 22:42). It is at this stage that the Sufi becomes one of what the Qur'an describes as God's "friends."[28]

The final, seventh level of the self is the *nafs al-kamila*, the completed or perfected self. At this level, no trace of the ego, or false self, remains. The human being functions as a perfectly polished mirror, reflecting the totality of God's qualities from the beyond into the here and now. One is in a state of unity, non-duality. Although inwardly one's being is purified of any but God, outwardly one manifests a condition of "exceptional ordinariness," integrating an inward ecstasy and realization of unity with an outward humility, maturity, and simplicity.[29]

Conclusion

Just as the outer universe expands beyond imagination, so the inner universe of the self is discovered to be an "ocean without shore."[30] Before this ocean can be explored, Sufi teachers suggest that one must reign in the tendency towards dispersion amongst the many desires of the lower self. A certain self-mastery must be developed along the guidelines of the *shari'ah*, achieving an equilibrium that allows for further movement towards God. Then, embarking on the *tariqah*, the aspirant engages in techniques of transcendence, allowing for the encounter of ever more

subtle and expansive levels of awareness, until the illusion of an "I" dissolves in the face of reality, *haqiqah*, itself. Summarizing the path, Ibn al-'Arabi observes that "My journey was entirely within myself."[31] According to Sufis, the discovery of God is made within the depths of our own being, reflecting an oft-quoted saying of the Prophet that "He who knows himself knows his Lord."[32]

Endnotes

[1] Idries Shah, *The Sufis* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1964), p. vii.

[2] Jay Kinney, "Introduction: The Sufi Conundrum," *Gnosis: A Journal of the Western Inner Traditions* 30 (1994): p. 10.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] For more on Sufi orders, see J. Spencer Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[5] Rene Guenon (d. 1951), French traditionalist and Sufi practitioner, suggests that the Arabic word for Sufism, *tasawwuf,* "can be applied to any esoteric and initiatic doctrine, regardless of the traditional form to which it belongs." *Insights into Islamic Esoterism and Taoism*, translated by Henry D. Fohr and edited by Samuel D. Fohr (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2003), p. 2.

[6] Carl Ernst briefly discusses the "Jewish Sufism" of Maimonides' grandson, Obadiah ben Abraham (d. 1265) and the "Christian Sufism" of Raymond Lull (d. 1316). Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997), p. 222. In South Asia both the Chishti and (more surprisingly) the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi lineages initiated Hindus.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 231.

[8] This saying is usually attributed to the famous early Sufi master Junayd of Baghdad (d. 910).

[9] Guenon records the Arabic version of this saying as: *at-turuqu ila 'Llahi ka-nufusi bani Adam*, meaning literally "the ways to God are as numerous as the souls of the children of Adam." *Insights into Islamic Esoterism and Taoism*, p. 2.

[10] According to the famous Andalusian mystic and metaphysician Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 1240), "while the paths are many, the Way of Truth is single." Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi, *Journey to the Lord of Power*, translated by Rabia Terri Harris (New York: Inner Traditions International, 1981), p. 26.

[11] Frank Griffel, "Introduction," *Shari'a: Islamic Law in the Contemporary Context*, edited by Abbas Amanat and Frank Griffel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 3.

[12] See "Legal Pluralism," in Wael B. Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (New York:

Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 27.

[13] Griffel, "Introduction," p. 1.

[14] Ahmed Tijani Ben Omar, phone interview by author, December 14, 2010.

[15] Jay Kinney and Richard Smoley, "The Gnosis Interview with Refik Algan," *Gnosis: A Journal of the Western Inner Traditions* 30 (1994): p.37.

[16] Robert Frager, *Heart, Self, and Soul: The Sufi Psychology of Growth, Balance, and Harmony* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 1999), pp. 57-60.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 66.

[18] Guenon, *Insights into Islamic Esoterism and Taoism*, p. 1.

[19] William C. Chittick notes that the Qur'an "encourages few practices as often as it encourages *dhikr Allah*." See his "Introduction" in Tosun Bayrak, *The Name and the Named: The Divine Attributes of God* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2000), p. 11.

[20] See, for example, Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 9.

[21] Khaled Bentounes, head of the Alawi Sufi order, warns: "Do not play around with a dimension that is of another order and which you cannot attain except by crossing the doorway of a path marked by the guide. The teacher proposes a meticulous dosage that goes hand in hand with the capabilities of the disciple." Sheik Khaled Bentounes, *Sufism: The Heart of Islam*, translated by Khaled Elabdi (Prescott, AZ: Hohm Press, 2002), p. 102.

[22] Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Mysticism of Sound and Music* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996), p. 112.

[23] Kabir Helminski, *The Knowing Heart: A Sufi Path of Transformation* (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), p.111.

[24] *Ibid*.

[25] Frager suggests that "One of the important functions of the Sufi lineage is to prevent half-trained dervishes [students] from setting themselves up as teachers." Frager, *Heart, Self, and Soul*, p. 74.

[26] This perspective is sometimes referred to as *wahdat al-wujud*, the "oneness of being." Although he never used the term, Ibn al-'Arabi's works elaborate this ontology of oneness. In his *Kitab al-Alif*, Ibn al-'Arabi writes, "That which is worshipped by every tongue, in all states and at all times, is the One. Every worshipper, of whatever kind, is the One. Thus there is nothing but the One … and there is no existence for other than the One." As quoted by Stephen Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier: The spiritual life and thought of Ibn 'Arabi* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 1999), p. 25.

[27] As quoted by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, *Sufism: The Transformation of the Heart* (Inverness, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, 1995), p. 2.

[28] The Qur'an uses the term *wali*, which has connotations of friendship, protection, and

power. For more on the concept of "friendship" with God (*walaya*), see Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993).

[29] Helminski, *Knowing Heart*, p. 113.

[30] This phrase is taken from Ibn al-'Arabi's *Anqa al-Maghrib* ("The Phoenix of the West"), in which he writes: "I marveled at an Ocean without shore …". Gerald T. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time: Ibn al-'Arabi's Book of the Fabulous Gryphon* (Boston: Brill, 1999), p. 319.

[31] As quoted by Helminski, *Knowing Heart*, p. 113.

[32] In Arabic, this is: *man 'arafa nafsa-hu 'arafa rabba-hu*. For further discussion of this saying and its relation to Sufism, see "Chapter Three: The Self-Knowledge of Man," Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 39-47.

The Way of Confucius

Joseph A. Adler

The man we call Confucius lived from 551 to 479 BCE in eastern China. His actual name was Kong Qiu (Kong being the family name), but he is most often referred to as Kongzi, or "Master Kong." He was the founder of a religio-philosophical tradition that became almost synonymous with Chinese culture. From the 2nd century BCE to the beginning of the 20th century, "Confucianism" (*rujiao*, literally "the teaching of the scholars") was the official ideology of the Chinese imperial government and the reigning philosophy of education. This resulted in Confucian values eventually permeating all levels of Chinese society. Confucius thereby became a cultural icon and a symbol for both the glories and the failures of traditional Chinese culture.

The word "Way" (*dao*) happens to be the most fundamental concept in all three of the major text-based religions that have flourished over the last two millennia in Chinese culture: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Each of them interprets *dao* differently, but their common ground is the belief that for human life to be fulfilled it must follow the Way, however it is defined.

Buddhism originated in India in the fifth century BCE and entered China in the first century CE. The Buddhist Way is the "Middle Path" or the "Eightfold Path" (both "path" and "way" are *dao* in Chinese), which involves wisdom, morality, and mental cultivation. Daoism, at least in its classical form, took shape in several Chinese texts from the third and fourth centuries BCE, including the *Laozi* or *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*. The Daoist *dao* is the Way of nature, which accomplishes all through *wu-wei*, or non-intentional actions; humans should emulate that naturalness in order to live harmoniously.

The Confucian *dao* is similar to the Daoist *dao*, but the point of reference is the social world, not the natural world. The Confucian *dao* is the ideal socio-ethical-political order. Confucius and his followers believed

that this Way had been achieved in the distant past by the benevolent founders of the Zhou dynasty (11th-3rd centuries BCE), but that it was no longer being put into practice by the rulers of their time. By reviving the ways of those ancient sage-kings, Confucius hoped to restore the moral character of the ruling class of China. Virtuous rulers would put in place a benevolent government, ordinary people would respond by emulating their rulers, and the resulting social harmony would allow each individual to fulfill his or her moral and creative potential.

Confucius lived during a time of social and political chaos. The Zhou dynasty had been founded in the mid-11th century BCE, and had flourished for about three hundred years. It began to decline in the 8th century BCE, after the original Zhou capital (Chang'an, today known as Xi'an) was overrun by a northern nomadic group called the Xiongnu. By Confucius' time it had split into several warring kingdoms, each vying for supremacy.

Confucius was an itinerant teacher who regarded himself as merely a transmitter of the Way of the ancient sage-kings, not the creator of a new tradition. But in fact he was an innovator, being largely responsible for injecting ethics into the religion of the Zhou literate elite. Until his time, the religious practices of the aristocracy had centered on ritual sacrifice to ancestral and natural spirits and divination. Confucius redirected attention to the human, social realm of family life, community life, and government – the beginnings of "Confucian humanism." But this humanism was a religious humanism, because it was grounded in the belief in "Heaven" (*tian*), a semi-personalistic but mostly naturalistic absolute reality that engendered "virtue" or "moral power" (*de*) in human beings.

The best source for what Confucius actually taught is a collection of his sayings, brief conversations, and statements about him called the *Analects* or *Lunyu*. Although this text was compiled after his death by his students and several generations of their students, it has traditionally been regarded as an accurate representation of the Master's thought and, to some extent, his practice. "Practice" here means, primarily, selected examples of his comportment in daily life: how he treated other people, how he listened to music, how he ate, how he dressed, etc.

This type of daily activity was included by Confucius in his

understanding of "ritual" (*li*), a term that originally had referred more specifically to sacrificial ritual. Confucius broadened its meaning to include every human activity, which should be conducted, he said, with the same sense of reverence that one should have when sacrificing to gods or ancestors. Ritual so understood, or "ritual propriety," was the uniquely human way of expressing the fact that human beings are fundamentally social beings. Our social relationships are constitutive of who and what we are: we are sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, fathers or mothers, etc. These relationships are primary characteristics of human beings, not secondary. What distinguishes the "noble person" (*junzi*) from the "petty person" (*xiaoren*) is an understanding of these basic facts and a dedication to strive toward perfecting one's social nature. That perfection – probably not achievable but important as a goal nonetheless – was called by Confucius "humaneness" or "humanity" (*ren*), a variant of the word for person or human (also pronounced *ren*). Thus for Confucius, to be authentically human is to be humane; this is the proper goal of human life and what makes it meaningful. Without *ren*, ritual (*li*) – no matter how perfectly performed – is meaningless (*Analects* 3:3). But ritual is necessary in order to achieve *ren* (*Analects* 12:1). So *ren* is the necessary inner dimension of *li*, and *li* is the necessary outward expression of *ren*.

The reason that reverence is appropriate to the process of transforming oneself into a humane person is that "Heaven produced the virtue (*de*) in me" (*Analects* 7:22 or 7:23, depending on the edition), and Heaven is the Confucian symbol of the ultimate. One's inherent virtue is one's connection with something that transcends the mundane world and is therefore sacred. Yet the fact that such virtue is inherent in human nature means that the sacred is, in a sense, immanent in the human world; the potential or power enabling human beings to transcend their given conditions is immanent. Another connection with the sacred in Confucian thought is "learning" (*xue*), which for Confucius primarily meant learning from the wisdom of the "sages" (*shengren*) who produced the Classics or Scriptures (*jing*). The Confucian Classics were thought to be the records of the divine sages who created some of the fundamental features of Chinese culture and the sage-kings who founded the Zhou dynasty, whose first three or four hundred years were thought to have been a glorious golden age of

peace and benevolent government. Confucius regarded these sages as beyond the reach of ordinary humans, beyond even the achievement of perfect humaneness (*ren*). They were divine or semi-divine, as is suggested by the word we translate as sage, *shengren*, which is also used for "saint." Similarly, the so-called "classics" were *jing*, the same word used later to translate the word *sutra* when Buddhism entered China from India. And the two words together, *sheng jing*, are in fact the Chinese translation of "Holy Bible." This is why "scripture" is a better translation of *jing* than "classic." So the Confucian understanding of learning is also a connection with the sacred. In addition to these texts, learning encompassed the arts, such as poetry and music.

All of this together – *wen,* or literate culture – is part of the Confucian Way (*dao*). The *junzi* is one who practices moral self-cultivation (*xiu shen*) through learning, ritual propriety, and self-reflection, with the aim of making the Way prevail. This encompasses not only the self-perfection of the *junzi* aimed at humaneness but also the perfection of society through benevolent government. Service in government was the highest calling for the Confucian *junzi*. Confucius himself apparently served in several minor positions, but never achieved his personal goal of being an advisor to a king. The next best position for him was to be a professional teacher, and this is how he was honored throughout later Chinese history, as the "First Teacher," the "patron saint" of the teaching profession. His birthday, conventionally recognized as September 28, has traditionally been celebrated as Teachers Day in both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China on Taiwan.

II.

The teachings of Confucius were spread by his disciples, in several different lineages and variations. The next great Confucian thinker was Meng Ke, called Mengzi (Master Meng) in Chinese and Mencius in English. His dates are less certain than those of Confucius, but he lived in the 4th century BCE and perhaps a little into the 3rd. While we know Confucius (based on the *Analects*) as a teacher, Mencius comes down to us, through the book bearing his name, as a philosopher who presents and defends his ideas through rational argumentation. He is best known for his argument

that human nature (*renxing*) is inherently good – a claim that can be found implicitly but not explicitly in the teachings of Confucius. What he means by this, Mencius says, is that humans are born with the *potential* to achieve the virtues of humaneness (*ren*), rightness (*yi*), ritual propriety (*li*), and wisdom (*zhi*). That potential is innate in the form of specific, natural feelings, such as the feeling of commiseration, which can be consciously cultivated into the fully-developed virtue of humaneness. It is these concrete, naturally-occuring feelings that constitute the inherent goodness of human nature. This is a further development of Confucius' claim that "Heaven produced the virtue in me." It is restated by another text from the Mencian school, the *Zhongyong* (The Mean in Practice), which begins with the line, "What Heaven ordains/confers (*tian ming*) is called human nature." Mencius differed from Confucius in regarding sagehood as being within the realm of human possibility – in effect redefining sagehood as the theoretically achievable goal of humaneness.

The teachings of Confucius and Mencius constitute the core of "classical Confucianism." In the 2nd century BCE, during the Han dynasty (206 BCE - 220 CE), Confucianism became the official ideology of government. It was this government support that led eventually to the permeation of Chinese culture by Confucian values. However, after the fall of the Han, Confucianism fell into decline, while Buddhism and Daoism developed and gained popularity. (This was Daoism as a full-fledged religion, which originated in the 2nd century CE and was only loosely connected to the classical texts, *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*.) It was not until the Song dynasty (960-1279) that there was a major revival of Confucianism. The new schools of Confucian thought that developed during this period collectively came to be known in the West as "Neo-Confucianism."

III.

Neo-Confucianism built on the Confucian-Mencian base – the pursuit of sagehood as an ethico-religious ideal – but added elements borrowed from or inspired by Buddhism and Daoism. For example, the Neo-Confucians developed sophisticated theories of mind and human nature, no doubt inspired by the intense Buddhist interest in the mind. They also adopted meditation as one method of self-cultivation, although it was never

as central to Confucian practice as it was in Buddhism. Another new dimension of Neo-Confucian thought was an interest in cosmology, and several key concepts were borrowed directly from Daoism. So we might say that the Confucian Way expanded from its original socio-ethical-political focus to include psychology and cosmology. All of this, however, was still directed to the joint goal of perfecting the self and perfecting society.

The Neo-Confucian school that emerged dominant from the 13th century onward was the Cheng-Zhu school, named after Cheng Yi (1033-1107) and Zhu Xi (1130-1200). Cheng Yi and his brother, Cheng Hao (1032-1085), developed a metaphysical terminology in which the earlier Confucian-Mencian concerns with human virtue, human nature, learning, and government could be embedded in a larger philosophical framework. The two key terms were *li* ("principle" or "order" – a different word from the *li* that means "ritual") and *qi* (the "psycho-physical stuff" of which all existing things – including mind and spirit – are composed). Zhu Xi, a few generations after the Cheng brothers, combined their ideas with those of several of their contemporaries, constructing a coherent system that dominated Chinese intellectual life for the next seven hundred years, and is still being actively studied and developed by scholars world-wide. Zhu Xi also developed an educational curriculum covering all levels of schooling and beyond. This included a book called *Family Rituals* (*Jia li*), which became very popular in China, was reprinted throughout the ensuing centuries in many editions, and was regarded as the standard to strive for in the practices of ancestor worship and life-cycle rituals. Another influential school of Neo-Confucian thought was developed in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) by Wang Shouren (14721529, commonly called Wang Yangming) and his followers. Drawing in part on the ideas of a contemporary of Zhu Xi's, Lu Jiuyuan (1139-1193, commonly called Lu Xiangshan), and therefore called the Lu-Wang school, this approach relied more on moral intuition than the Cheng-Zhu school, which emphasized the importance of intellectual inquiry in pursuit of the Way.

The teachings of the Cheng-Zhu school, beginning in 1313 under the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), were the official basis of the civil service examination system through which government officials were selected until 1905. Neo-Confucianism would also dominate during the

last imperial dynasty, the Qing (1644-1911/12), but in the nineteenth century it would come under increasing criticism and attack

IV.

During the Qing dynasty, China was ruled by a non-Chinese ethnic group, the Manchus (who are today pretty much blended into the Han Chinese population). It had reached a pinnacle of success in the 18th century, but in 1793 the Qing emperor, Qianlong, rejected a request by King George III of Great Britain to establish trade relations. Britain needed markets for the products of its new industrial revolution, and it responded to the Chinese cold shoulder by growing opium in India and selling it illegally in China. The Opium Wars of the 1840s began a long series of catastrophes for China, including internal rebellions. Meanwhile Japan, which opened its doors to the West after over 200 years of self-imposed isolation, was becoming a modern industrial power, and defeated China in the 1895 Sino-Japanese War.

Chinese reformers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries tried various means of bringing China back to its feet, to no avail. The Qing dynasty fell in 1911 and was replaced by the Republic of China (ROC), which continues today in Taiwan. But the early republic was rife with corruption and very weak. In the 1920s the Chinese Communist Party arose and began a long civil war with the ruling Nationalist Party (Guomindang, or KMT) of the Republic, led by Chiang Kai-shek. Mao Zedong rose to prominence in the Communist party and became its leader. After the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in northeast China in the 1930s, the Nationalists and Communists temporarily joined forces against the Japanese. This continued through World War II until the Japanese defeat in 1945. The Nationalists and Communists then resumed their civil war, and in 1949 the Communists won, driving the Nationalist government offshore to the island of Taiwan. On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong stood on the reviewing stand of the Gate of Heavenly Peace (Tiananmen) in Beijing and declared, "China has stood up" – alluding of course to the century and a half of decline, humiliation, and subjugation. This was the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which today governs the Chinese mainland.

This brief historical background is necessary to understand the vicissitudes of Confucianism in the 20th century. The "New Culture Movement" in the early part of the century was based on the premise that virtually everything about China's traditional culture was holding it back from becoming a modern nation-state. High on the list of culprits in this blanket rejection of traditional China was Confucianism. Under the banner of science and democracy, the reformers felt that there was nothing worth salvaging in Confucianism. They especially criticized Confucianism for its age and gender-based hierarchies, which had become quite rigid during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Communist thinkers also joined this anti-Confucian trend, so by the time of the Communist victory in 1949, Confucianism in mainland China seemed virtually dead.

Despite these difficult times, there were some intellectuals who felt that Confucianism, too, could be reformed, especially by engaging in dialogue with Buddhism and Western philosophy. These thinkers were sowing the seeds of what later became known as "New Confucianism," which some call the "third epoch" of the Confucian tradition (after Classical and Neo-). But the tide through much of the 20th century was clearly against them.

The attack on traditional China, including Confucianism, reached its pinnacle during the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" of 1966-1976. Instigated by Mao Zedong in order to purge the party of potential opposition to Mao, schools and universities were closed and young people were urged to join the roving bands of "Red Guards" who destroyed temples and other cultural artifacts of traditional China. The "Red Guards" harassed and violently punished anyone suspected of being sympathetic to Western or traditional Chinese culture. This was part of Mao's theory of "continuing revolution."

Another feature of the Cultural Revolution was the staging of mass rallies in the newly-cleared Tiananmen Square (the largest open public square in the world). At these rallies, up to a million Red Guards and others would wave their "little red books" of quotations from Chairman Mao. Overall, the ten years of the Cultural Revolution were a nightmare, which virtually all Chinese today deeply regret.

Yet the 20th century saw the beginning of a "third epoch" of Confucian thinkers (after Classical and Neo-), exemplified by Xiong Shili (1885-

1968), Mou Zongsan (1909-1995), and Tang Junyi (1909-1978), who incorporated Buddhist and Western learning into a new Confucian synthesis. They became known as the "New Confucians." They are part of the elder generation of Chinese and Chinese-American scholars, who have trained a large contingent of younger scholars, most of whom are Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Chinese-American, and Euro-American. Some in this latest generation are less apt to call themselves "Confucians" and are generally seen as scholars of Confucianism. Others, like Tu Weiming (1940 -), formerly of Harvard University, and now a Professor of Philosophy and Founding Dean of the Institute of Advanced Humanistic Studies at Peking University in Beijing, consider themselves New Confucians. However, since "Ru" really means "scholar," the distinction is not a sharp one. Due largely to the influence of the third and fourth generations of Confucian scholars, the Confucian tradition is increasingly being taken seriously as a significant contributor to the cross-cultural dialogue of religions and to comparative philosophy.

V.

There is not a consensus on the question of the religious nature of Confucianism, although scholars in the field of religious studies generally understand it as a religious tradition. The problem is partly a semantic one and partly due to the particular character of Confucian thought and practice. One semantic question concerns the reifying connotations of speaking of it as "a religion," given that it is not, at least since the demise of the imperial Chinese examination system and court rituals, an institutionalized religion. But neither is Chinese "popular religion" institutionalized, yet no one denies that it is religious; it simply is not referred to as "a religion." Confucianism can indeed be understood as an example of "diffused religion" (a term coined by the sociologist C. K. Yang in the early 1960s), which is religion that is practiced in largely secular social settings. The settings for Confucian practice are the family, the community (interpersonal relations), and until the end of the last dynasty, the state (government).

Another semantic problem involves the Sino-Japanese words for "religion:" *zongjiao* in Chinese and *shūkyō* in Japanese, which are different

pronunciations of the same Chinese characters (*kanji* in Japanese). This word was coined in the late 19th century by Japanese translators of treaties and Western-language texts and was later adopted by the Chinese. These translators felt that Christianity was a different sort of thing than the various Chinese and Japanese "teachings" (*jiao* / *kyō*), such as Buddhism and Daoism, and "ways" (*dao* / *dō* or *tō*), such as Shinto. Christianity demanded exclusive allegiance, while Buddhism, Daoism, and Shinto could be mixed and matched unproblematically by individuals. And Christianity strongly emphasized belief in particular doctrines, while the East Asian traditions emphasized action more than belief. *Zongjiao* / *shūkyō* fit the bill, because *zong* / *shū* means "sect" and implies exclusive membership, and *jiao* / *kyō* ("teaching") implies doctrine. *Zongjiao* / *shūkyō* therefore has connotations of a foreign, exclusivistic, doctrinal religion. When Chinese or Japanese people, then, say that Confucianism is not a "religion," they of course are saying that it is not a *zongjiao* / *shūkyō* – which is correct if we understand that word as unpacked above. But when asked whether it is a *jiao*, like Daojiao (Daoism) or Fojiao (Buddhism), they are likely to agree, because in Chinese it is in fact called *Rujiao*.

The Way of Confucius originated as a particular solution to a period of social and political chaos in ancient China. It developed into a religious humanism, or humanistic religion, based on the belief that human nature is inherently good and that its goodness is its connection to "Heaven," the Confucian term for the absolute reality. Although it has not always been recognized and practiced as a religious tradition, it has profoundly shaped the cultures of China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, and has in the past half century begun to be taken seriously as a contributor to the dialogue of world religions.

The Way of the Dance of Dialogue

M. Darrol Bryant

Let me begin by thanking Tim Minor and Rami Shapiro for the invitation to be part of this BIG I (Interfaith, Interspirituality, Integral Spirituality) Conference.[1] It is a fitting title. It deals with something of immense importance. It points to something that is happening within the religious/spiritual life of humankind. It is happening here. It is happening everywhere.

Just before Christmas, I returned from my first trip to China. It was happening there. It was evident at the crowded Buddhist temples I visited, the mosque in Beijing that was filled for Friday prayers, the Catholic Cathedral in Beijing that was filled to overflowing on Sunday morning and welcomed 400 new members, and at the Lama Monastery with its 30-foot-high wooden image of the Buddha. It is happening with the surprising Confucian scholars I met.

It is happening in India as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, and Thomas Christians engage one another. It is happening in the Middle East even in the midst of conflict and the Arab Spring as Muslims, Jews, Christians engage one another. It is happening around the globe.[2]

Yet we don't have a common name for it. I call it the Way of dialogue or a new way for men and women of the different faiths to relate to one another. I consider it the most significant development in the spiritual life of our time.

My Journey

It wasn't always like this. When I went to a small and wonderful liberal arts college in the early 60s, our President boasted that the college was 97.5% American Lutheran students – and he hoped the percentage would be higher next year. Diversity of religious conviction was regarded with

distaste – even when the differences were within the same family tradition. One of my friends told me that his Swedish Lutheran father had told him "not to have anything to do with those Norwegian Lutherans!" And contact between major traditions was pretty unthinkable.[3]

When I began my study of religion in the early 1960s, little did I know that my life would lead me into the dance of dialogue.

It began for me in college when I encountered the work of the great Jewish thinker Martin Buber. He brought the word "dialogue" into my life.[4] It continued when I took a course at Harvard with Raimundo Pannikar, the great Spanish/Indian Catholic thinker and pioneer in interfaith dialogue who said "I left Europe [for India] discovered I was a Hindu and returned as a Buddhist without ever having ceased to be a Christian." He opened Indian spirituality to me. My horizons expanded when I went to Europe for a course on *Religion In Dialogue* that took me to Geneva, Rome and Eastern Europe. In Geneva, we visited the World Council, of Churches an ecumenical body for intra-Christian dialogue. In Rome, basking in the glow of the 2nd Vatican Council, we visited the new Secretariat for Non-Christians (later renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue)[5] for the dialogue with other faiths. And in Prague and East Berlin, we participated in the Marxist-Christian dialogue. These experiences deepened and extended my sense of the importance of exchange and dialogue.

This sense of importance grew during a year working for the Lutheran World Federation and organizing the World Encounter of Lutheran Youth that brought Lutheran youth from around the world to Latin America for a week in an rural and a week in an urban setting on the themes of poverty and student unrest. I met the new liberation thinkers of Latin America (Bishop Helder Camara) before they were known in North America.

But nothing was as important as a sabbatical year in India with my family. We stayed for three months at a Muslim university in New Delhi, had all our meals with the Ali family, and immersed ourselves in a Muslim milieu and prayed in a mosque. We also encountered Sikhs, Tibetan Buddhists and the communities of Krishna and Radha devotees in Vrindaban. We were then in Madras with Hindus, in Kerala with Thomas Christians, Hindus, and Jews and in Pune with Hindus, neo-Buddhists, and Parsees. This year gave the dialogue of faiths a human face and brought

home the importance of participating in the actual life of the many Ways of spiritual life. Not only my knowledge but my own faith was enriched immensely. By the end of the year, our kids were putting on comic skits about "dad and interreligious dialogue."

Most of my way of dialogue has been on the ground. I have been more than twenty times to India, including taking students for a Study Term Abroad for three months. I call the course "encountering the living religious traditions of India." I have been to Korea and Japan six or seven times each and stayed in Buddhist monasteries. Once I participated in a Confucian festival in Seoul. The first thing a Confucian scholar said to me was, "You Westerners need to understand that Confucianism is a religion." And I visited Shinto Shrines in Japan. I have been to Turkey six times and engaged Muslims in dialogue and prayed in their mosques. I have organized international and inter-religious conferences that have brought together peoples from all traditions. I have made dialogue central to my forty years of teaching.[6]

I have always been convinced that the Way of Dialogue grows out the depths of one's faith. It is not an add-on, or peripheral, or, as some seem to think, a betrayal.

I make this point because much of the literature about dialogue is written by people for whom this is a theoretical issue. And when reading this literature, I often find myself saying that no one should write about this remarkable development in our global spiritual life if they haven't spent at least two years in significant lived dialogue with people of faiths other than their own.

Lessons Learned

So here are six things that I have learned about the Way of Dialogue.

1. We need to demystify the dialogue of the peoples of faith. **It is a living encounter between men and women of different faiths that creates relationships – and over time, friendships – overturns preconceptions, and deepens our understanding of the sacred.** It is grounded in the conviction that it is valuable to know something of the faith of those with whom we share this common planet and the quest for truth. It grows out of deep listening, over time, and listening again and again. It requires that

we develop a capacity to listen to the other in their terms, rather than too quickly translating what we hear into our own terms. This is crucial.

In the process of dialogue, we also learn about our own faith but now in relation to the faith of another. As we together share something of our deepest convictions, we move towards mutuality, we discover things we had not known about ourselves and others, we begin to break our misconceptions and misunderstandings. We move more deeply towards the truth that is given to us in our respective faiths.

It is not about all Ways being the same, or equal, or any other of the shibboleths that litter the writing about dialogue. It is an existential process, a living dance of dialogue.

2. **Dialogue is a process**. It begins with the experience of listening and listening again, of hearing the voice of the other, the prayers, the rites and rituals, the teachings, the stories, and then hearing again, or being silent together, or checking to see if one has rightly understood. It is speaking about what one holds dear and how one experiences the religious life and the gifts of the spirit. It acknowledges our unknowing, our uncertainties, our groping. It becomes a sharing, through words, in words, and in silence. It is being attentive to the spirit. It involves contemplating what is said or shown or participated in. It involves the rhythm of listening and speaking, of speaking and listening. There are also moments of confusion, times when words fail, times when a laugh speaks, moments of insight and understanding.

3. **Dialogue may take many forms**. It may involve participating in one another's worship or festivals. It may mean meeting over a cup of coffee. It may involve reading one another's scriptures or studying the writing of a particular writer or listening to the poetry of the mystics. It may involve participation in one another's *sadhana* (spiritual discipline), or exploring another's way of meditation. It may involve sharing hurts in one's experience within one's own traditions. It may involve families sharing meals – as we did so often in India and elsewhere – or having a cup of tea together. It may involve sitting in silence together in a holy place. It may mean working together on social issues or working to better the life of one's community. It is happening where interfaith study groups are formed; it is happening when Jews, Muslims, and Christians gather to

read and reflect on one another's scriptures. Dialogue is no single thing. Dialogue is another name for "loving the neighbor" (Bryant), or "for the spiritual journey of our time" (Cousins) or "for the transformation of the world." (Eck)

4. **Dialogue is becoming contemporaries**. In every encounter and meeting, we begin as "distemporaries," people coming from different places, backgrounds, having different worries and preoccupations, and different experiences of our own faith and that of others. We have different interior stories as well as different social locations. In dialogue, when it is authentic, we gain the gift of becoming contemporaries, sharing the same time.

5. **Dialogue is a way beyond exclusivism** – the notion that only my tradition is true and all others are false – and **inclusivism** – the notion that the truth in other traditions can only be seen in terms of my own tradition – and beyond **pluralism** – the view that there is simply a plurality of religious Ways and all of them are equal. Dialogue is a way of exploring the gifts of every tradition without assuming any particular tradition exhausts the truth of the Ultimate.

6. **The dialogue of faiths depends upon the faiths involved**. Its content depends upon the character of the particular persons involved in dialogue and the nature of their respective faiths. The dialogue of Christians and Buddhists will be different in content than the dialogue of Christians and Muslims; that of people from the First Nations and Hindus or again Christians because of their diverse histories with one another; that of a Confucian and a Jew (which I learned about in China).

Dialogue is not debate; it is not proving that I am right and you are wrong. It is not arguing about doctrinal differences. It is not just the activity of scholars, or religious leaders, or professionals. It is open to all. Dialogue is going together, seeking together, pilgriming together into the truth and end of the human journey. Dialogue is a quest for meaning and the ultimate.

As I look back on my life, I now see that there were many influences that foreshadowed the direction my life would take. It all began on the plains of North Dakota under a boundless sky and an endless horizon. Its end is the boundless and endless Mystery of Transcendence.

Endnotes

[1] This talk was first given at the *BIG I Conference* at *Wisdom House/Scairrt-Bennett, Nashville, Tennessee February 3-4, 2012.* It has been slightly revised for publication here.

[2] At the end of World War II there were two or three organizations or groups that promoted interfaith activities. When Dr. Francis Clark of Great Britain compiled an Interfaith Directory in the 1980s it included more than 700 groups worldwide and he knew that this was not a complete listing. See Francis Clark *Interfaith Directory* (New York: International Religious Foundation, 1987). It is also worth noting that the vast majority of these initiatives come from lay members of the religious traditions. Now there are hundreds in North America alone. In a little Canadian Interfaith Directory that I did in 1993, to commemorate the 1893 Chicago Parliament, I listed more than 50 groups in Canada.

[3] We have to remember that then the ecumenical movement within Christian traditions was just beginning, and it was prior to the 2nd Vatican Council. Moreover, it was a time when it was common to hear that "sex, politics, and religion" were not to be discussed in polite company. And such attitudes have not wholly disappeared. As part of a course with the bland title "The Study of Religion," I have regularly required students to either attend a service in a tradition other than their own (and I don't mean another strand of their home tradition) or to have an interview with a person of another faith about the role of faith in their life. And three out of four students tell me how significant this was for them and often say that this is something they have always wanted to do but didn't dare. The assignment gave them the cover they needed to do it.

[4] This was in the early 1960s when I was studying philosophy at Concordia College in Minnesota. Martin Buber noted that "genuine dialogue" happens "where each participant has in mind the others…and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relationship." In the early 70s my understanding of dialogue was greatly deepened through an encounter with the writings of a contemporary and friend of Buber's, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. His great work *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* changed my life and *Speech & Reality* gave me a more nuanced and differentiated appreciation for the role of speech – vital speech – in human affairs. Speech, wrote Rosenstock-Huessy is "the life blood of society."

[5] One cannot overemphasize the importance of the 2nd Vatican Council (1962-65) for the emergence of dialogue in the Catholic and Christian world. The "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to the Non-Christian Religions" (*Nostre Aetate*) called for "dialogue and collaboration" with people of other religions. This was the first official statement on "other religions" in the nearly 2000 year history of the Church. Within a few years, the World Council of Churches established a unit for Dialogue with Living Faiths and Ideologies. This was a sea-change in Christianity. But I have seen it in other traditions as well. Every time I have heard HH the Dalai Lama speak, he has always spoken of the importance of inter-religious dialogue. I have heard it from the mouths of Grand Muftis, Hindu Acharayas and Swamijis, and from Sikh Jathedars and Jewish Rabbis.

[6] See my *Religion in a New Key* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2000). Among

more recent volumes encouraging dialogue see M. Darrol Bryant & Susan Bryant, eds. *Mahayana Buddhism: History & Culture* (New Delhi: Tibet House), M. Darrol Bryant, Susan K. Harrison, & A. James Reimer, eds. *On Spirituality: Essays from the 3rd Shi'I Muslim Mennonite Christian Dialogue* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2007), and M. Darrol Bryant, Judith Miller, & Yan Li, *Along the Silk Road: Essays on History, Literature, and Culture in China* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2011).

Along the Way

Pamela O'Rourke

Life is a pilgrimage
with friends…
Moments of capturing happiness and
being captured by it…
Moments of heart song and
spontaneous laughter and joy...
Moments of learning and listening
to a heart break…
and stitching it together again.
Washing, pressing, organizing…
words brushed on paper
stories - pictures
burned into our mind and
kindnesses penetrating our heart.
It is our passing through
the ancient waters of time
And the dreams of India…
And it was GOOD.

The Way of the Holy Rascal

Rabbi Rami Shapiro

Holy rascality is an attitude, a mixture of the bold, irreverent, provocative, fearless, and funny. Holy rascals delight in pointing out the nakedness of emperors and pulling back the curtain surrounding every Great and Terrible Wizard of Oz. Their tools are irony, parody, humor, paradox, freethinking, and common sense, and while they labor tirelessly to free people from the circular, and often viciously circular, thinking of religion, they are not opposed to religiosity itself. They aren't anti-God; they simply believe that no god is God. They aren't anti-religion; they simply think that at its best, religion must point beyond itself.

If holy rascals have a motto it may be the opening line of the *Tao te Ching*: *The tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao*. Most people are obsessed with names and naming; but all names are pointers, and no name grasps the Unnamable. The name-obsessed are consumers of menus who never taste a meal and collectors of maps who never walk the ground. Holy rascals don't focus on names: as the *Rig Veda* tells us, "Truth is one. Different people call it by different names." But no name is THE name, so call it what you wish but never imagine that what you wish is what it is.

Holy rascals are not limited by time or tradition. While as individuals they may be rooted in one religion, they are always open to the insights in all. They are not interested in maintaining boundaries. Holy rascals arise everywhere and every when. They speak different languages, wear different clothes, confront different challenges, and carry different burdens. What they share is a desire to set people free:

> I maintain that truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect … Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or coerce people along a particular path ... I

> am concerning myself with only one essential thing: to set man free. (Krishnamurti, 1929)

Truth, reality – life as it is in this moment – is pathless because it is always and already right under your feet. If there were a path to Truth, Truth would be finite and somewhere else, and it would take time to reach it. But Truth is infinite – everywhere – and ever-present – every when – and hence cannot be found over time but only realized here and now. This is why God's first command to Moses is that he remove his sandals – understood as everything that keeps him and us from actually connecting with the Ground of Truth (Exodus 3:5). Only when we drop the conditioning of place and tribe, culture and religion, gender, race, and sexual preference (Genesis 3:1) can we discover the pathless land, the promised land, the kingdom of heaven.

> It is not in the sky, that you should say, "Who will fly up and get it for us so that we may hear it and live it?" Neither is it beyond the ocean, that you should say, "Who will cross the sea for us, and get it so that we may hear it and live it?" No, the truth is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to live it. See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. (Deuteronomy 30:12-15)

There is no place to go and nothing get. Everything is set before you, nothing is held back, and nothing can be avoided. Life and death, prosperity and adversity, it's all right here and right now. This is what the holy rascal knows and wants to tell us, but it is not what we want to hear. We don't want life *and* death, we want life instead of death; we don't want prosperity *and* adversity, we want prosperity instead of adversity. And because we don't like reality, we invent conventional religion.

Conventional religion, that is religions invented by men for the benefit of the male hierarchy that runs them, offers us a world of either/or; either life or death, prosperity or adversity, and in so doing envisions the world as a zero-sum game of competing camps: us and them, the believer and the infidel, the faithful and the heretic. Don't imagine it is just western religion that does this: infighting among and between Hindus and Buddhists is as rampant as that among and between Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

Zero-sum games are based on the proposition that there must be winners and losers, saved and damned, high caste and low, enlightened and unenlightened. Zero-sum religious games often add to that by insisting that winning and losing is absolute and forever.

The glory of eternal salvation, for example, depends on the horror of eternal damnation, and its value rises with the price of admission. If everyone is saved, salvation loses its value. Zero-sum religion, like all zero-sum thinking, is rooted in the idea of scarcity: there isn't enough of God's love (or Truth or what have you) to go around, and if you want some you had best join the team with the best chance of getting it.

Which team is that? You can't know in advance; there are no measurable criteria, only competing claims. So religions compete and you choose. And since you can't know if you've chosen rightly, your choice is always tinged with fear and doubt, and to suppress both, religions encourage a militant allegiance.

While holy rascals do find wisdom and insight in religion, most often in the teachings of outliers and mystics, they see the zero-sum game conventional religions play as dangerous and deadly, and seek to free us from it by awakening us to it, and to the fact that the Truth isn't scarce but infinite and already within and around you: "in your mouth and in your heart for you to live it."

> Jesus said, Of the kingdom of God no one can say, "Look, here it is!" or "Look, there it is!" For the kingdom of God is already within you. (Luke 17:21)

> Jesus said: If your leaders say, "Behold, the kingdom is in the sky," then the birds will get there before you. If they say, "It is in the sea," then the fish will get there before you. The kingdom is within you and around you. (*Gospel of Thomas*, logia 3)

If the kingdom is within you, then you need not bother with religion at all, or if you do, you can do so lightly, enjoying the game as a form of play and not taking it too seriously. In either case, all you really need do is live what is so, but we fear this radical freedom, and, sticking with Jesus for the moment, rush to block our ears to his teaching by filling our heads

with hymns to his glory. The best way to put an end to a rascal is to kill him. But if that doesn't work, worship him.

Holy rascals seek to end the zero-sum insanity of conventional religion by ending the ignorance and fear that fuel it. They have faith that the Truth will set you free (Gospel of John 8:32) because truth and freedom are synonymous. The truth is you are free, and every system that pretends to set you free is actually imprisoning you.

> You seek to come close to Truth, and though the door to it is open, the doorkeeper refuses your request to enter… "You can ignore me if you like," he says, "but I'm powerful. And I'm only the least of the doorkeepers. From hall to hall there is one doorkeeper after another, each more powerful than the last." … You decide not to enter and sit down by the door to wait to be invited in. You spend your life waiting, and as your death approaches you ask the doorkeeper, "Everyone strives to reach the Truth, so how is it that for all these years no one but myself has ever begged for admittance?" "No one else could ever be admitted here," the doorkeeper roars, "since this gate was made only for you. And now I'm going to shut it!" (Franz Kafka, *Before the Law*, adapted)

We are like this fellow at the gate. We sit before Truth and fearfully await permission to enter. Holy rascals drop by now and again and encourage us to go in, but we look at the doorkeeper – the ism or ideology to which we have given over our autonomy, imagination, and freedom – and we dare not move. So the holy rascal tells us stories to pass the time and maybe something more.

> This is what the kingdom of heaven is like: Once upon a time a man hired laborers to work in his vineyard. He negotiated a price with those he hired at dawn, and set them to work. After a few hours the man hired more workers, and as the day progressed even more were hired. When the workday ended the man paid everyone the day rate negotiated with those he had hired at dawn. The first hired complained: it was unfair to pay those who came last the same as those who came first. But the

> vineyard owner said no one was harmed by this and paid as he pleased. (Matthew 20:1–16)

People naturally think in terms of more and less. This is because we imagine the world to be a zero-sum game of winners and losers, haves and have-nots. But Jesus is a Jewish rascal who imagines a nonzero-sum world where each person sits beneath her own vine and fig tree and none are made afraid (Micah 4:4).

If Jesus' parable ended here it would be powerful enough, but he adds a capping phrase that is pure rascality: *So the last shall be first, and the first shall be last* (Matthew 20:16). This teaching upsets the hierarchy to which so many of us desperately cling: the hierarchy of privilege and specialness, the chosen, the saved, the elect, the high caste, the true believer, the twice born. Seeing the danger in Jesus' teaching, and wishing desperately to protect this hierarchy, the author of Matthew's Gospel adds another teaching of his own that undoes the rascality of Jesus: *for many will be called, but few will be chosen* (Matthew 22:14). With this the radical nature of the kingdom is undone, and the rascality of Jesus is tamed in service to the new religion being built around him. Let's see how.

So the last shall be first, and the first shall be last. Don't imagine this is a one–time event related to the specifics of the parable alone. If Jesus is simply saying that the last hired will be privileged over the first hired, then the kingdom of heaven is just another zero-sum game, and the generosity of the landlord is capricious. But the kingdom Jesus is proposing is something else entirely.

When you step into Jesus' world and you are among the first, the privileged, the elite, you will suddenly be among the last, the downtrodden and the outcast; but, since the last will be first, as soon as you are last you are suddenly first again. Being first again, however, only means you are once more last, and being last again only means you are once more first, and round and round and round until you stumble dizzily off the zero-sum playing field of winners and losers, and into the pathless nonzero Truth that is the kingdom of God.

Do you see how radical this is? Can you imagine a world without firsts and lasts? A world where money doesn't equal privilege, and no group

has an advantage over any other? Where Christians aren't saved and Jews aren't Chosen? This is the pathless land, the kingdom of heaven.

Zero-sum religions imagine zero-sum gods, and zero-sum gods need to be placated lest you find yourself on their bad side and damned. But holy rascals don't worship zero-sum gods. They are prophets and sages of nonzero reality. The zero-sum god is a fearsome and violent god, and to rebel against him (and he is almost always male) is to suffer at the hands of those who worship him, but the god of the rascal is Truth, and the faith of the rascal is rooted in love rather than fear, and justice rather than might.

> With what shall I honor Yah the high God?
> Shall I bring burnt offerings or year-old calves?
> Should I approach Yah with thousands of rams?
> Or ten thousand of rivers of oil?
> Perhaps I should sacrifice my firstborn for my sins?
> (Micah 6:6–7)

Anyone listening to the Hebrew prophet Micah at the time would be nodding in agreement. Of course you should bring burnt offerings (Leviticus 23:37) and calves (Leviticus 9:8) and rams (Numbers 7: 17, 23, 29, 35, 41, 47, 53, 59, 65, 71, 77, 83, 87, and 88) and oil (Leviticus 2: 1,2,4,5,6,7,15, and 16) and even your firstborn (Exodus 13:2; 22:29; Numbers 3:12). There is nothing surprising in this. What is surprising – indeed revolutionary – is Micah's rejection of it all:

> God has told you, Humanity, what is good.
> And what does Yah demand?
> Only this: establish justice, practice kindness,
> and walk humbly with your [notions of] God;
> then will you be known for your wisdom.
> (Micah 6:8–9)

Micah challenged the priestly Judaism of his time and the sacrificial god at its center, replacing both with justice, compassion, and humility. Centuries later Hillel, an elder contemporary and perhaps teacher of Jesus, did something similar with rabbinic Judaism. When challenged to stand on one foot and expound the entire Torah, both written and oral,

Hillel obliged saying, "That which is hateful to you do not do to another. That is the entire Torah; everything else is commentary. Go and study it." (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a)

This story is so ubiquitous in Jewish circles that it is hard for Jews to fully grasp the audacity of this teaching. But listen to Hillel with fresh ears and it will become clear. Hillel is claiming that the entirety of Judaism, centuries upon centuries of revelation and teaching, is mere commentary to this single humanist affirmation that isn't in Torah at all! He didn't reject Judaism; he reinvented it. Judaism was now a way of compassion, and any understanding of Torah and tradition that failed to deepen and expand one's commitment to compassion was not Judaism at all.

Holy rascals aren't limited to Jewish prophets, Hillel, and Jesus, of course. I'm merely offering what I hope are well known, if not well understood, examples to articulate what I take to be the central message of the holy rascal: live free and die.

The world you and I inhabit is a wild place. We wish it were otherwise. We wish, and often fervently pray, that the world conform to our needs, desires, and fantasies. We do our best to control events, but in the end nothing works. That's why we insist that the end isn't really the end, and fantasize about heavens and hells where the first are forever first and the last forever last.

And then along comes a holy rascal like the Hindu sage Shankara to shake us up: *The world is only illusion (maya)*. Yes! We knew it: this world is an illusion; it doesn't matter! *Only Brahman (the Godhead) is real*! Absolutely! God is the only reality. Preach it, Brother! *Brahman is the world*. What?!? No, no, no, no, no, that can't be right!

If the world is *maya* and Brahman is real and the world is Brahman, then Brahman is maya and maya is Brahman and the first will be last and the last will be first and the duality of opposites crumbles into a wild nonzero play (the Hindus call it *lila*) beyond our control. We can't have that, can we? No, we can't, and so we won't. And if that Shankara fellow comes around here again, we'll show him what's what! So we toss Shankara under the ox cart, sit ourselves down outside the door to Truth, and wait. And while we wait we occupy ourselves with silliness that holy rascals hope to undo.

> One evening neighbors saw Mullah Nasrudin searching for his keys in the dirt beneath a flickering gas lamp. As they came to help, someone asked, "Just where did you lose your keys?" "In my house," Nasrudin replied. "Then why are we looking out here?" the other asked. "Because the light is better out here," he said.

The light is always better outside, for it is there that the keepers of the light, those self-proclaimed doorkeepers and guardians of truth, shine it most brightly. The brighter their light, the more dark and foreboding the inside of our house – the inside of our selves – seems; and the darker it seems, the less inclined we are to journey within and find the keys and unlock the truth that the Truth is never locked-up in the first place.

The way of the holy rascal is to put an end to our distractions and live the nonzero wildness that Ecclesiastes calls *hevel havalim*, fleeting and impermanent (Ecclesiastes 1:2); a world in which everything and its opposite has its time and place (Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8), and the best way to live is simply to eat gratefully, drink happily (Ecclesiastes 3:13; 9:7), find honest work that brings you joy (Ecclesiastes 3:13; 9:10), and cultivate a few close friends (Ecclesiastes 4:9).

That's it. That's the way of the holy rascal: eat, drink, work, love, and create a nonzero community where everyone has the opportunity to do the same. This simple vision of life well lived is anathema to many who cannot imagine a world without winners and losers, the frightened and the frightening. This is why the editors of Ecclesiastes, like the author of Matthew's Gospel, sought to undo his rascality by adding their own capping phrase to his book: *The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Fear God and observe His commandments! For this applies to all humankind* (Ecclesiastes 12:14). This is the anti-rascal message! Holy rascals call us to freedom; this text enslaves us. Holy rascals call us to love; this demands fear.

We live in a zero-sum game of our own imagining. The way of the holy rascal is to stop playing, and to live freely the non-zero Truth that is the Tao that cannot be named.

The "One" Way
THE SOUND OF ONE HAND CLAPPING

Yanni Maniatis

To find the Way,
Close your eyes,
Listen closely,
And attend with your heart.
Anonymous

About twenty years ago, I was studying to be a Shiatsu practitioner. The objective of a Shiatsu treatment is to balance the energies of the client's meridian/energy pathways. In order to do this, you "hold" two points along a meridian line and wait to "feel" for an energetic shift or balancing.

In one practice session, I went so deep and was so in touch with the energies as they were balancing that at one point I no longer felt that I had two hands on the person's body. It felt as if I had only one hand on him. As well, I no longer felt separate from the client, but I felt as if he and I were one.

It was a very profound feeling of connection and communion that I experienced at that moment, and as I was feeling this connection, I felt I knew what the Zen koan the "Sound of One Hand Clapping" was pointing to. Namely, that the "Sound of One Hand Clapping" is the feeling or experience of oneness.

It was a very transformative event for me. I had shifted my awareness out of a duality consciousness into a oneness consciousness, and as a result, I could sense a unity with what I initially perceived as being separate from me–my client.

Similarly, I believe that it is through this ability to become one with or come into communion with another that we can understand what it means

to listen.

From my experience, we can never really have meaningful interactions with another if we see them as separate or outside of us. For real communication to occur, there can only be One, not two.

I've come to call this process of listening the Art or HeArt of Listening.[1]

To further explain what I am mean, the following brief dialogue between Theophane, the monk, and his students I believe is helpful:

"Father, could you tell us something about yourself?"
The Monk leaned back.
"Myself……?" He mused.
There was a long pause.
"My name …… used to be …… Me …..... but now ….... it's You."

– from Theophane the Monk's *Tales of a Magic Monastery*

So, what is Listening?

Listening is not a cognitive function. It is a function of the heart. It does not separate, categorize and analyze; it instead embraces.

It is a receptive, feminine state. It is a surrender, a merging with, a communion, an embrace; it is just being present, with no agenda.

Listening is not an active, assertive masculine state. It is not a state that judges, calculates or analyzes. It is simply a state of being, a state of silence, a state of openness, receptivity, and allowing.

It is quiet and still and does not pay attention to words or appearances; instead, it senses the essence of things. It looks into the soul of people, experiences, and all things. It is a state of simply being present and just knowing.

From my point of view, listening is the most important skill that one can develop.

Listening to another

I believe that there is no such a thing as someone or something other than you.

One of the gifts of learning to listen is to realize precisely this: that

there is no other. There is only one, not two; and the only way to listen is to merge with or become part of or one with that which you are listening to. There is no other way to truly listen.

Otherwise, all you are doing is judging and analyzing with your mind, and, by doing so, you separate yourself out from what you are listening to and experience it as other than yourself when it is not other.

This separating out is what creates all the conflict *within* our selves and *with* others and also all the conflict in the world. We see people and things as other. But really, how can anything or anyone be other?

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, there is the event called the Fall. From my point of view, that event describes the time when we chose to stop listening with our hearts and, instead, began to judge with our minds. We ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that is, we entered the world of judgment, analysis, duality and separation.

We no longer experienced life from within, but, instead, we experienced it as other than us or outside of us. We started judging and analyzing instead of feeling, and that created the sense of separation that we feel from our selves, each other, nature, spirit, our higher selves. This is what, I believe, cast us out of the Garden of Eden.

In our Western cultures, we have given preeminence to the cognitive, masculine ways of knowing and allowed the intuitive, feminine ways of knowing to be ignored. Despite all the valuable technological advances the West has created, this overemphasis on the cognitive has wrecked havoc on us physically, emotionally and spiritually.

We need to come back into balance again; we need to come to our senses and lose our minds, so to speak. Thus we can integrate both ways of knowing, and then we can re-enter the oneness of the Garden.

LISTENING TO ANOTHER IS A SKILL THAT SO FEW OF US HAVE.

So, what *does* it mean to listen to another?

So often when we interact with someone, we want them to be or act in a way that we want rather than allow them to be and act as they want.

I have found that most of us most of time, myself included, are self-absorbed. Therefore, we are not listening. We are so caught up in projecting

a certain impression about ourselves or getting our point across or being heard or being right that we pay almost no attention to the person right there in front of us.

Listening cannot occur when the mind is preoccupied. Listening can only occur in the silence and receptivity of the heart. It can only occur when the little self, the ego, the self-absorbed part of us, is silent.

As well, when we interact with someone, we are often so preoccupied with a problem or a train of thought that we pay absolutely no attention to what a person is saying to us. They are talking to us, but we are simply not there! We are off on some other train of thought or off in some other dimension. We literally are not present!

Also, what often happens is that we are so full of *hubris* that we just want to hear ourselves talk and we are not in the slightest bit interested in what another has to say. We are not there to listen, we are only there to make another see or hear us; all we want to do is be externally validated.

In this process we just keep putting up one barrier of separation after another. Eventually, it becomes very difficult to bring these walls of separation down in our relationships. This is the cause of all the conflict in the world.

So many people over so many different eras just did not know how to listen, nor did they want to. They would claim that God was on their side and that they were in the right and others were in the wrong. But here's how I see it:

God is not on your side or on my side.
He/She is inside each and every one of us!

For myself, I really came to understand this when I was in my early thirties. At that time I became the Executive Director of an organization that planned ecumenical, inter-faith conferences all around the world. The people who attended the conferences were academics in religion and philosophy as well as religious leaders from all over the world. Many very fascinating people attended from all walks of life.

The conferences were as large as 1,000 attendees or as small as twelve. I did this work for about seven years and literally went around the world

many, many times.

Here I was in my early 30s and the head honcho of the whole enterprise while the participants were at least in their early 40s or all the way up into their 80s. Also, most of them were rather eminent in their communities and some were even internationally renowned.

So, my position as their junior was clearly to serve them all. I had to make sure that the organizational aspects of the events went smoothly and that they were all well cared for. In addition, I had to make sure that the topics that we chose had thematic coherence and that it all came together easily. I learned an enormous amount doing this.

One of the most important things I learned was that I had to be listening all the time. I had to be a good listener. Whether I was running a large meeting or just a small planning meeting, I had to be listening. I had to be listening, as well, to mundane complaints such as someone's room was too small or perhaps the glass of water was not placed correctly on the podium. I had to always be listening.

So, given my age and the position I was in, I had to listen. All I did was listen" As well, when I wasn't at an actual conference or a formal meeting, I was meeting with people at my office or talking on the phone with them. When I was at an event, we would have breakfast, lunch, snack and dinner meetings. When I was on the beach in Maui, Hawaii, I was in meetings. At six in the morning, I was in meetings. At eleven at night, I was in meetings: listen, listen, and listening. As time went on, I began to see that there were three kinds of people that I was listening to. First, there were the holier-than-thou eminences, as I called them. When they talked about the paper they wrote, or their tradition, or themselves, it was all ego; it was all look at how great I am! Look at how much better I and my tradition are!

The second group of people was incredibly brilliant intellectually and had wonderful things to say, but they were only interesting up to a point. After awhile, what they were talking about would give me a bad headache or a severe case of mental diarrhea. They were so caught up in their heads. They were the talking heads.

Lastly, there were the laughing Buddhas and other wonderful souls like them who came to these events simply to learn, to enjoy themselves

and to enjoy the company of others. They just laughed and smiled and greeted you warmly all the time. They were there just to enjoy, to listen, to learn, to just be present.

I soon began to realize that it was so much more enjoyable being with those who were present and listening. Those who were endlessly talking about how great they were or how brilliant their intellectual theories were got rather boring; and, interestingly, these same people never asked me a question about myself. I did not exist on some level other than as an object. I was truly other than them.

But it was these laughing Buddha types who would not only ask me about me, but they would listen. I felt embraced by them. I felt one with them. I was included.

(By the way, many of these laughing Buddhas were not Buddhists! They were Hindus and Sikhs, Muslims and African Indigenous, Christians and Jews, as well as Buddhists!)

In order to really be listening one must be silent

I really learned through all this that it was so important for me to be silent in order to really be listening. It did not matter whether I was in a planning meeting discussing practical things, in a conversation pondering profound issues or just hanging out. In order to hear, I had to be still and listen quietly. It was only by doing this that I was able to hear and respond from a place of connection.

My mind had to be still and my heart open
in order to really be listening.

You listen by being silent! It was not that I did not speak up at times, I did; but I learned not to talk a lot in these settings. I chose to listen. I learned to just be present and witness what was going on. I learned to go beyond words and appearances and instead sense the essence of the interchange.

I listened in the silence and to the silence, not only to my own silence, but also to the silence between their words. And it was there that I got to know them. It was there where I got to know who they really were and

what they were really saying.

If we are not engaged in a truly listening mode, we create the conditions for conflict to arise because we are not paying attention, have no idea what is being said, are not present and are not honoring the person speaking.

In this non-listening mode, we perceive ourselves to be other than the person we are talking to. From this left-brain dualistic perspective of separation, we see someone or something outside or other than ourselves and therefore feel justified in ignoring them, scapegoating them or even in inflicting physical or psychological harm upon it.

On the other hand, if we were using our right-brain intuitive faculty to listen, we would experience ourselves as one with rather than separate from another and our response would be quite different and much more embracing and positive. We would better understand the consequences of our actions and words and act more in concert with what is the Highest Good for all concerned.

So, then, how *does* one *really* listen?
How can you have a conversation and be silent, you may ask? Actually, you can have the best one you've ever had. Let me explain further.

Quiet your mind and open your heart!

Language, at best, is a poor form of communication

At this point I feel it would be valuable to offer a few comments about language and words. From my point of view, words or language are very poor forms of communication. They, at best, are pointers to meaning, but they do not express meaning in and of themselves. Actually, they mask real meaning and separate us from it. Let me explain.

The ancient languages were pictographic in nature – Egyptian hieroglyphics, cuneiform, Chinese, etc. – and were much better than modern analytical, left-brain, Western languages in communicating the essence and subtlety of things because they were pictographic.

I myself majored in Classical Greek as an undergraduate. Though its alphabet is not pictographic, its very rich and elaborate syntax and grammar easily creates pictures in the reader's mind. That is why it was such an excellent language for writing great poetry and literature. Apparently,

Sanskrit is similar in this regard.

Modern science has come to understand that we store information in our minds as pictures. We do not store information as words. When I say tree to you, you do not spell the word t-r-e-e out in your mind, but rather a picture of a tree is triggered from your memory and you internally see tree. Actually, you do not just see a tree; you actually have an emotion that you associate with the concept of tree that comes up for you, too.

Interestingly, what has happened to us is that we have become a highly analytical, mental, left-brain culture. We think words have meaning in and of themselves, but they do not. All that words can possibly do is point to meaning.

We think we can understand only through analysis, through words and through the logic of the left brain, but that simply is not true. Words make us feel separate from our object of attention and limit our understanding. They objectify, analyze and categorize things as outside or separate from us.

On the other hand, the logic of the right brain, albeit different from the left brain, helps us to see from the inside-out and therefore helps us to see the bigger picture, so to speak. The right brain helps us to feel one with our object of attention rather than separate from it.

But you can only understand or access the right brain's logic through feeling or by silencing the left-brain mind, and then in this silence you can become one with the object of your attention. Again, the left brain knows only how to analyze, judge and categorize, which in effect separates you from your object of attention.

It is the right-brain, intuitive faculty that allows us to see or sense what is going on from a much broader perspective. It triggers pictures in our minds which give us the bigger picture of what we are observing. Remember, a picture is worth 10,000 words; so a picture communicates so much more than a pile of words ever could. Pictures help us to access the essence of a thing.

And please remember, as I said above, these pictures not only conjure up images, but also emotions. So, we really get to feel what we are seeing. Plus, if you let the pictures flow one after the other, they create a movie, so to speak. And then as this movie unfolds before you, you really get into the

essence/feel of what you are focusing on.

So, by just focusing on an analysis and a categorization of our object of attention, we don't see the whole picture. We get to see only a small portion of it; we place limits on it and at best we get to only skim the surface.

But by using our intuitive/listening/right-brain faculty, we not only see more of what we are focusing on, but also get to see and feel what we are focusing on from the inside-out. We get to become one with it and, therefore, come to know it from within. We get to know so much more this way.

In other words, in this mode of listening, the separation between subject and object is transcended. The listener becomes one with his/her object of attention and knows it from the inside-out by identification with rather than information about.

So, in order to truly listen to or communicate with another we must become one with them. We must be in communion with them.

In this regard it is interesting to look at the etymological root of the word communion. In Latin, com means with and union means one. So, communion or communicate means to become one with.

We can't get around it: in order to communicate with or listen to another, we must become one. We cannot be separate and expect to understand or know another. We can not think and analyze and expect to know. We must become one, not two, if we are to truly be present and listening.

So, by quieting your mind and opening your heart you will come to know, as Theophane, the monk came to realize, that there is no other; there is only You–the Divine You.

And it is then that you will "hear" the Sound of One Hand Clapping and be on your Way!

Endnote

1 I feel that Darrol Bryant's life and work has been dedicated to this art and that he's a master at it.

The Way of the Tibetan Book of the Dead
(AS OF AUGUST 2012…)

Val Lariviere

On May 8, 1996, my life changed. That day, my two friends Cerridwen and Mark drowned in a canoe accident on the Montreal River. In January they had gone ahead to set up a home in Elk Lake, Ontario, where I would follow and we three would build a business and set off on a path together. And then they died. This wasn't my first experience with death, but at that time it was most certainly the closest. I expected the world to stop while I gathered myself, but that is not what happened. My life went on. This existence was made up of versions of myself: one version wanted to follow them before they got too far away; another version wanted to go on although I lacked the skills to take the first step, and yet another self wanted to close my eyes and wish it all away.

My response to this rending took me back to university, to the study of religion in an attempt to find some answers to the larger questions of life. Over time, my focus revolved more and more around how the various religious traditions view death and what, if anything, lay beyond. Under the supervision of my professor, Dr. Darrol Bryant, I was given the opportunity to invest a large amount of time and energy into a single project. Perhaps predictably, I asked him if I could investigate something concerning death. Our initial conversations quickly turned toward Eastern thought, as these traditions include rich discussions on the topic of death. When Dr. Bryant suggested *The Tibetan Book of the Dead,* something clicked deep within me and I clearly felt this was the teaching I needed to explore. And so began my very personal journey with this remarkable illuminating text.

From the beginning I experienced challenges working with this text. First, I did not read any of the original languages and so could not reference the writings in their original form. Second, as I am a Canadian who was

born into the Roman Catholic faith, I was unfamiliar with the cultural and religious milieu of the work. These roadblocks led to the notion that I might compare some of the major English translations of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and see what emerged. I began to read and study in the attempt to release some small amount of understanding, however clumsy and confused that attempt might be. Every week or two I would meet with Dr. Bryant to talk, and it was in these informal chats that I became aware of a deepening of my experience of the reading. It was, I think, as close as I have ever come to what the Tibetans describe as transmitted insight. That was how it went for eight months – reading, sharing and talking and in the end, writing.

The central question of my exploration concerned what happens to human beings after death, in the Tibetan tradition, and the implications of such an understanding. I began with a comparative analysis – sometimes line by line – of the three English translations (with commentaries) of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* that were popular at that time: the 1919 translation by Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup with commentary and footnotes by W.Y. Evans-Wentz, the 1975 work by Francesca Fremantle and Chogyam Trungpa, and the 1994 text by Robert A.F. Thurman. I also included some relevant information from Sogyal Rinpoche's *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* to help unravel some of the basic ideas of this unusual and complex text. Finally, I made an attempt to suggest some possible implications of these teachings for both Western culture and individuals.

I will begin this re-visiting of my previous journey with *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* with a brief discussion of the foundational concepts of "*bardo*" and "liberation." Then I will proceed to describe the states of consciousness experienced during the death process as outlined in the texts. Finally, I will attempt to describe what this study meant to my personal search for the answer to the question of death and how it changed me.

According to tradition, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a set of instructions on liberation through hearing composed by Padma Sambhava and written down by his wife in the eighth or ninth century of the Common Era. Padma Sambhava buried these texts in the hills of central Tibet where they were discovered in the fourteenth century by Karma-

Lingpa.[1] Tradition further holds that these detailed instructions, practical guidelines or process manuals are to be read to the deceased for the forty-nine days following his death to increase the potential for liberation or at the very least a better rebirth. The hope is that if the deceased has followed a spiritual practice in life, hearing the text read to him at death will encourage him to face any experience he may encounter at death or thereafter with a confidence born from rehearsal rather than a horror-filled fear of the unknown.

Sogyal Rinpoche writes that the actual name of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is *Bardo Todrol Chenmo,* which he translates as "the Great Liberation through Hearing in the *Bardo*."[2] Liberation can be understood as enlightenment, understanding or awakening but these words alone may not contribute significantly to clarity in our Western understanding. Robert Thurman describes liberation as the dissolution of subjectivity and objectivity where all that remains is pure intelligence, our real nature.[3] One of the methods thought to invite enlightenment is on hearing a profound teaching such that "whoever comes into contact with this teaching…receives a sudden glimpse of enlightenment through the power of transmission."[4] It may be that liberation is beyond definition by words. My understanding of liberation from the Tibetan perspective increased significantly when it was approached through metaphor. For me, the most beneficial metaphors were those created by Francesca Fremantle who described liberation as being like removing dust from a mirror or like clouds dissolving to reveal a clear sky.[5] From within the worldview of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead,* the deceased must recognize his experiences as himself and not something external to himself, and if he would attain liberation he must maintain that recognition. In this way recognition is simultaneous with liberation.

The concept of *bardo* is perhaps even more difficult for the Western mind to grasp. Lama Anagarika Govinda describes the *bardos* as representing different states of consciousness of our life.[6] Chogyam Trungpa translates *bar* as "in between" and *do* as "island" or "mark"; an island between two things.[7] He describes *bardo* as "gap" and explains it as both the interval of suspension that occurs in life as well as in death. Robert Thurman refers to the *bardo* state as "the between." However, it was Trungpa who made

the *bardo* experience accessible for me by approaching it from a more psychological viewpoint. He states:

> There are bardo experiences happening to us all the time, experiences of paranoia and uncertainty in everyday life; it is like not being sure of our ground, not knowing quite what we have asked for or what we are getting into…they are not just psychedelic experiences or visions that appear after death.[8]

The notion of losing ground was immediately illuminating for me. I remember being very excited by this revelation in conversation with Dr. Bryant, as I was so easily able to tap into this feeling and the existential terror it suggested.

The term *bardo* might also reflect the temporal place where you have left what you know and have not yet arrived at what is next. The between, transitional, intermediate, interval or gap are all descriptions used to describe the *bardo* states. Another perhaps potentially valuable term not used by any of the authors and/or translators is "liminal" which is defined as "of or relating to a sensory threshold"[9] and is much used in descriptions of rites of passage. Victor Turner, whose work as a cultural anthropologist is often referred to as symbolic and interpretive anthropology, states, "[I]t is the liminal state which is both threatening and at the same time the only route to change."[10] This sounds startlingly similar to Trungpa's description of *bardo* experiences: "They are the heightened qualities of different types of ego and the possibility of getting off ego. That's when the bardo starts – the peak experience in which there is the possibility of losing the grip of ego and the possibility of being swallowed up in it."[11]

Evans-Wentz, Thurman and Trungpa each acknowledge six *bardos* or modes of consciousness: the *bardo* of this life, the *bardo* of dream, the *bardo* of meditation, the *bardo* of dying, the *bardo* of *dharmata* (or reality) and the *bardo* of becoming. The *bardo* of dreaming and "the *bardo* of meditation both take place within the *bardo* of this life." [12] Fremantle states, "All the instructions concerning the six *bardos* basically deal with allowing that gap to open by undermining our belief in the ordinary world that we take for granted, and then letting go into the space beyond."[13] Sogyal Rinpoche argues that the *bardo* of dreams corresponds to the *bardo*

of death, although the latter is much deeper. In this way, how your mind is in the dream state may give you an indication of how it will be at death.[14] In a similar way, our meditation practice can give us the skills to enter deeper and deeper states of consciousness where we can become adept at waking in unfamiliar circumstances with the awareness that these are simply creations of our own thoughts. So developing a meditation practice or skill with our dreams may allow us to experience these states of mind while still alive, enabling us to more easily recognize the Clear Light or the Luminosity at the moment of death and attain liberation.[15]

Using these concepts as our foundation, it is now possible to turn our attention to the text of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The work is divided into three sections identified as three *bardos* based on the experiences of the deceased just prior to his death and for the forty-nine days afterward. The guide describes what the deceased experiences physically, mentally and emotionally. The *bardo* which dawns at the moment of death is called the *Chikhai Bardo* and is an extremely potent moment, powerful in itself when "all beings are as close as possible to their own highest enlightenment."[16] Our sources divide this *bardo* into two stages. Evans-Wentz calls the first stage the primary Clear Light seen at the moment of death[17] and notes that it is the penultimate moment to attain liberation. But this is not as easy as it may sound. At the moment of his death, the deceased is at the very least confused as he begins to experience the dissolution of his body. Often the literature describes the deceased as being in a swoon. Evans-Wentz communicates this experience as "losing equilibrium" and Trungpa likens the experience to a feeling of "uncertainty" when one is confronted by an unfamiliar reality. Personally, I have never experienced a greater terror then when I first considered the notion that "I" will no longer exist, that there will be no more me, no memories, no thoughts, nothing. Perhaps the most helpful picture of the experience comes again from Trungpa when he suggests that the deceased is overcome by a feeling of "losing one's ground" which builds "up to a point of fear of becoming insane, the point where there are possibilities of leaving the world of duality and going into a sort of woolly, fuzzy emptiness."[18] It is easy to understand that this fear of losing ground might cause the dying person to grasp at the life just lived, at what is familiar, rather than to recognize the Clear Light as himself. So

in the hope that he will hear and be awakened, the text is to be read to the deceased for three or four days as a way to remind him of his spiritual practice and keep his mind from wandering.

If the deceased has been unable to hold on to the Clear Light as himself, and achieve liberation, he will next experience the second stage of the *Chikkai Bardo* or the secondary Clear Light seen immediately after death. This state is less intense than the previous one although the deceased still may not know that he is dead. He is confused and may be reluctant to give up the notion of a subjective self. His consciousness will leave his body and float around the room and he will be able to see and hear his relatives although he may misinterpret his awareness of their grief as a state of continuing to be connected to them.[19] Here, the living who would assist the dying are again asked to remind the deceased to focus his mind on the teachings he has received in life by meditating on his tutelary deity or the "Great Compassionate Lord." [20]

At this point, if liberation has eluded the deceased, he awakens out of his swoon into the second or *Chonyid Bardo.* The inner and outer dissolutions are complete. The person now understands that he is dead and that he is in a *bardo* state but he remains under the delusion that he still has his flesh and blood body. The deceased may try to contact his relations and friends and may become frustrated when they do not respond or angry when they divide his belongings or talk about him. The text reminds those sitting with the deceased to continue to speak to him, to read the guidance to him and most importantly to advise him to turn away from the life he has left as there is no longer any possibility for his return to it.

Again there are two phases of the *Chonyid Bardo*: the appearance of the Mild or Peaceful Deities, which is thought to take place from day one to day seven, and the appearance of the Fierce or Wrathful Deities from day eight to day forty-nine. Originally, I explored and compared each day individually but some general observations may be made. The central notions are that everything the deceased may see or experience at this time is simply his mind arising before him in unfamiliar ways and a reminder not to succumb to fear or panic.[21] Initially, he will experience three phenomena: frightening sounds, bewildering lights and terrifying rays of lights. Following that, the symbolic visions of the Peaceful Deities

arise. Although it might seem that the presence of benevolent deities would be comforting, Trungpa insists the opposite is the case:

> This state of absolute peacefulness seems to be extremely frightening, and there is often the possibility that one's faith might be shaken by such a sudden glimpse of another dimension, where the concept of union is not applicable anymore.[22]

The descriptions of each vision are extremely complex, specific and detailed with layers of esoteric meaning. Familiarity with related teachings in life allow the deceased to use the coded visions as tools to aid him in the awareness that they are simply thought forms arising from the enlightened energy of his own mind. It is this recognition that will liberate him.[23]

If the deceased is not yet liberated, the experience of the Wrathful Deities will take place. The Wrathful Deities are represented by extremely detailed descriptions of their blood-drinking visages without the esoteric trappings present in the visions of the Peaceful Deities. And whereas the impulses of Peaceful Deities arose from the heart of the deceased, the awareness of the Wrathful Deities arises from the intellect and so the deceased can more clearly recognize his current state. The fear, terror and awe felt in the presence of Fierce Deities are of such intensity that recognition of them as embodiments of his intellect becomes increasingly difficult for him. But he need only recognize just a little and it is easier to become liberated because "with the arising of overwhelming fear the mind has no time to be distracted, and so it concentrates one-pointedly."[24]

Failing recognition, the deceased will wander further into the third or *Sidpa Bardo*, a much lower plane than the *Chonyid Bardo*.[25] Here, the deceased has come to the full knowledge that he does not have a body and develops an overpowering desire to have one. Thurman states that the deceased creates for himself a subtle energy body which is "driven by the swift wind of evolution, [his] mind is helpless and unstable, riding the horse of breath like a feather blown in the wind, spinning and fluttering."[26] He is unable to rest and his thoughts take on a desperate quality, with only the thought of acquiring a new body bringing him any relief. He reaches out to his relatives but they cannot hear him and this causes him to feel yet more pain. Here, the reader must try to orient the deceased to his current

state and remind him to focus his mind.

If he has not succeeded in achieving liberation, the deceased will next be presented with a judgement experience similar to that in many Western religions. Here, a vision in the form of a Good Genius (Evans-Wentz) or conscience (Trungpa) and the Evil Genius or conscience appear to count out pebbles representing the good deeds and bad deeds performed by the dead person during his life. If there is any disagreement, *Yama* the Lord of Death will consult the Mirror of *Karma* (Evans-Wentz) or Mirror of Evolution (Thurman) to decide on the veracity of the arguments presented. Sogyal Rinpoche highlights two important and necessary points that emerge in this judgement experience. First, that the judgement takes place in the mind of the deceased alone, whereby he is both the judge and the judged. Second, "that what really counts…is the motivation behind [the deceased's] every action, and there is no escaping the effects of [his] past actions, words, and thoughts, and the imprints and habits they have stamped with [him]."[27]

There are two distinct orientations in the *Sidpa Bardo*: the first is instruction for closing the womb-door and second, if that fails, for choosing a beneficial womb. The five methods that may be employed to close the womb-door and prevent re-birth involve both images to tempt the deceased as well as instructions to resist the temptation. As always, if the deceased can stabilize his mind, he will succeed in closing the womb-door. If, however, the deceased fails to close the womb door, then his rebirth is at hand. The danger arises in that in his passion to acquire a material body, the deceased could be lured into the lower realms for incarnation. The text takes great pains to remind the officiate that liberation is still possible in the *Sidpa Bardo* and for this reason the guide should persevere in his repetitions since even if the deceased is not liberated by one orientation, he may be liberated by another.

Each realm of potential rebirth is landmarked by particular signs and characteristics that the deceased may recognize. It is only in the human realm that conditions are favourable for spiritual advancement, but it requires such intense single pointed concentration to suppress the feeling of being pursued that the deceased may seek refuge anywhere without thought of how his choice will affect his future. To aid his focus, the

deceased is encouraged to take refuge in the Three Jewels and bow to the Lord of Compassion. He is further advised to balance his mind and give up all attachment to outcome and enter a supreme state of equilibrium.[28] Thurman illustrates it as follows:

> Here these most powerful Archetype Deities are invoked to provide a shock intervention, to slow the course of a between-being's rebirth; not at this time to attain liberation, but to find a brief respite to change course and choose a better rebirth. For a person with no experience of an Archetype deity, this is the moment to invoke…anything fierce and of overwhelming power, that still can be thought of as a benevolent protector by the person.[29]

And then the dead is reborn.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead provides an extremely detailed description of an after-death experience. Do I believe *Bardo Todrol Chenmo* is an accurate statement of what occurs as we die? No, I don't suppose I do. Am I now convinced that there is life after death? Again, no. But do I believe then that this text is without worth? A resounding no. I will now attempt to describe the avenues this text has taken my thought and the changes that the time I spent with these teachings has wrought in me.

If the *Bardo Thodol* is a true account of the human experience of death and dying, we are to accept the verity of life after death. If the experiences described in the text do in fact imply the existence of a consciousness able to exist independently from our physical bodies, it should impact on how we live. For instance, it would necessarily call into question our treatment of the dying and the dead. If the dying and the dead have a heightened sense of hearing, then what is said in their presence becomes more important. If the dying and the dead can see what is happening, then more attention must be paid to how we treat their bodies during and after death. And even beyond these rather pragmatic considerations are spiritual considerations for those of the medical community. Sogyal Rinpoche frames these considerations in the form of questions:

> How can you be a truly effective doctor when you do not have at least some understanding of the truth about death, or how

> really to care spiritually for your dying patient? How can you be a truly effective nurse if you have not begun to face your own fear of dying and have nothing to say to those who are dying when they ask you for guidance and wisdom?...Isn't it time now that the medical profession should understand that the search for truth about life and death and the practice of healing are inseparable?[30]

Issues such as resuscitation and euthanasia would become more complex as well.[31] From this new perspective, it would be infinitely more important to help the dying cope with everything that attends their death process – fear, pain, confusion – with love and compassion rather than strictly from the medical model of pain relief and euthanasia. Also, the definition of death itself would have to be enlarged beyond the termination of specific bodily functions to include the cessation of subtle levels of consciousness. Psychiatry and psychology might have to shift as well since in this new context the mind would be understood as having a separate existence from the body which could indicate a need for therapies to move away from physical treatments such a drugs or electric shock therapy, as these would be too limited to be useful.

Some of the more potent implications would exist at the personal level. For one thing, the preparations one might make for one's own death would swing from the material world (e.g. purchasing one's burial plot) to the non-material world (e.g. some type of preparatory spiritual practice). For another, if consciousness is independent of physical processes, an individual, while in the fullness of life, might seek to expand his knowledge of his own consciousness and change the emphasis in his life from the physical things to things of the mind or spirit. Practices such as meditation, dream work and visualization might take on a new significance to achieve both the good life and the good death. Concepts like knowledge and compassion might replace consumerism, materialism, and so forth in the life of the individual.

Following from this, the teachings of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* could offer a revised attitude of compassion to our treatment of the dead. The text instructs us to support our dying with compassion both as they

die and after they are dead. We are to read to them, talk to them and not try to hang on to them. We are to try to create an experience for them that might lead to their enlightenment (however that is culturally or religiously envisioned). We are to think about them and what they need and above all what they want. But this requires more from us than we may have to give. This requires us to deal with, if not face, our fear of death.

Joan Halifax, a Buddhist roshi, anthropologist and ecologist, tells us that "death is repressed in Western culture" and I cannot but agree. It is not that we in the West are unfamiliar with death – we are assaulted continually by images of death in our media if not in our own experience. It is rather that we treat death as alien to us and respond to it with fear and loathing. We deny death because it signals some kind of cultural failure. At the very least we fear the knowledge that the world will at some point go on without us. Our response is to keep death separate from life. We have hospices and hospitals for the dying and funeral homes for the dead. We have specialists to deal with what we will not. And specialists, however good, remove us from the necessity of being personally responsible for our dying relatives, friends and selves. We have so far removed death from life that we do not view it as a rite of passage like puberty or marriage or as a profound transitional experience for which we can prepare. We approach death always as a beginner, always without skill. Perhaps it is here that *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* can offer us some assistance.

I am not suggesting that it is necessary to read the Tibetan text to the dying in the West, but I do think that there are teachings contained within this book which could easily be applied to the Western experience of dying to great benefit. First, the Tibetan text is, in essence, a guide and as such serves to prepare the dying for the experiences he will encounter. If we can extrapolate the experiences described in the text, then we can create the same sort of guide. Second, the Tibetan text states that remembering one's spiritual practice is the single most important tool with which to successfully navigate the after-death states. If we can bring to the mind of the deceased a recollection of his own spiritual beliefs and practices, it will also serve to ground him in what is familiar and give him a framework within which to move during the death experience. Third, the Tibetan text identifies for the deceased what he may be feeling and his state of mind,

offering instructions on how to cope with these feelings and mind-states. This kind of instruction cannot be anything but helpful to the dying and the dead since it not only normalizes the experience but also recommends strategies that may be helpful. Sogyal Rinpoche states:

> When we suddenly realize that our whole life, our whole reality, is disappearing, it is terrifying: We don't know what is happening to us, or where we are going. Nothing in our previous experience has prepared us for this… [O]ur anxiety will even heighten the experience of physical pain. If we have not taken care of our lives, or our actions have been harmful and negative, we will feel regret, guilt, and fear. So just to have a measure of familiarity with these teachings on the bardos will bring us some reassurance, inspiration, and hope, even though we may never have practices and realized them.[32]

The teachings of the *Bardol Thodol* serve as preparation for an unknown experience and as such may be of inestimable value. There is an advantage to being rehearsed for an after-death experience, even if there should be no such experience. This is so much more than we have currently in the West. Fourth, the dying cannot but benefit as compassion is placed at the centre of the death experience.

When I began the research for my original paper, I wasn't really expecting any kind of definitive answer as to what happens at and after death. My thinking in spiritual matters has always tended towards the idea of mystery or the notion that if I can understand it, it can't be true, since the spiritual is always "bigger" than I could possibly imagine. I did, however, discover some maps for the journey if not exactly truths to hang my hat on. I came away from this study taking death seriously. I have learned that it is not important to me what if anything occurs after death. It could be anything – the void, the land of milk and honey or rebirth as a hungry ghost. What is important is my attitude and I alone hold the power to create it. I have learned that death is not the worst thing that can happen to a person. It is much worse to live without compassion and cause suffering to others. Now for me, death can no longer be something from which I can turn away. If it is someone else's death I am to witness, I am

to stand my ground and remind my friend who he is. My goal is to always take my heading from a place of compassion. If it is my own death, I am to prepare by meditating and dream-work so that my fear and panic at death is lessened when my basic confidence in "I" is shattered at my death. And in a truly amazing way, the more I turn toward death, the more willing I am to launch myself into my own life. There is no time to waste. But above all – in both life and death – I must turn towards whatever experience is approaching and stand my ground. Fear alone will defeat me.

I have learned much from my time with this remarkable text, and I understand that my personal journey with this text must continue through my life, and if I am lucky, my death. I do wish that I had had some familiarity with this beautiful guide on that day in May, for all of our sakes. When my friends died, all I could do was stand guard at their coffins so very lost to them and to myself. I had nothing to offer them and no way to begin to heal myself. Now I believe it would have been different with *The Tibetan Book of the Dead,* for as the Fremantle and Trungpa translation ends, "Even if the buddhas of the past, present, and future were to search, they would not find a better teaching than this."[33] And with that I think I might agree.

Endnotes

[1] Robert A.F. Thurman, "Preface," *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (New York: Bantam Books) 1994, p. xix.

[2] Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco) 1992, p.102.

[3] Thurman, p.48.

[4] Francesca Fremantle & Chogyam Trungpa, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987) p.xi.

[5] Francesca Fremantle, *Luminous Emptiness* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001. p.21.

[6] Lama Anagarika Govinda, "Introductory Foreword," *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* compiled and edited by W.Y. Evans-Wentz. London: Oxford University Press, 2000. p.lxi.

[7] Fremantle & Trungpa, p.10.

[8] Fremantle & Trungpa, pp.1-2.

[9] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. Tenth Edition.* Massachusetts: Merriam Webster,

Incorporated, 1997. p.675.

[10] *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Ed., John Bowker. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. p.818.

[11] Chogyam Trungpa, *Transcending Madness*. Boston: Shambhala, 1992, p.132.

[12] Fremantle, p.58.

[13] Fremantle, p.69.

[14] Rinpoche, pp.107-108.

[15] Rinpoche, pp.106-107.

[16] Thurman, p.253.

[17] Evans-Wentz, p.89.

[18] Freemantle & Trungpa, pp.3-4.

[19] Thurman, p.127.

[20] Evans-Wentz, pp.98-99.

[21] Fremantle & Trungpa, p.41.

[22] Fremantle & Trungpa, p.13.

[23] Fremantle&Trungpa, pp.xvii-xix.

[24] Fremantle & Trungpa, p.57.

[25] Evans-Wentz, p.151.

[26] Thurman, p.172.

[27] Rinpoche, p.292.

[28] Fremantle & Trungpa, pp.91-92.

[29] Thurman, p.190.

[30] Rinpoche, p.357.

[31] Rinpooche, pp.371-375. Here Sogyal Rinpoche reviews these issues from a Buddhist perspective.

[32] Rinpoche, p.246.

The Way of Hospice

Nick Ruiter

Philosophy of Hospice

Maggie, the 83-year-old woman in the bed at St. Michael's Hospital palliative care unit, informed me that "old age has arrived" when I asked her how she was doing. I noticed her blanket pulled up to under her nose, different from previous visits.

Her niece had asked me, a hospice spiritual care coordinator, to visit to assist with funeral planning but not to involve Maggie in the planning. I also heard myself agreeing when she requested would I please not tell her auntie that she was dying. So once a week for six weeks, we discussed the other ninety-eight topics that remained open. Maggie talked about her youth, her experiences as a young married woman, living through the bombardment of London during WWII, her family, the awful art that makes its way onto hospital room walls, immigrating to Canada, her outlook on life, as well as her hope of returning to her apartment on Toronto's Lakeshore Boulevard.

I pulled my chair closer to her bedside as I pursued her comment. "'Old age has arrived'. Tell me Maggie, what's that like for you?"

Her eyes twinkled above the blanket. She replied, "Don't you worry. You'll find out."

Laughter filled the room.

There are many insights that I derive from Maggie and the many others I have been privileged to serve in the way of hospice. Health care professionals talk about patient-centeredness, to engage the value of an individual's consent to informed treatment. Hospice care is essentially a philosophy of care that seeks to embrace the uniqueness of the individual. To live and die on one's own terms is viewed as contributing to dying well, whether at home, in hospital or hospice. Dame Cicely Saunders, generally credited with starting the modern hospice movement, stated that we

bother with hospice care to make it possible for people who are dying to live fully until they die: *"You matter because you are you. You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die."* [1]

Whatever inner resources or sense of humour Maggie possessed to enter dying, it is important to acknowledge that it is Maggie's path. It is her illness, her suffering, her dying. Dying is personal. It is our spirituality we seek when we try to cope with illness, grief, death and dying. It is our spirituality we seek when we need things to make sense.

Maggie's decisions regarding the care she receives from others at the end of life are central to the overall care plan. Her niece understood this, helped to save care team members from pursuing potentially unfruitful avenues and supported her aunt to die in a way that was appropriate to Maggie.

How do any of us whether alone, in a family, among friends (or on a professional care team) wish to be spoken to on our deathbed?

Philip is a 64-year-old man living with lung cancer and a prognosis of less than six months. I first meet with him in his apartment where he lives alone. I was on a joint visit with a hospice nurse. An initial assessment indicates Philip experiences considerable pain and discomfort. He hardly looks up from where he is seated on a couch. Nevertheless, he remarks with pride that he can still knock back a six-pack of beer on weekends. The nurse discusses what pain medications and dosages he is taking. Sitting next to him on his couch, I introduce my role as someone who he can talk to in confidence about things important to him. We can meet weekly or Philip may wish to request a pastoral counselling session on the basis of need.

"I would be guided by you, Philip."

His response startles me. "I know what's going on," he said. "God is punishing me for the life I've lived."

A moment of silence ensues. His statement hangs in the air.

"Oh?" I reply. "Care to say some more about that?"

More silence signals that it is the end of the conversation. He declines the invitation of a new one. Before we leave, he gives permission to have a palliative care doctor visit to help manage his pain. He also gives me

permission to contact him again. I was to walk with his comment for four months.

My subsequent phone calls to Philip go unanswered. I decide to simply drop by to catch him at home. He buzzes me up through the intercom, lets me into his apartment, then asks me "Who are you and what do you do again?"

Monthly we carry on this way. Nothing is allowed to be scheduled. On my last visit I wait outside his apartment when I hear his laboured breathing preceding him up the few steps to his apartment lobby. I offer to carry his grocery bag but he shakes his head. We sit on his couch, yesterday's half-empty beer bottle on the coffee table in front of us. He catches his breath. Despite fatigue, Philip manages some conversation. He opens up on bits and pieces of his personal history. After an hour, I take my leave. When my hand reaches the doorknob, I give voice to a thought that struck me in the moment: "Philip. I think God may like you after all. You don't blame anyone else for your illness. You don't push your problems onto others. And you are your own man." Philip's emphatic "yes" lets me know that I'd probably gotten as close as anyone to this very private man.

At St. Joseph's Health Care Centre the following week, I was to meet him one more time. I knock on the door, announce myself and ask for permission to visit. He opens one eye to see who it is then lets it close. He doesn't say a word. Before taking leave, I speak softly in his ear commending him for being his own man and for keeping his dignity."You save energy for you, Philip. Be yourself: no more, no less, no different." Philip died later that evening.

When the late Canadian documentary film maker Alan King was asked by York University film students to comment on his film *Dying At The Grace*, specifically what insight he had gained of our common humanity, he paused thoughtfully before replying how each death he had filmed had been "utterly unique."

Dr. Kubler-Ross studied the concerns of the dying and kick started public discourse on end-of-life care in the United States. Her book *On Death and Dying,* published in 1969 and largely addressed to the medical profession, noted that there were many questions that went unanswered by doctors. Patient distress may easily be unheard or overlooked in a

high-tech hospital environment. She valued the older dying-at-home experience, wherein one is surrounded by family and friends. Historically, hospices in the United States date from the 1970s.

Dr. Dorothy Ley, one of Canada's pioneers of Palliative Care, wrote:

> Palliative care is about living and the meaning of life. It's about loss and grief and joy. It's about giving and receiving. It's about caring and sharing. It's about tears and laughter. These short words may sound trite but they are not. They are very powerful words when acted upon. In short, palliative care is about life, not death. We must always remember that.[2]

Bearing the name of the hospice in which I work, the late Dr.Ley outlined four pillars or domains that comprise holistic hospice care of the dying. Hospice care is comprised of physical care, emotional care, spiritual care and informational care. That is, effective pain and symptom management; teasing out an individual's or culture's understanding of illness and dying; discerning the truths that an individual lives by; and promoting the value of timely information is the way of hospice. Hospice care supports people to live the life they want or need to live, no matter how long or short the time left.

To add further context, the World Health Organization has developed this definition of palliative care:

> Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.(2008)[3]

At the level of clinical practice, it is important to add that palliative care can only be accomplished by a team, usually inter-disciplinary or even trans-disciplinary in nature. Working and learning collaboratively is the rule. No one person on his or her own can provide palliative care. When a cure is no longer possible but healing is, there is room for a nurse, a volunteer, a physician, a personal service worker, a social worker and a

spiritual care provider.

Finally, hospice acknowledges the contribution of family members who truly know the individual. An acute care medical model most often will focus on the individual's illness. The unit of care in hospice is the individual and whomever the individual names as "family." That could include, for example, a neighbour, former colleague, partner or friend. And often some surprises.

Family Dynamics

Bruce is a 72-year-old man with end stage congestive heart failure, married, and the father of two adult daughters. Until his hospitalization he worked as the CEO of a fairly large Canadian company. I receive a telephone call from his daughter who lives out of town. She cries on the phone as she tells me her dad is dying, that her grief is overwhelming and not helped by the fact her sister is not allowing her to visit dad at the hospital, as 'your crying will just bring dad down.' She telephones me every third day, with whimpering and crying that I come to regard in a Rogerian positive-regard way as "being daughter."

She asks me to visit her father.

I visit in the Palliative Care Unit of the hospital to meet Bruce and learn that his other daughter is "doing daughter." She is well read about her dad's illness via the internet, rolls up her sleeves to be a better nurse than the palliative care nurses on the hospital floor and is actively trying to cheer dad at his bedside. There is a framed picture on the wall that illustrates a young boy beside a brook, fishing pole in hand, a picket fence country church in the background, and who in his bare feet and jeans is living an idyllic moment. "Doing" daughter asks, "Hey dad, wouldn't you love to go fishing?" Bruce is eight days away from his last breath. I hear him say softly, though I'm not sure his daughter heard, "Maybe it's time to drop the fishing rod ....."

I leave the hospital telling myself that the difference in approaches of "doing daughter" and "being daughter" is neither a reflection of the grief nor the depth of love that each daughter feels for Bruce.

Each is doing the best she can.

The involvement of the family usually complicates care. Everyone does

family differently. Some will not want to be in the room at all. Some may not want you to be in the room. The role of hospice is to try to facilitate the farewells and the tying up of loose ends. The hospice team will promote a family meeting early in the process to assess family dynamics that will impact the care plan.

Respecting that family dynamics are built up over decades, even intergenerationally, the role of a hospice spiritual care coordinator is to be an inquiring learner or student allowing the individual and their family to be the teacher.

A Family Conference is an opportunity to receive and convey key information. Medical updates may be reviewed. Some will want to know whether they will die in pain and suffering. Others may want to know how long they will live. Families may use the time to air grievances or find grace moments to reconcile and heal unresolved conflict. Pragmatically, the Care Team will ask the family what is working and what needs to improve.

In a free-standing, ten-bed residential hospice, family meetings usually include, in addition to family, the hospice medical director or nurse, spiritual care coordinator, hospice volunteer and a social work, theology or nursing student on field placement. Vital learnings occur when the dying individual participates and expresses his or her goals of care and how best the family may use the time to navigate the next days and weeks.

I have learned that redemptive moments of change, growth and healing are made possible by the extra freedom afforded individuals when a family conference is facilitated by a compassionate and professional care team member. Having someone from outside the usual social circle lets a family be themselves - to be the people they are.

Poignant moments occur when families are finding it difficult to come to terms with an impending death. At times, it appears left to a six-year-old to ask, “Is daddy going to die?” and have the question penetrate the adults. Often as the needs of the dying one dwindle, the needs of family increase. Witnessing a loved one die is itself a form of suffering, a threatened, then real disruption of attachment. Fears and anxieties are heightened. Grief feelings give evidence that the future is being altered. Each in the family is experiencing loss and changes in their assumptive world.

Spirituality

Hospice spirituality is presence and "being with." The distinct role of the care provider is to companion, to explore thoughts and feelings. To facilitate the experience of spirituality is to affirm and celebrate the individual's own truths from within the person's life and experience.

We have a sense of spirituality within us, heightened near death. Often it is made manifest in a quest for meaning, for connectedness and wholeness. Jenny, a Filipino-Canadian mother, thirty four, with advanced bone cancer shared the following: "If I am to go I want to know why. After all, life must have some point. Doesn't it?" [4]

Echoes of her meanings emerge as we are drawn more deeply into dialogue: "I know I have something to give. I have three kids, a husband, come from a large family and friends but it's hard – I feel thankful for my family, I feel hopeless when I think of my family... if I am to go I want to be at peace ... what I most want to tell them is I love you. I'm here too. I just want to be free to love".[5]

Working through times when one's experience of life may be at odds with one's perspective on life is to face one's spiritual distress. The essence of spiritual pain is to feel hopeless and that one's life is without purpose or is meaningless. [6] One's dying is reflective of the entire life that is being lived. Accepting that each person is the expert on his or her own life's journey, the spiritual task near death is to work through the existential issues that frame our lives. Not surprisingly, these issues of dying, meaning, isolation or freedom are not necessarily worked through within a religious context.

Canadian hospices distinguish between spirituality and religion. Spirituality is a dynamic process of turning inward to reflect on life, but at the same time turning outward to seek that which is beyond daily experience. For many, spirituality is found in religion. For many other people, their spirituality is expressed in nature, art, music or life in general.

I have needed to develop a definition of spirituality that is accessible to fellow colleagues on the Care Team, whose spirituality may or may not contain religious elements: hospice spirituality is attention to the ebb and flow of one's sense of self. Following this more organic or experiential approach, hospice staff are encouraged to uncover or make aware the

spirituality that has always resided within the person – spirituality that may or may not contain religious elements. This plays out then in highly individual care plans which capture unique spiritual questions and expressions. Caregivers need to have the skill and ability to "hear," "see" and respond to that individuality, thereby employing a skill set which embraces diversity.

There is something therapeutic for both care-seeker and care-provider in making the starting point the spiritual integrity of the person. The pastoral stance or skill is one of listening, of being present to the lived experience. It is to know yourself as a spiritual being, experiencing your spirituality. It is to draw on that wellspring to support the dying. It is to be invited into the journey not to determine or even know the outcome of the journeying.

Finally, from time to time I am given the opportunity to teach others about the way of hospice. My rule - whenever and wherever one is invited into the clinical encounter - is to grant the care seeker 90% of the air time and to give yourself 10%.

On the other hand, if you're having a good day, give yourself 5%.

Endnotes

[1] See Dr. Robert Twycross. http://www.stchristophers.org.uk/page.cfm/ID=900 (accessed June 2011).

[2] Ley. Dorothy C.H, *The Heart of Hospice* (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1994), p.30.

[3] http://www.who.int/cancer/palliative/definition/en/

[4] Notes from a private meeting held in Toronto October 7, 2000.

[5] Notes from a private meeting held in Toronto October 7, 2000.

[6] Frankl, Viktor, *Man's Search for Meaning* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987).

The Way of Bodhisattva

James Duerlinger

Though with little practice of the Bodhisattva way of life, I have been blessed by teachings on the Bodhisattva's path from its accomplished practitioners, and in dependence upon their teachings, here, in accord with the venerable Buddhist tradition of explaining the path in verse, I humbly offer a treatise called

THE BODHISATTVA SUTRA.

Prologue

A poet I am not, since without linguistic proficiency.
May the song in my heart compensate for this great deficiency.
Its verses were composed by the power of love and compassion
for all suffering beings who live in a samsaric fashion.[1]

Here is another song that's sung about the Bodhisattva's path.
It expresses a heartfelt prayer that all avoid their karmic wrath.[2]
Since when first taught in a way that today is not applicable,[3]
I have asked the Bodhisattva to teach a path more suitable.

Request for Teachings

Bodhisattva, Bodhisattva,[4]
born of compassion and wisdom,
free of selfish thought and action,
well-versed on the path to freedom,

divine is your life of compassionate activity.
With attachment to self, for you, no longer a constraint,
by the thought of us awakening, you sustain your life,
for it is that we suffer that's your principal complaint.

To you we all go for refuge in prayer.
Teach us now your path to freedom from pain.
Show us the wisdom that lives for others
from a new perspective we can retain.

We live in a world, modern in culture,
where old myths are dead and science prevails,
religion is dogma, amusement reigns,
and past accomplishments seem tall tales.[5]

How, Bodhisattva, can your presence be felt?
What are you now, to us, in our modern age?
How, as we are, can your teachings be practiced?
Of your book of skillful means, please turn the page.

Your heroic deeds are nothing to us.
Your countless lives, stories for little tots.
Traditional hyperbole is gone.
Speak plainly so we may untie the knots.

A modern image must be created.
For us monastic ways have seen their days.
Mythology is now psychology.
So give us a teaching that truly stays.

Know that our lives can no longer tolerate
views of the world that are provincial in scope.
A message is needed that can speak to us all.
In this time of great crisis, please give us some hope.

Your essence we seek in a contemporary guise.
We students of Buddhism request the Dharma.[6]
Reveal the teaching we can share with others,
creating for us all, the means to good karma.

The Bodhisattva Gives Teachings Because Requested[7]

Suffering, its origin, cessation, and the path,
in the past, present and future these will remain true.[8]
Test them and see them as your modern age conceives them.
In whatever form they are conceived, keep them in view.

How are the sufferings of the present day
any different from those of past ages?
We all are born, get sick, and then we grow old,
only to die, according to the sages.

The world we live in is created by mind,
whose manifest sufferings are to us well-known.
Impermanence is its hidden suffering.
Most hidden of all is its repressive tone.

The sufferings of birth, sickness, aging and death,
loved ones departed, enemies who us attack,
desires frustrated, human limitations–
we will experience them all, none will we lack.

Appreciation of this truth requires a thought
born of our memories of suffering in the past.
Feeling pain suffered by our brothers and sisters,
creates in us compassionate feelings that can last.

See within the depths of the suffering in samsara.[9]
We seek things permanent in a world of impermanence.
We have been angered because of supposed offenses,
creating suffering that's beyond our endurance.

Our leisure and fortune are valuable assets.
Let us resolve to use them as best as we can.
This life is truly precious, so let us not waste it
in trivial endeavors during our life's brief span.

The cause of suffering is afflicted action.[10]
Seeking for a self that has never existed,[11]
worldly goods which bring us only suffering.
This farce called samsara has too long persisted.

In dependence upon thinking we truly exist,
the mental afflictions inevitably arise,
which by poisoning actions in our everyday life
cause us all to suffer our ultimate demise.[12]

The mental afflictions are many in number,
of which six, the Buddha has taught, are the root cause:
the afflictions of desire, anger, and pride,
ignorance, doubt and false belief that should give pause.

The first, desire, is a deluded mind
that seeks objects for a pleasant sensation.
But by themselves these objects do not exist.[13]
Their gross impermanence causes frustration.

The second, anger, exaggerates what is unpleasant
on the assumption of a self that exists by itself.
It is painful itself and in all that it produces.
Anger does not arise when we have knowledge there's no self.[14]

The next is called pride, the mind of a puffed-up ego.
This is thinking that we are something more than we are,
boasting of actions, regardless of their true merit,
not realizing that we have not progressed that far.[15]

One kind of ignorance is not understanding emptiness,[16]
another, not knowing karma and its accumulation.[17]
Another kind is ignorance of the beginningless mind.[18]
It's the lack of knowledge necessary for liberation.

What is called doubt is indecision that obscures how things are.
It keeps us from making sure that afflictions are overcome.
Let us not falter in the effort to understand the truth,
lest this doubt be the cause of why we to suffering succumb.

To have false belief is to hold fast to the mind
that prevents the attainment of liberation.
In its most destructive form, it is self-grasping[19]
in which self-existence receives affirmation.[20]

The other afflictions will be familiar enough
if we all take time to look deeply into the mind.
They poison all actions, whose results of suffering
through study of the law of karma we will find.[21]

Contaminated actions plant seeds in consciousness
that in proper conditions must always yield their fruit.
And when they bear fruit, our reaction plants more seeds.
The process continues until cut off at the root.

The world of our suffering will never cease
till we destroy the causes of actions' fruition.[22]
When afflictions have been eliminated,
actions cease to cause a suffering condition.

The cessation of suffering does not seem possible
if we should see Buddha as an ordinary preacher,
his holy teachings as matter for cocktail chatter,
or the spiritual friend as philosophy teacher.

Without some faith that the Buddha is enlightened
the process of confirming it will not commence.
It should be clear at the outset of the practice
that of his status there's no initial defense.[23]

Though faith is required, it should not be blind.
It's confidence and trust based on reflection.
How efficacious is the Buddha's teaching?
Faith counters pride and fosters a connection.

Those who do not practice the teachings are in no position
to develop deep confidence in a Buddha's fruition.
For this very reason he himself has strongly emphasized
that faith is gained by considering our improved condition.

Though cessation of suffering is our goal,
we must consider the path for us the best.
Should we practice to cause our own freedom,
or to obtain the freedom of all the rest?

Some practice the teachings for their own advantage.
They are content just to gain freedom for themselves.
But the final end of practice is for others.
It's the path into which the Bodhisattva delves.

If we seek Buddhahood, the ultimate condition
for helping all beings become free of suffering,
we accomplish cessation without selfish concern,
and our actions are part of the path unerring.

No other conception of human perfection
can make our lives as meaningful as this one.
Develop faith, then proceed, study and reflect.
The human good for all is the prize to be won.

The path to cessation must certainly be travelled
to bring an end to our suffering condition.
In the ancient times so many paths were being taught,
one for each person of different disposition.

But since a path is sought for the modern era,
in which selfish actions threaten a dire end,
not only for self but also for all others,
the Bodhisattva path we need to comprehend.

Every path begins with the renunciation
of the suffering ways of the afflicted mind.
Meditate on suffering to reject fully
the different pleasures the world has enshrined.

Suffering ends with the death of the ego.
Happiness begins with egoless concern.
May all become free of the mental afflictions
through the great merit on the path we will earn.

The six perfections need to be practiced[24]
with awakening mind motivation,[25]
the desire to become a Buddha
who causes all suffering's cessation.

We are, all of us, beings who face,
from birth to death, the human condition.
In this regard, we are not different.
Compassion for all is the tradition.

Let's count all suffering as our own.
Selfish concern is irrational thought.
Concern for others is meaningful life.
Everyone can see what selfishness has wrought.

It's senseless to discriminate friend from foe.
The kindness of one is found in all others.
Repay all such kindness with great affection.
Let's become Buddhas to save our brothers.

Practice the perfections, each with the others
with the wish to become Buddhas for their sake.
This is the way of every Bodhisattva.
This is the best life of which we can partake.

Generosity is giving to others what we can,
for the sake of becoming Buddhas to help them all.
The practice of giving is the best antidote to greed,
which digs the pit into which our world's poor do fall.

In gratitude for services they render to us,
food on our table and the clothes on our back,
the shelter they provide us, these things and so much more,
let us repay them by giving whatever they lack.

Feed the hungry, clothe the naked,
protect the innocent, give to all
the fruit of our labor, as we can,
let us their great suffering recall.

Nothing we possess now belongs to ourselves.
It is given by others out of great kindness.
Return it whenever they need it or want it.
To not see this truth is to suffer from blindness.

A time will come when possessions are lost,
family and friends, career and position.
Mentally offer them while there is time.
Be a part of the giving tradition.

Morality is mind free of harming others,
seeking Buddhahood so that we may all be free.
The practice of morality prevents in us
a hellish state of mind from which we want to flee.[26]

Killing, stealing, and the harmful sexual unions,
lying, slander, harsh speech, and gossip of any form,
covetousness, malice, and beliefs that are perverse,
none of these acts of body, speech and mind we perform.

Harm not living beings or their environment.
Their condition reveals our disposition.
Let us free them all from our polluting ways.
A place for their fruition is our mission.

Cultivate family relation and care.
Extend it to whomever we may meet.
Mutually dependent are we all.
Our family needs to be complete.

We need to play our part in modern society
with a generous spirit and proper morality.
To rule or to be ruled is not so important
as maintaining a true Bodhisattva's mentality.

Show respect for the practice of all religions,
in spite of the fact that they are not our own.
Since sincere practice fosters love and compassion,
of world peace is religion a cornerstone.

Patience is compassion for those who harm us,
whose suffering we devote our lives to destroy.
Being patient is an antidote to anger,
the most powerful enemy of our joy.

Our greatest friend is the enemy,
the shadow self who tries to teach patience
by calling attention to the culprit,
the anger whose protection is pretense.[27]

Look to the pain in those who would try to harm us.
Their pain is ours in the same situation.
This is their way to lessen their heavy burden.
Be compassionate and avoid aggravation.

There is need for patience when suffering arises,
Troubles and obstacles are in this life without end.
If we must assign blame, it's best to blame ourselves
for performing the actions upon which harms depend.

Best of all is not to blame anyone.
These problems arise so them we may solve.
Bear them as the sufferings of others
so by suffering them we may evolve.

The practice is very difficult,
and brings much suffering in its wake.
We can endure this great suffering
if we reflect on what is at stake.

Joyous effort is taking pleasure in virtuous action,
With the wish to become Buddha to help suffering creatures.
Practice joyous effort as an antidote to laziness.
Great joy on the path is one of its distinguishing features.

Life is short and the time of death is uncertain.
Let us make joyous effort each morning and night.
Remove worldly obstacles lest we stumble
before the time comes for us to enter the light.

When joyous effort is practiced, there is less suffering,
procrastination on the path is quickly diminished,
unwholesome actions become much easier to avoid,
and both discouragement and gross attachment are finished.

With proper pride in good action and strong resolve,
our capacity for practice not in doubt,
generate the joyous effort of a Buddha.
This is the way in which the practice is devout.

Rejoice in the thought of the happiness of others.
Let us anticipate the joy our actions will bring.
Ignore false appearances causing discouragement
as parts of the illusion to which all beings cling.

Be wary of joyous effort's pleasure,
lest it become the primary concern.
Pleasure sustains what our heart demands,
but the practice let it not overturn.

Joyfully giving and harming no other,
with pleasure be patient and control the mind.
Free of delusion, drawing no conclusion,
with joyful effort leave suffering behind.

Practice concentration which is one-pointedness of mind,
with the wish to become Buddha to help those who suffer.
This practice is an antidote to mental wandering,
which is mind dropping one object in search for another.

Without practicing concentration there is no achievement
of the strength of mind needed to undermine ideation,
the fertile field in which mental afflictions plant and spread seeds.
So fix attention on just one object of meditation.

Find a place and a time to sit
before we are taken by death.
Straighten the back and cross the legs,
face the wall and follow the breath.

Balance in body and mind is kept
by the yogi whose breath is controlled.
This benefit is not his goal,
but caused as the practices unfold.

A mind without interest in its object selected
creates a discouragement of the very worst kind.
Overcome laziness which is due to non-interest
by seeing the value of a concentrated mind.

Intensify interest and avoid distraction
to retain the object for further inspection.
So train in mindfulness and be not distracted.
If our mindfulness is lost, so is perfection.

Let all foreign thought and feeling pass,
lest mind be led to the wilderness,
which is any place it will be lost,
away from the heights of mindfulness.

An untamed mind cannot follow the path.
Seek a teacher who shows us the tether.
When the mind is bound to reality,
from suffering we are free forever.

With concentration engage the other perfections
so the results of practice will increase in power.
Do not neglect the perfection of concentration.
When paired with wisdom enlightenment will flower.

Wisdom is discrimination destructive of ignorance,
the conceiving of a self that causes dissatisfaction.[28]
It is made strong with concentration, and paired with compassion
enables the guru to see the truth without distraction.

Since self is neither same nor other than its body and mind,
no self is found in the causal basis of its conception.[29]
Since self and aggregates are dependently co-arisen,[30]
their appearance of self-existence is the great deception.[31]

Neither the same nor other are cause and effect.[32]
The causal continuum relies on this fact,
that cause and effect are dependently conceived.[33]
Things separately existing cannot interact.

Bodhisattvas who have practiced well
can establish themselves in insight
into the selflessness of persons,
their first entrance into the light.[34]

The ways of investigation called wisdom by Buddhas
begin with awareness of our minds' operations.
Be aware of how mental states dependently arise,
establish their functions, then dissolve reifications.[35]

Be wise when giving and in avoiding harm to others,
practicing patience, joyous effort and concentration.
Being free of delusion, and drawing no conclusion,
follow the great Bodhisattva path to liberation."

Endnotes

[1] To live in a samaric fashion is to pursue goals in life on the basis of a false view of self. Stress the second syllable of this word. For readers unfamiliar with all technical terminology used here, I will explain which syllable of the unfamiliar words are to be stressed.

[2] Karmic wrath is the negative result of unskillful actions performed in the past. Stress the first syllable of "karmic."

[3] The Buddha taught the Bodhisattva path long ago for a culture ancient in character, and many of the things he taught are no longer applicable for this reason. Stress the second syllable rather than the first in "applicable" so that the word as a whole properly rhymes with "suitable" in line four.

[4] Stress the third syllable of "Bodhisattva."

[5] Stress "tales" rather than "tall" in "tall tales" to match the ordinary pronunciation of "prevails" in line two.

[6] The Dharma is the teachings of the Buddha. Stress the first syllable of "Dharma."

[7] Buddhist teachers teach only when requested. They do not proselytize.

[8] These are the four noble truths taught by the Buddha in the sixth century B.C.E. in Sarnath, India. They are the truth of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to the cessation of suffering.

[9] Samsara is beginningless rebirth in which suffering occurs. Stress the second syllable of "samsara."

[10] Afflicted action is action contaminated by the mental afflictions. Actions contaminated by the mental afflictions give rise to suffering, in accord with the law of actions and their results. The root mental affliction, which gives rise to all others, is the conceiving of a self as existing by itself.

[11] The self that has never existed is a self that exists by itself.

[12] Our ultimate demise is endless deaths after endless rebirths in the realms of samsara.

[13] Phenomena exist only in dependence upon other phenomena, not by themselves.

[14] The teaching that there is no self is that there is no self that exists by itself, apart from the body and mental states in dependence upon which it is conceived.

[15] The meaning of "we have not progressed that far" is that some practitioners take pride in having accomplished more than they have on the Bodhisattva path.

[16] Emptiness is the lack of independent existence.

[17] Not knowing karma and its accumulation is ignorance of the law of karma.

[18] According to the Buddha, since every mental state has as one of its causes a mental state that occurs immediately before it in the same continuum of mental states, which is called the mind, the mind is beginningless. Ignorance of the beginningless mind is not understanding how it causes us to suffer and how it can free us of suffering.

[19] Self-grasping is grasping at the independent existence of the self and all other things that falsely appear to exist independently.

[20] The self-existence that receives affirmation from self-grasping is the independent existence of a self and things other than a self. "Self" is ambiguous, meaning either "independent existence" or "person" or both at the same time.

[21] In his discourses, the Buddha explained what the different kinds of results are of the different kinds of contaminated actions. His disciples organized his explanations into teachings on the law of karma.

[22] Since the results of our beginningless contaminated actions are infinite in extent, the Buddha taught a path to liberation in which we destroy the conditions under which these results arise. The most important condition he taught us to destroy is the conceiving of a self as existing by itself.

[23] In the tradition, it is taught that we can develop a reasoned faith in the Buddha's accomplishment by experimenting with his teachings, first putting one into practice to see whether or not it in fact makes our lives better, and if it does, try another, and if, time after time, putting his teachings into practice improves the quality of our lives, we acquire a reasoned faith in his accomplished state of perfect enlightenment. See the next verse.

[24] The Bodhisattva's path includes the practice of the six perfections, which are six perfected states of a Buddha's mind. They are the perfection of generosity, the perfection of morality, the perfection of patience, the perfection of joyful effort, the perfection of concentration, and the perfection of wisdom.

[25] Awakening mind (*bodhicitta*) is the desire to become a Buddha for the sake of freeing all beings from suffering. A Buddha has, among beings, the most power to help beings free themselves from suffering.

[26] According to tradition, the practice of morality prevents rebirth in the realms of samsara called the hells. The Bodhisattva now reformulates this teaching as rebirth in a hellish state of mind.

[27] It is falsely believed that the function of anger is our protection. Stress the first syllable of "pretense."

[28] The conceiving of a self causes it to appear to exist by itself and because we cling to this appearance we suffer.

[29] A self is not the same as its body and mind, since it possesses them. A self is not other than its body and mind, since it and its body and mind causally interact. Since neither the same or other than its body and mind, it does not exist. The causal basis of the conception of a self is its body and mind.

[30] The aggregates are the elements of the body and mind of a self. Although self and aggregates do not exist by themselves, they do exist to the extent that they are dependently co-arisen.

[31] The conceiving of a self as existing by itself causes a self to appear to exist by itself.

The conceiving of aggregates as existing by themselves causes them to appear to exist by themselves. Since self and aggregates exist in dependence upon one another, their appearance of existing by themselves is deceptive, causing us to believe that they exist by themselves.

[32] Cause and effect are not the same because nothing can cause itself, and they are not other, in the sense of separately existing as a pot and a cloth do, because cause and effect would be unrelated to one another.

[33] Cause and effect are conceived in dependence upon the other, and it is the application of their conceptions to things that are constantly conjoined, one after the other, that makes the things related as cause and effect.

[34] The selflessness of persons is the absence of our independent existence. Insight into the selflessness of persons is the experience of our lack of independent existence. This experience is entrance into the light that is the third noble truth, the truth of cessation of suffering. In the experience of our lack of independent existence there can be no suffering.

[35] The study of the mind begins with us becoming aware of its different states, which enables us to determine how the suffering states of mind arise, which enables us to prevent them from arising by first preventing the mental states that cause them from arising, and then preventing the arising of their root cause, the conceiving of a self as existing by itself. When we prevent the conceiving of a self as existing by itself, we stop reifying a self and the mental states that are reified in dependence upon its reification.

The Way of the Spiritual Seeker
MONISM (OR AS ABOVE SO BELOW)

Siobhan Chandler

Seekers in North America and in many other parts of the world are in a monist mood. What do I mean by this? If you've never heard of monism, don't worry. Most spiritual seekers have never heard of monism and certainly do not associate this label with their interests and activities, and for good reason – the word is really more academic than popular. But I would like to change that. I think monism and the concepts that underlie it are so important they could change the way we think about popular religion. I am enthusiastic about the concept of monism because it has brought my "religion" into sharp focus, and helped me make sense of what looks like a disconnected cluster of personal development techniques, spiritual teachers, and commercial offerings. But before I get into that, let me share a little about myself, because although I used to think that the path I took was unique, I now know after years of studying the "spiritual but not religious" phenomenon, it is actually pretty typical. It explains a lot about the monist orientation and why it is becoming so pervasive

I never went to church growing up. In fact, for a good part of my teen and early adult years I scoffed at religion and even considered myself an atheist for a time. I did not get much succor from this attitude, and as you probably know, life has ways of getting you to rethink things. By the time I was 21, I had delved into the self-help literature to solve some personal problems I was facing. Mainly I felt my life lacked direction and purpose. I simply did not see how the things my culture taught me to want and be would make me happy. I found great comfort in books like "What Colour is Your Parachute" and "Do What You Love and the Money will Follow." These and other titles did a great deal to calm my apprehensions that I was

out of touch with reality. Instead, they introduced me to what seemed a radical notion at the time: career satisfaction meant finding out what made me happy and no-one else could tell me what that would be. I was greatly relieved by this since I did not think I was cut out for so many of the occupations I was taught were the gold standard for success. I just could not see myself as a dentist, lawyer – or God forbid! – an accountant. What I did not see at the time was that what had started out as an employment question – what should I do for a living? – was essentially the first stop en route to a much deeper and infinitely more complicated question – who am I? In the blink of an eye, I had moved, unsuspecting, into the realm of spirituality.

Many people today travel similar paths to becoming spiritual seekers. While some do undertake a deliberate spiritual search, many get thrown into it by the dictates of fortune. Whether this is because they get diagnosed, depressed, divorced or disoriented, their search for solutions leads them straight into the heart of what is sometimes called "quest culture." Why does this happen? I think it is mainly because conventional wisdom today has it that "the answers are inside you." In fact, this is such a common sentiment that in many cases it goes unquestioned. Yet this is not the classical western view. On the contrary, the great Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which have directed so much of our history, are quite clear the answers are not inside you. These traditions emphasize that your best bet is to look outside to a higher power that can guide and correct your corporeal misjudgments. In these traditions, God above is the source of wisdom and illumination.

Many liberal religionists will say that this is overstating things, that God is not remote or absolutely unknowable and He is certainly not the wrathful menace that some of the scriptures make Him out to be. No, they say, there is an imminent God of Love, a God that is accessible and amenable to humankind. I do not dispute this, but for us to make progress with understanding the monist ideal, we have to agree that no matter how loving the Abrahamic God might be, at some level there is an unbridgeable gap between humankind and God. Humans are made in the likeness of God, but they are not God in any practical sense. God is Lord, Father and divine Ruler. He is the unsurpassed source of all that is, a singular deity

presiding over His creation of which humans are an important but relative part.

In contrast, what the self- help literature was telling me in so many ways was that I was "God." It told me that I did not realize this because, like everybody else, I was conditioned out of this knowing by the forces of socialization and culture. But that is fine, these teachers said, for there is a path of "recovery," methods to recover or reclaim my natural state of grace. Through a combination of breaking down the ego's tenacious grip on my mind and behaviors, and bolstering conscious connection to a transpersonal dimension through things like meditation, visualization, and prayer, I could find my way back to my essential nature, which was inherently divine. I was invited to get in touch with my "inner being" and experience my direct connection to a god variously described by names such as Divine Reality, Infinite Intelligence, Source, Supreme Consciousness or Absolute Awareness. In connecting to this god-force, I was told, I could unleash its creative power and wisdom to transform my small "s" self, unhelpfully fixated on competition and survival, into the Self of enlightened awareness and love. Journaling, dancing, chanting, meditating, gardening, skiing, fasting, praying were other ways I was told I could find my way "up the mountain" of spiritual insight and development. And since there are as many ways up that spiritual mountain as there are people willing to climb it, most reasonable pursuits were permitted, provided they did not harm another being. Anything could be a source of insight and transformation. Negative events like my mini existential crisis were especially prized for their ability to identify where one was cut off from their inner wisdom.

Historically speaking, though, considering the historical prominence of Christianity in the west, it is simply incredible that today we have a mega million dollar wellbeing industry committed to telling seekers like myself that the answer to life's biggest questions are inside, and that they need no particular outside authority to access this spiritual power. How did this happen?

One way to understand this is to appreciate that the "god within" is not a twentieth century notion linked to the 1960s counterculture with its eastern-mystical or hippie drug scene or even the 1980s New Age

movement for that matter. Rather, it has existed on the margins of western religious life for thousands of years. For example, the idea that each person contains a divine spark which is a source of inherent and infallible wisdom that corresponds to the infinite oneness is prominent in the writings of the early Christian Gnostics, the Renaissance Hermeticists, the writings of the Swedish polymath Emmanuel Swedenborg, and many other spiritual but not immediately recognizably religious groups including the Mesmerists, Theosophists, Jungians, and, of course, many spiritual seekers of today. Likewise, the contemporary fascination with the beauty and inerrancy of nature as a source of wisdom and wholeness is also a key premise in western monist or non-dual thought. It is seen in the Hermeticists' fascination with alchemy and astrology, the Mesmerists' methods of manipulating an invisible fluid they believed linked the whole universe together ("animal magnetism") to bring about healing, and the nature mysticism of New England Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. In short, the main ideas that are popular with many spiritual but not religious seekers today have a long history, and are by no means newly invented pathways to the divine.

Yet what consistently confuses people is how a path of connecting with the god within can have a shared basis if it requires each spiritual seeker to follow guidance that is uniquely his or her own. While I would be the first to admit that the landscape is eclectic, offering seekers a dazzling array of options, I also think that despite this seeming diversity, what binds much contemporary seeking into a coherent whole is its essentially monist worldview, captured at the most basic level by its guiding axiom – *as above so below.* This simple creed of "as above so below" points to the essential, non-negotiable plank of the monist cosmology which gives rise to its key doctrine: there is no separation between creator and created. What exists in the "heavens" above corresponds exactly and completely to what is below on earth. Some common metaphors that give shape to this principle of correspondence – the identicality of macrocosm and microcosm – are the concepts of holograms and DNA where the code for the whole is contained in each cell, as well as the concept of life force energy (also called *chi*, *prana*, *kundalini*, bio-plasmic or vital energy) that permeates and binds creation together through an invisible field or matrix. As a result,

everything is interconnected, and despite appearances, everything is one.

While this might all seem religiously non-specific or vague, as it is practiced today, the monist way is actually highly structured, following its predictably guiding motif that everything is interconnected and that source energy is distributed non-preferentially in all creation. This gives rise to a set of systematic corollary beliefs, namely that 1) nature is sacred and alive and a source of information and guidance about the godhead, 2) religious truth is not confined to a single faith or tradition, but rather seeds of divine wisdom are found in all the religions, and 3) the human Self is sacred and a source of guidance and wisdom because it is connected to the godhead. Furthermore, the term monism – literally 'one-ism' – is an etymological clue that points to the principle aim of these seekers, which is to develop spiritually by overcoming the illusion of separation and realize the inherent oneness of all that is. This is achieved through a special type of insight or knowledge sometimes called *gnosis*. This is not a knowledge based on reason (don't forget the mind is vulnerable to cultural misdirection and therefore unreliable) but rather on an intuitive knowing based on awareness of one's feelings, sensations, dreams, instincts and so forth. The subjectivities of the self, therefore, are not fantasies or airy-fairy whims, but impulses which must be correctly developed and understood so they can serve as a font of incredible insight and therefore power which can assist and direct the seeker on the journey to Selfhood. Delving within to connect to one's inner being is integral to the monist way because it is how one connects to the divine portal within. This leads to the readily observable fascination monist seekers have for their inner life, mapping and mastering its every detail through methods ranging from dreamwork to therapy. Philosophically, therefore, monists are non-dualists. They resist separating the "uni-verse" into the polarities of mind and matter, body and soul and certainly, God and human, in favour of an integrated or holistic approach that underscores the interconnected nature of the super-stratum.

The spiritual but not religious phenomenon that we see today is basically a monist worldview. Not only does it draw on the western monist traditions but also incorporates eastern forms monism. This is seen in the love affair many have with reconstituted forms of Buddhism, Hinduism and Daoism, the evidence of which parades before us in myriad ways,

including the recent commercialization of Buddha statues for homes and gardens, ubiquitous yoga studios, and tattoos of lotus flowers and the yin yang. While it is frequently suggested that the weakening of Christianities has led to indiscriminate religious outsourcing, so to speak, I think it more accurate to say that these traditions have taken hold in our time because they resonate with a pre-existing though latent stream of our own monist heritage. The specific flavour of the contemporary spiritual but not religious phenomenon ultimately derives from its characteristic blend of monist philosophies east and west.

Despite the fact that most people that I would describe as monists are totally unaware of the history of monism in the west and have almost no sense of it as a tradition per se, what is astonishing is how systematically monist ideals are reproduced culturally. While monism has always been obscured (even denounced) by the historical grandeur of Christianity, this is no longer the case today. With a shift in social conditions especially since the 1960s and the overarching cultural dedication to the self, I think (and I am not alone in positing this "spiritual revolution") monism is poised to become the next big thing. The reasons for this are not complicated. Western culture is individualistic by definition. As our society has developed, it has become progressively more emphatic that humans are capable of independent reasoning, and action.

What I am saying, therefore, is that the central premise of monism – that one is God, or at least that one has complete access to that which is divine because it is rooted within the self – is wonderfully concordant with the late modern psyche and its strong predilection for self-centeredness. I mean this literally, by the way, and not as a slur. For while selfishness is a real danger in a culture of individualism, there is complete cultural permission, indeed an expectation, that we are the architects of our destiny and have the right to choose the path our lives will take. We are socialized from birth to think of ourselves as autonomous agents who can fulfill our dreams provided we have opportunities, resources and most importantly, incentive. In fact, this orientation is being so sufficiently amplified by each generation that now we hear Generation Y described as a youth culture with an excessive sense of "entitlement" to riches and opportunities based on merit that is not earned. In truth, this generation is simply heir to a

prescription handed them by their similarly self-entitled predecessors, who apparently lacked the foresight to anticipate how their own values and priorities would inevitably play out.

Why do I mention this here? Well, as it turns out, self-centeredness, autonomy and entitlement are highly relevant to any discussion of monism, and account, I believe, for its invisibility in mainstream religious scholarship. Any serious study of alternative spiritualities such as this are bound to confront the chorus of disapproval directed at monist seekers (especially "New Age" style spirituality) whose penchant for so-called "navel gazing" has earned them a reputation as being narcissists whose beliefs and practices are only accelerating the individualism of our age with all its undesirable consequences. It is said to lack discipline and integrity in part because it does not have clearly visible institutional parameters, namely churches, leaders and scriptures. Many scholars and social observers regard spirituality outside religion as a mutation, an artifact of late modern religious life that amounts principally to disconnected people each doing their own thing with no guiding principles or moral imperatives. I hope that this short essay has suggested that this is not the case; yet the view is still pervasive.

My personal experiences and scholarly efforts to meet and speak to people who have rejected organized religion for the monist way lead me to a different conclusion. I am optimistic that the monism I describe here is an integrating, even demanding path that holds great promise for personal and social transformation. My research certainly does not support the stereotype that being spiritual but not religious makes one socially and politically inert – in fact quite the contrary. Many of these seekers are very involved with their communities and each other. When one understands that the spiritual but not religious phenomenon is tied to the rebirth of monism in our time, and not simply the degradation of the monotheistic traditions, it emerges as an alternative religiosity with moral and spiritual weight. It is my hope and ambition that spiritual but not religious seekers will reclaim their past so that the community continues to gain a self-conscious awareness of itself as a new religious voice. Like all religions, it is an aggregate of its light and shadow sides. On its better days, I see it as a path of working out our common human destiny by holding to the vision

that, as inhabitants of planet earth in a dangerous time, we truly are all in this together.

Endnotes

See the following: Robert Forman, *Grassroots Spirituality: What is it, why is it here, and where is it going?* (Exeter, UK: Imprint, 2004); Robert Fuller, *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2005); and Paul H. Ray and Sherry R. Anderson, *The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People are Waking up and Changing the World* (New York: Harmony, 2000).

The Way of Interreligious Friendship
PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON MY SPIRITUAL PATH

In Memory of Joep van Beeck - A Friend

Alon Goshen-Gottstein

Identifying the "Way"

When I received an invitation to write a piece that expresses what is fundamental to my spiritual path, I struggled to identify what exactly my spiritual path is. Clearly it is Jewish. I am a practicing Orthodox Jew, a scholar and a rabbi by training. But it is also a universal path, a path that is open to the inspiration coming from other religions. It is furthermore a path that highlights wisdom, spirituality and the reality of holy people. The struggle to articulate "the way" in a manner that goes beyond the obvious "way of Judaism" or "the way of hassidism" led to the identification of "the way of interreligious friendship" as a way of describing my spiritual journey. While this is a partial description, given the multiple options I had at my disposal, it is nevertheless a valid and important way of capturing something essential about my own path while paying tribute to friends, both those who are with us and those who have gone ahead on "the way." It is offered as a tribute to one friend, to Darrol, while being dedicated, and drawing its model and example from another friend, a Jesuit father who recently passed away. Reflecting on our relationship allows me to articulate what I mean when I speak of "the way of interreligious friendship."[1]

Fundamental to the Jewish teachings from which I draw inspiration is the recognition that the spiritual life is not carried out in isolation. A friend, or friendship, is vital to advances on the spiritual path. As one hassidic authority captures it: having a friend is like having two divine souls, combating one animal soul (DovBer of Lubavitch,1773-1827). That

is, one requires the aid of a friend as one struggles with the realities and challenges of the spiritual path, expressed through the most fundamental tension of our dual nature as divine soul in animal body. As another hassidic master puts it:

> How great and wondrous is the virtue of the love between friends, who adhere together and who speak from heart to heart, and each one loves his friend as his own soul. And this leads them to true repentance, to humility and joy, to the delights of performing the commandments, to soul searching and to overcoming temptation. And through it they attain both worlds, this world and the world to come, and the awakening of the heart with God's love and awe, and the quality of truth and peace, for the divine presence only dwells where there is peace. (Rabbi Abraham Weinberg (1804-1883), *Yesod Ha'avoda* 2,10,10).

Fundamental to my decades of spiritual travel is the fact that I have travelled this way accompanied by others. Where I have gone beyond the example provided by my immediate environment is that those others have followed spiritual paths other than Judaism. As I look into my own journey into other religions, their study and the inspiration they have provided for me, I recognize that friendship has played a key role in this process. Even though I studied world religions at university, they only became meaningful to me, in some way a part of my own process, when they were mediated by their practitioners, not as cases of show and tell, but as living witnesses to the spiritual reality to which the religions testify and which they make possible for their followers. Thus, friendship has been an important gateway to appreciating other religions and ultimately to my own personal spiritual evolution. In the context of the present collection of "ways," gathered in one volume, I would consider it important enough to serve as a distinct way - the way of interreligious friendship.

Dimensions of Interreligious Friendship

In attempting to articulate what this way consists of and what are its contours, I would like to suggest three layers or dimensions of interreligious friendship. These correspond to three dimensions of friendship in general.

The first has to do with what friends bring us. One of the common activities practiced between friends illustrates this level of friendship, and I therefore would like to name this level accordingly - gift giving. Friends give each other gifts. There are different kinds of gifts that are shared between friends. There are the obvious gifts, like the bottle of wine a friend brings when she comes for dinner, or the birthday present that is always cherished. But support, help and even consolation are also gifts. Even the insight, self understanding and broadening of horizons that friends can bring one another may be classed as gifts of friendship. More broadly speaking, friendship, or the friend herself, may be considered a gift. In a religious context one may think of the individual friend as a gift of God.

In thinking of interreligious friendship, it seems that much that transpires between friends of different faiths would come under the rubric of gift giving. Self-understanding, understanding the other, ways of reading scripture, insight and perspective on life, techniques for coping with life, in particular spiritual life, are all examples of spiritual gifts shared between friends. We are enriched by what the friend has *given* us.

There is another level at which interreligious friendship affects us. All humans share basic features of the human condition. They face similar challenges, have similar, or equivalent, aspirations and ultimately live their various lives as variations on common themes. Our growth, psychological as well as spiritual, is founded upon role models. Modeling is how we grow and how we help others to grow. What it means to be religious, what it means to aspire to God or what it is to walk the spiritual path is more than the sum total of actions, commandments and teachings that we have received as gifts along the way, whether from our own tradition or from another. How we are formed spiritually is through models, those individuals who show us what it is to be religious and how the sum total of the details of the religious life cohere into a pattern that can be emulated by another. Great teachers and saints are thus in some way models that teach us what it is to be religious, even if we are unable to imitate what they model for us. To have a friend from another religion is to be open to another kind of modeling than what one is used to from one's home tradition. Even if one argues that all religions *basically* do the same thing, there is no argument that they do so *differently*. And that difference is as

significant as it is edifying for those who constantly seek to advance on the spiritual path. A friend from another religious tradition – that is, one who lives that tradition deeply, has internalized it and has come to represent it – is a model for how to be religious. Beyond the details of teachings, the content of conversations and the substance of sharing, something else is communicated that offers a teaching on how one is placed *in relation* to what one considers of significance. Modeling may affect how one relates to Scripture, to religious deeds, to one's fellow human, to a teacher, to the religious life or to God himself. Modeling instructs us how to place ourselves in all these relations and how to live them as expressions of our religious life.

There is still another level at which friendship operates, more elusive than the former two, and one that often remains implicit or partially articulated, but nevertheless one that is fundamental to the reality of friendship. Early on in life one discovers that some people are your friends, while others are not. Even early in life one forms particular friendships with only a select number of friends. What accounts for this particular friendship? It seems to me the answer is more than circumstantial and it relies on more than the fact that one individual was kinder to us than another. This elusive quality I refer to as resonance of being. Something in the very being of the other attracts us. Such resonance may point to a similar psychological, spiritual or metaphysical chord that both parties to the friendship strike. It may also point to complementarity, based upon their differences. Various systems, such as astrology, the enneagram and others, seek to introduce method into the puzzle of why one is attracted to one person rather than another. For present purposes it is sufficient to recognize that beyond the conscious transfer of ideas, gifts of the religious life and even role modeling, there is another dimension that friendship makes manifest.

This dimension exists in interreligious friendships, as it does in more common friendships. When it does, it is enriching in very particular ways. In the case of interreligious friendship, we touch not simply the being of the person, but the being of the person as it has been cultivated through practice, contact and interiorization of a particular tradition. An interreligious friend is, to some extent, a friend who incarnates something

of the tradition in his or her being. The tradition resonates within the person, and forms a significant part of the resonance of being, the energetic bond and the deep attraction that the person holds for us. If Jewish tradition counsels us to avoid friendship with the wicked because thereby we would be integrating into ourselves something of their evil, this principle applies equally to the positive value of interreligious friendship. Having a true friend from another tradition is an opportunity to imbibe, to be exposed and somehow to integrate fundamental energetic aspects of the tradition that has shaped the friend.

There are different ways we can express the relationship between these three dimensions of interreligious friendship and how they affect us. One way could be to consider the gifts as mainly gifts of the mind and understanding. Modeling, in turn, would be attitudinal and resonance of being would touch our very being through the resonance of the being of the other. Another way of putting it might be that the third level goes to our core, to the heart.

Why we need friends from other religions and why the friends from our own tradition may not be enough would be answered differently, according to the level we address. In terms of the gifts they bring, every friend brings a different gift into our lives. The understanding, self awareness and mirroring that a friend from another tradition brings into our life are distinct from what someone in our tradition might. So it is with alternative models. Even if different religions tackle the same challenges, confront the same situations and seek to establish the same relationships, the models they offer for how to do so are different, and therefore provide important complements to what our own tradition inspires in us. But the riches of friendship become most apparent if we are able to sense the impact of friendship on our very being, on the vibrations of our hearts.

Religions color the heart, so to speak, in different colors, according to their particular hue. The heart is one, and yet it has in it so much variety. The riches of the spiritual life, made manifest through the plurality of religious traditions, find their grounding in the energetic shades or colorings of the hearts of the faithful. In friendship, these deeper realities, amalgams of the heart and being of the individual with that of the tradition, radiate from one friend to another, thereby enriching our being and our

spiritual life. The riches that the heart of a friend from another tradition communicates to us, beyond words and deeds, are different and unique to him in important ways not obtainable within our own tradition.

The first level of friendship requires openness of mind. You cannot receive the gifts that the friend from another tradition could share with you if your mind is closed, caught up in preconceived judgment, or the attitudes of enmity or hostility that traditions have cultivated at various points in their history. But the gift remains external to us, in some way, just as physical gifts shared between friends are external to the being of the friends, even if they are expressive of it. Gift giving may thus be utilitarian, serving the instrumentality of a particular friendship, whether it be political, diplomatic or religious. The second level of friendship requires a degree of trust. If the gifts of understanding or other gifts are filtered through our scrutiny, adopting a particular attitude and stance requires a degree of letting go, of trust, at least sufficient to test or taste another way of positioning oneself in relation to key aspects of life. Trust is, needless to say, a vital component of friendship, and therefore a friendship that can only share the gifts of friendship and their outward benefits - intellectual, social or political - is not yet a true friendship. But true friendship also engages the heart in love, as a basic feature of friendship. It is only in openness to love that the resonance of being, the coloring of the heart in light of tradition, can be shared between friends.

A Model Friendship - Remembering Joep

I have travelled the way of interreligious friendship with many friends. I am grateful to have close friends from all major faith traditions. Whatever I articulated above is a way of trying to make sense of my own experience in order to share it with others. At this point I would like to reflect on one particular friend, the Dutch Jesuit theologian Franz Jozef van Beeck S.J. His was probably my oldest interreligious friendship that was specifically theological, drawing on his religious identity as a priest and bringing us together as two friends who share the depths of their religious identity through their friendship. I first met Joep at a theology conference organzied by the Shalom Hartman Institute. I believe it was in the late 1980s. I had spent almost a week with a formidable group of about forty Christian

theologians, studying religious texts and sharing ideas. On the level of gifts, the sharing was a rich harvest of learning, understanding and insight. Yet, within that context Joep struck me in a way that was quite different from the impact that other participants had on me. Here I can only appeal to the mysterious dimension I referred to above as resonance. Something drew us to each other. If I were forced to say what it was, I would have said that we both had a deep quest for God. But then that would imply that others did not, and in no way would I make such a judgment. Perhaps, then, this could serve as a way of introducing one dimension of modeling, the inspiration I received from Joep's example of how to be religious.

As I may have already intuited then, and as I came to learn through our many years of close and intimate friendship, Joep had a great struggle with his role as a theologian and with how to reconcile his theological work with his deeper quest for God and His presence, or differently put, for the mystical life. A world-class theologian, and a much published one at that, he nevertheless struggled with his insecurities, but even more so with how to practice the vocation of the theologian without losing that fundamental definition of what a theologian is. As Joep taught me in the name of Evagrius (345-399), "If you pray, you are a theologian." Joep sought to unify those two dimensions, and this quest was a source of struggle, suffering, anxiety, but ultimately also one of success and conquest. Here we met and here Joep provided a model for me. He modeled for me something I could not, and still cannot, find within my tradition. The Jewish model, as David Weiss Halivni famously quipped, can be summed up this way: "The people I study (or talk) with I cannot pray with, and the people I pray with I cannot study with." This forces a choice of who one prefers to be with, but more than anything it makes one a spiritual schizophrenic. And indeed, that is how I would characterize my own spiritual state at that point in my spiritual formation. My academic and my prayer life were strictly compartmentalized, though in fact they interfered with each other in various ways. Meeting Joep was probably the first time I was exposed to an alternative model, an ideal of integration. Even if this integration involved ongoing struggle, it was a vision that could be realized, a clear image of the spiritual life, much clearer than the confused attempt to proceed along two tracks without being able to reconcile them. And I

could have never received the testimony of this way of being, this path of theological reconciliation, had it not been communicated to me not only through a living example, but by the compelling power of a friend who moved me, who understood what I was after and with whom I resonated deeply.

Joep was one of the first people with whom I shared my initial ideas for founding an interreligious academic institution, what came to be known eventually as the Elijah Interfaith Institute. One of the many important comments he made on the first draft of the proposal has stayed with me. Joep commented on the importance of teachers sharing their spiritual practice with their students, so that the students can see how the spiritual lives of their teachers find expression. It was important for him that my Christian students should see me making Kiddush and celebrating Shabbath with my family. Just as a theologian had to unite learning and prayer, so a teacher, to be effective, had to unite his teaching *about* his religion with his practice *of* the religion. What may be a truism in self-contained circles of classical Jewish study rang as a bold and daring challenge when carried into academia and into interreligious education.

In spiritual friendship our humanity joins our spiritual quest. What makes friendship something other than teacher-disciple relations, or other than the sharing of scholars and theologians gathered around common sources, is that the friend is engaged in his humanity, even as a common spiritual quest is underway. I would say that the more fully the friend's humanity is engaged, the fuller the friendship. It is the fullness of Joep's engagement in the project of living a spiritual life with the totality of his person that provided another important arena for modeling. Ideals of friendship, as articulated in Judaism, are always, and without exception, concerned with friendship between males. There are absolutely no resources in Jewish thought or law, and consequently in lived Jewish experience, for a spiritual friendship between man and woman. As I have come to learn, Christianity is much more fortunate in this respect. With a rich monastic heritage and a religious elite that practices celibacy, it has identified ways of addressing basic human and spiritual needs through models of friendship between celibate men and women. In an ideal Jewish portrayal of reality, one readily considers marriage as the arena for cultivating deep friendship

between men and women, a fact witnessed by the text of one of the Jewish benedictions celebrating a marriage - "God created bride and groom...love and friendship". Needless to say, the totality of a personality cannot be subsumed or fully contained within an extrapolated vision of what a given tradition envisions as ideal relationships. The complexity of our psyche, the variety of our life circumstances and the deep yearnings of our heart lead us to seek multiple relationships on multiple levels, addressing various needs and aspirations. Meeting Joep and sharing with him the processes of the heart exposed me to how love is lived in practice and how spiritual ideals are reconciled with the depth of the human heart. The experience of spiritual friendship between men and women that Joep so excelled in could be communicated in its integrity only through a living relationship, a model, a friend.

Our relationship continued for over twenty years. I visited him at Loyola University in Chicago, where he taught theology; he took part in activities of the Elijah Institute in Jerusalem. I could continue telling of the lessons, gifts and ways of modeling, but I would rather conclude with the story of the end.

Several years before he passed away, Joep felt he was losing his full mental faculties. He resigned himself to never completing "God Encountered," his unfinished theological masterpiece. He resigned himself to the fact that he could no longer teach. It was time to go back home, to Holland. His final years were spent in a Jesuit retirement home in Nijmegen. I visited him there twice. The first time, I was struck by the ease with which he could simply resign himself to sitting and being, being with God, as he sat and looked out at the garden surrounding the home. And he referred to it as a form of contemplation, with no regret for the life of the mind, with its attendant gifts and riches that he had to give up. He was content living in the present, in the presence. This too was a lesson, a model, and one that I did not, maybe could not learn, visiting the sick and dying of my own faith.

My final visit took place a few weeks before he passed on. I knew by then it would be the last time I saw him. I travelled in order to say goodbye. I came in order to show him my love, even if he could not show me his. I knew he might not recognize me. I knew we could not communicate. But

we did, in another form. Stripped of words, unable to articulate or to grasp concepts, Joep could operate only from the heart, in the most direct way, through a smile, through his eyes, through the radiation of a heart that still beat with the love of relationships built over a lifetime. And here we met on a level that required silence, once words tired him out. In that silence was a deeply imprinted recollection of what friendship had produced in both our hearts, a depth of bonding of two beings who had shared so much along the way. And the way was not over. As I left him to catch the train, I told him, with my eyes tearing, that this is the last time we would meet in person and that our next meeting would be in heaven. Joep raised his head, looked at me with a great big smile, and nodded his head with full affirmation. He knew. The way continues.

Endnote

[1] The choice is informed by one more important factor, namely a project titled "Friendship Across Religions" that I am in the midst of directing and for which I provide the Jewish voice. This collaborative project, best described as an attempt by scholars of different religions to construct their respective theologies of interreligious friendship, is carried out under the aegis of the Elijah Interfaith Academy. My own contribution titled "Understanding Jewish Friendship, Extending Friendship Beyond Judaism" and my introductory piece to the collection of essays provide the theoretical background to the present paper that is more personal in style. While the justification, from a Jewish perspective, for what I offer here is presented in that paper, the present paper advances my own reflection on interreligious friendship beyond what is articulated in that paper. Thinking of Joep van Beeck as a model has been particularly helpful in this respect. An earlier iteration of my reflections on friendship was offered in "Muehe dich, einen Freund zu Finden", Ueberlegungen zur Freundschaft aus den Quellen der judischen Tradition, *Entdeckung der Freudenschaft, von Philia bis Facebook*, ed. G. Kugler and D. Borel, Herder, Freiburg, 2010, pp. 95-104.

The Way of Aging
LIBERATION AND THE LATER YEARS

Kendra Smith

Once a year, my church (Unitarian/Universalist) honors those of its members who are eighty years and over in a service dedicated to the "Doctors of Durability." The current ministers strive valiantly, I suspect, to uphold this tradition they inherited. They speak of wisdom – I look around me questioningly. "Courage" – the courage of a conscripted soldier, I think. After all, who volunteers for failing eyesight, hearing, sphincters? Nevertheless, the service has its pleasures. After the last one, my reflections poured out in a poem. And then I began to think of developmental psychology, usually focused on childhood stages, and considered what might be gained from the last stage, the final stage before we exit. I intend to speak of some research and my own reflections; then memories of my father and a brother, as their days wound down. But first, the "poem":

> Doctor of Durability, hey, that's me!
> Thank you all for lunch, the hugs and beaming smiles.
> Like something in a petting zoo, I preen and arch my back and purr.
> What I'm getting now is unearned credit
> For piling up the years, four score and more.
> A child gives out her long stemmed roses, one to each
> Knobby, wrinkled, reaching hand. She looks awed.
> At lunch we laugh and eat and smile. No yesterdays
> And no tomorrow figure in our pleasantries.
> But I – I remember all those years that I've survived.
>
> "Make my bed, light the light, *To be sung*
> I'll arrive late tonight,
> Bye bye blackbird."
> My first song. I was three. It's late, and I'm *still* arriving.

Jimmy Steven's father threw himself out a window.
We were hushed around my uncles, like someone died.
Professionals out of work, they stared all day at faded carpet.
Mother. Prettier in her coffin than in illness. Like she's asleep they said.
Do you remember the 1930's song "Happy days are here again"?
Tramps who came to beg, eyes downcast and mumbling, got some buttered bread.

"The day that will live in infamy" I was in college.
My room mate's no-good cousin survived the blast.
Boys my age drilled all day, singing a funny dirty tune.
To the barked commands of their drill instructor, I kept going to philosophy class.

A submarine sighted off the coast, Heart Mountain, barbed wire.

A soldier came to dinner. He was shipping out next day, he said.
He was going to be the point man on patrol, the one who draws down fire.
He had no hope of coming back, he said. He didn't.
So many didn't get to live a long, long time, but I remember him.
My brother Bob, handsome in his Navy blues, my cousin a bombardier.
A sailor lynched, some babe in Casablanca – Bobby never talked about the
bombs and bullets.
One friend survived the fire bombs in London, another a bomb in Amsterdam.

Johanna survived on tulip bulbs when food was gone, with the Jewish family
Her family hid all through the years of war.
Some tough broads we've gotta be, Joan and Johanna more than me.

VJ Day and church bells rang! Through all the city church bells rang.
Second thoughts about the Bomb came later.
That August day deep-throated bells resounded deeply solemn joy.
Through CARE we sent what food we could to "enemies" no more.
So much energizing hope we had when war had ended, so much hope
And so much fear. Bomb shelters built (futility!) – children drilled in schools.

Let's go far away from nuclear bombs and super powers, anywhere, but far away.

So much to remember! If you're under 80 this must mean almost nothing!
Seoul, Korea, the Inchon River. Brainwashing, a neologism enters the English language.
Crosses burned, Selma. "I've got a hammer to hammer out freedom."
My daughter, in the midst of it, was disillusioned by ignoble acts in noble causes.
Too bad, I think, but understand – no great movements free from pygmy egos.
Viet Nam, the plumbers, Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist – it has its humor, yeah.
Two bumbling gumshoe FBI guys coming to my door, asking where's your husband.
Watergate, Nixon, the Saturday night massacre –
But tanks did not go rumbling down Constitution Avenue,
As Sheila Kennedy thought they would, in a military coup.
If you're too young this won't register. But you will have your own,
Your own teeterings on brinks and national insanity.
When JFK was shot we turned, many of us, away from social action.
The psychedelics hold out hope of happy be-ins, easy transformation.

Hah!
Yet glimpses of a promised land led me to months of meditation.
Face to face with just myself, it wasn't bliss, much more like pain.

My mind is playing like a fire hose over smoking embers of the past.
Omit the embarrassments of youth, the follies of the middle years,
Old age and all its problems. Really they don't matter much.
Only social struggles and psychotherapy, that's all? You ask.
No no no. Certainly not.
But today I think of that which draws us on, some subterranean tide.
This day is for the durable, those "able to withstand decay and wear and tear."
That's the dictionary meaning for those of us now honored.
I carry within me those who didn't undergo a slow decay,
Those who died, out of turn and way too soon.
Hey you guys, you shouldn't predecease your elders.
My daughter Karen, she was first; then Henry; Serena, worst of all –

Because we didn't know the how or where.
My heart was opened by your freely given unearned love.
"Cogito ergo sum?" Dead wrong, Descartes, touché.
"Amata ergo sum," having been loved I am; and yes, I'm still becoming.

Green beans, scalloped potatoes, ham. Like every vertebrate we chew,
Ingesting plants and flesh along with soil and sun.
Even in decay we are a miracle of nerves and bones and parts that close and open.
What about that inner world each one of us inhabits?
That precious world of love and beauty, moments of transcendence, more real than real.
Hush. Approach that inner world with delicacy and care.
More fragile than the body, these inner worlds we hardly know

ourselves.
Will you share, my dears, some little part of yours with me?

After I had written this, I googled the song "Bye Bye Blackbird" to get the rest of the lyrics. The song appeared in 1926. More to the point, it is about a prostitute leaving "the life" that is spurious to return home. It is a good metaphor for our life's journey toward the true and the good. The good and the true become more important in old age, more important than superficial appearance, success, power. What is good as love is good is valued above all. This is what was meant by the Yiddish-speaking aunt of a colleague of mine who said, "Life is a *cholem* (dream). Around eighty you wake up." (Note the echoes of Buddhism and Hinduism in that aphorism.) Now we can laugh at the dramas that used to engross us; yet we remember, and sympathize with the tribulations of the younger generation. In life's final stage, we see them from a longer perspective. This is our wisdom. We laugh at our current dragons, too, collecting jokes that often begin with "You know you are old when…when everything either dries up or leaks…when you are over the hill and don't know how you got there without getting to the top…when friends stop asking how you are and say instead "You're lookin' good!"…when you'd rather be comfortable than beautiful. But humor is only froth atop deepening appreciation of small things: the sun delivered to our doorstep with the morning paper, a kind word, dew sparkling on a spider web, an unexpected smile, the face of a friend. Slowed down, we have returned to our senses, senses once again vivid as in childhood, even if organs are impaired. In this last stage, there can be strides in personal and spiritual growth. The Israeli writer, David Grossman, puts it simply:

> …we feel our lives most when they are running out: as we age, as we lose our physical abilities, our health, and, of course, family members and friends….Then we pause for a moment, sink into ourselves, and feel: here was something, and now it is gone. It will not return. And it may be that we understand it, truly and deeply, only when it is lost.[1]

Only then, Grossman implies, do we return to the strongest and most

authentic pulse of life within us.

Erik Erikson, with his wife Joan, delineated stages of development throughout the entire life cycle in their seminal book, *Childhood and Society*[2]. Each stage is a period of tension and conflict, and each in its resolution has the *potential* of growth, strength, and a greater sense of coherence and wholeness; and each has a potential for its opposite. The potential for infancy is trust that the world is benevolent and will meet the infant's needs, a potential that Erikson paired with its partial failure as Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust. In the stormy twos, a sense of autonomous, competent selfhood is acquired – or, failing, a child reacts by becoming passive or rebellious, Autonomy vs. Shame in Erikson's scheme; and on through six more stages.

What might be attained in the period that begins at seventy-five to eighty years of age Erikson named Integrity, which he defined as an affirmation of one's life style. *Childhood and Society* made great sense to me when I read it in the 1950s except for this last stage. Affirmation of one's life style seemed insufficient. Years later, after Erik Erikson's death, I met his widow Joan, who confided what she, too, had been less than satisfied with their section on the latest years, and that it was her intention to revise it. This she did, in a small book titled *The Life Cycle Completed,*[3] which she published before dying at age ninety-five.

Concurrently with her revision, a Swedish professor, Lars Tornstam,[4] and his associates carried out a study of an elderly population. Tornstam found a considerable degree of contentment among these elderly persons. A decreased interest in material possessions and greater interest in what I have called the inner world, their own and the inner world of others, characterized this group. He found in his sample more self-acceptance, less self-centeredness, greater selectivity in how and with whom one spent time, and a positive attitude toward contemplative time alone. These elders felt an awe at being a part of this cosmos of billions of suns in billions of galaxies, of the immensity of time, and the mystery in which we are born, live, and die. Many were profoundly serene in the face of terminal illness, a serenity that did not correlate with religious belief. We see the same attainment in our own aged, but perhaps it is more common in Sweden where the famous social safety net ensures that all its citizens have their

basic needs met quite generously. It is noteworthy that peaceful deaths are witnessed more frequently by hospice nurses than by hospital nurses.

Tornstam named these attainments in the final years of life *gerotranscendence*. If he had paired it with its opposite, as Erikson did with his developmental stages, it might be Gerotranscendence vs. Petty Smallmindedness. Although the elderly population studied was spread along a continuum between these polar opposites, many of them qualified as "gerotranscendent," contrary to stereotype. There is a tendency in Western societies to see old people as preoccupied with trivia, devoid of interests or any turns of mind that might be interesting.

Healthy old age is enjoyed for a far longer span than it was one hundred years ago; and the number of years spent in invalidism is extended also because of modern medicine that stalls off death without restoring health. Changed conditions for the aged require different expedients. It is no longer assumed that the grandparent generation will be cared for in their adult children's homes, and senior residences or assisted living is a growth industry. Large numbers of elders live alone. For people on the threshold of old age, late sixties or early seventies, the fear that looms largest is the fear of dependency. One creative solution is co-housing, small intentional communities, some expressly for seniors.[5] A group of retirees at the University of Colorado some years ago bought an apartment building and together hired services that each would need in time, an instance of exceptional initiative.

More common are groups in churches and other institutions that meet to discuss common concerns, both practical services to sustain independent living and emotional issues. The taboo against facing death honestly fades, helped by discussion and by putting into writing advanced care medical directions for one's terminal illness. An essential step for realizing the potential in the final developmental stage is overcoming denial of our own death, usually a process rather than a single realization. Gerotranscendence, or simply transcendence, is a turn away from materialism toward spiritual values. It *tends* toward liberation, or enlightenment, as it is understood in Buddhism, while not yet its equivalent. The Tibetan word *bardo* is often misconstrued in the West as the transitional state between death and a next life. Actually, in Tibetan belief "*bardos* occur continuously throughout life,

and are junctures when the possibility of liberation, or enlightenment, is heightened."[6] An awareness that death and decay are no longer on the other side of the horizon is just such a juncture. The losses associated with age can lead to liberation.

Sooner or later as we age, we need the help of the younger generation. Autonomy was a huge achievement when we were very young, not won without struggle and conflict. Relinquishing it is seldom easier, and sometimes self-sufficiency is so fiercely defended that safety and sanitation become an aggravation and worry for our caring families. Learning to accept help with simple gratitude, neither fighting it nor feeling unworthy and indebted, is a spiritual attainment. The words of a columnist, Adele Starbird, stick in my memory. Writing of the chores she did for her ninety year old mother, she said that her mother made it easy for her by *not* thanking her profusely but acknowledging her care with a simple loving smile.

In my own experience, I have found a need for my daughter's help in managing things I used to do for myself. Remarking on our role reversal, I said to her, "I'm not a mother anymore. I'm an ex-mother. The statute of limitations has run out." "Oh no," my daughter smiled, "You carry mythic weight." Mythic weight – it is what I have gotten from my many relatives who lived into great age with serenity and contentment. Always responsive and interested in what I could tell them, they left me feeling affirmed and optimistic about the future after a visit. They had weathered so much – immigration, Depression, wars, drought – and had adapted to so much change from the world they had been born into, a world much like George Washington's with horses and windmills and premature deaths a common occurrence. They had mellowed, becoming warmer, less judgemental, even playful. In their nineties, in nursing homes that spell the end of bodily privacy, they embodied equanimity, even a sort of gallantry.

My older relatives are a template for the way I view old age. Curious about the perspective of a fifteen year old grandson, I asked him "What are old people good for?" He paused, then answered, "They keep the family together. And connect me with the past. You're like living history." This made me feel like Methuselah of course. Hopefully, I asked if that made him think of future generations; but a boy of fifteen doesn't think much

beyond college entrance. The notion that the last years yield spiritual rewards I would not attempt to explain.

My brother, Bob, died at eighty-four, not a great age, yet the way he met his dreadful disease, a degenerative neurological disease, is desideratum to celebrate the human spirit. The disease causes a gradual loss of control over one's muscles and a loss of the capacity for abstract thinking. For Bob it began with his right foot dragging, and then his right hand became useless. He did what he could for himself as long as possible, and then gracefully accepted help. As he confronted the truth of his situation, he became transparent to himself and others, almost luminous. From an early age he had hidden his feelings, both sad and tender. I had always sensed his kind heart, and now it was openly expressed. To give but one example, a woman in his nursing home who had lost her mind began to howl, like an animal. Bob reached over and covered her hand with his, murmuring softly and soothing her. In this juncture, this *bardo*, he was enabled to be his truest self, caring and affectionate. The howling woman presents the face of old age we dread; my brother's transparency and compassion its potential. The last time I was able to visit him, his wife asked as she brought me to him, "Do you know who this is?" With a tenderness he could not have allowed himself to show before his illness, he promptly said, "My little sister!" (And then with dismay, "But your hair is white.")

Over a lifetime we each construct a self-image, a part of our ego structure, and in our achievements and social roles we find validation of this self-image. Though the achievements and honors are long past, we tend to identify with them as long as we equate them with self-worth. Giving up this outdated identity, restricting though it may have been, is the hardest developmental task. It is a process of disidentification through which the spiritual dimension is regained. Only then can one realize one's essence as one with nature, its cycles and beauty, with soul, with Atman, with Buddha nature. This is the goal of monks who spend years in meditation, and it can happen in the *bardo* of old age. It is poignant to see photos in nursing homes that the elderly have posted of themselves, as a young and beautiful woman perhaps, or as a youthful navy officer, or a plaque with M.D. following the name. Understandably the patients want the professional caretakers to know that this stooped and sagging

mortal coil was once something else. It is more important that the persons themselves know they are something else, something larger and of the spirit. This is not easy. Neither was adolescence or the stormy twos, but all the stages mark the way toward becoming fully human.

In both my father and my brother I saw this process of disidentification and a more expansive identity take wing. My father, Henry Nelson Wieman, had been ambitious and totally committed to his work as an author and a professor, his books influential and translated into many languages. He had lived, as we say, in his head. It is a family joke that when one child fell out of the Model T as he was driving to the beach, he was so absorbed in the book he was writing in his head that it took minutes to attract his attention. In his early eighties, still teaching, he became irritable, and in debates sharply combative. Some comments indicated his fear of being a has-been and his apprehension that rivals in his field would have a greater legacy.

Then there was a transformation, almost a transfiguration. He made the decision to leave his university post and said simply that his writing was finished. He retired to a small town where, apparently contented and peaceful, he did a little gardening, walked in the woods, and limbered his stiff limbs with yoga. He read and was keenly interested in developments in the field of human relations as it was relayed to him by a younger man, but it was simply appreciative interest without striving to incorporate something more in his own work. Often his face was suffused with pleasure as he gazed at younger people. For me the change in him is encapsulated by one event. Happening to look out a window at my father as he was doing some yard work, I noticed that he was stock still, transfixed by something in a rough patch of grass, his face radiant. After he had moved on, I went out to inspect the spot that had enthralled him. In some grass that the mower had missed I found a wild pink trillium – Blake's "heaven in a wildflower!" With the old preoccupations gone, he was open to immediate experience, the freshness we knew before language and concepts grayed our experience. I believe my father was identifying with life itself. Some lines of poetry from a Buddhist monk, Sanghrakshita[7], describe this shift:

> (We) try to grasp our own lives. But Life

Slips through our fingers like snow. Life
Cannot belong to us. We
Belong to Life. Life
Is King.

Rather than believing life to be one's possession, life itself is embraced with its ongoing creativity, becoming and dying, and becoming anew.

The ego-self or self-image, that includes identification of the self with one's body, is an important and necessary development for functioning adulthood, but to release it at the end is liberation. I saw this process even more in my brother Bob. From early childhood, because of an exceptionally high I.Q. and precocity, he had been labeled genius, with commensurate great expectations. It was his pride and, like the ancient mariner's albatross, his burden. A polymath, he became a professor of philosophy who loved the subject but did little to advance his career, inhibited by his need to do nothing that might be less than brilliant. In mental games or intellectual discussion he had a compulsion to prove his superiority, even though he sensed that people found this obnoxious. Yet with the young he was nurturing and he found relaxation in all sorts of non-intellectual endeavors, from repairing his ancient car to hiking the Smokies. Release began with retirement when he became a volunteer assistant for a first grade teacher. This professor of philosophy gently encouraged six year olds, and for one slow learner he used his wood working skill to make numbers and alphabet letters out of wood.

Illness ended Bob's volunteer work. When our far flung family gathered for a last reunion, Bob was hobbling with effort. Yet he was all simplicity, ease, and what I can only call clarity. The clenched jaw was gone. When a few of our party got into a philosophical discussion, Bob listened, seemingly interested but silent. This was so out of character – what had been character – that I commented on it. Simply, without self-pity, he said, "I can't do philosophy anymore." He joined us in a game of Taboo, again surprising me because he knew he could not compete. He knew we were giving him help with hints, yet he enjoyed play as he had never enjoyed play so freely. No medieval knight sprung from his armor could have been lighter than Bob freed from the need to prove superiority.

On learning his diagnosis, Bob had researched his disease and he had no illusions about his future. It was after he had lost control of most of the striated muscles that he had a heart attack. June, his wife, asked if he knew what had happened to him. He nodded calmly. She asked if he wanted treatment. He shook his head vigorously, no. Return full circle to the first year of life, and Erikson's view that the developmental gift of infancy is Basic Trust. It is the same at the end of life. With simple acceptance and trust in the natural order of things, or God, or Being, Bob died.

Endnotes

[1] David Grossman, quoted in an article about him titled "The Unconsoled" by George Packer. The *New Yorker* magazine, September 27, 2010, p. 56.

[2] Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950, 1963).

[3] Erikson, Joan M. *The Life Cycle Completed*. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997).

[4] Tornstam, "Gerotranscendence: A Theoretical and Empirical Exploration," in L. E. Thomas and S. A. Eisenhandler, eds. *Aging and the Religious Dimension* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1993).

[5] Marohn, Stephanie, ed. *Audacious Aging* (Santa Rosa, CA.: Elite Books, 2005).

[6] Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2002), p. x.

[7] Urgyen Sangharakshita, "Life is King," in *Complete Poems 1941-1994* (Cambridge, Eng.: Windhorse Publications, 1995).

The Way of the Yoruba

Jacob K. Olupona

In this brief essay I would like to reflect on the way of the Yoruba. The Yoruba live their religious lives in the context of their tradition and culture, particularly in what is often called the Yoruba indigenous religion. The Yoruba number more than 60 million people. They mainly live in the southwestern part of Nigeria in West Africa, but they also live in several other countries, especially in Togo and Benin. In the Americas, the Yoruba religious tradition constitutes an important aspect of the Afro-Atlantic world in Cuban *Santería*, and Brazilian *Candomblé*. Unlike some other world religious traditions, Yoruba religion and spirituality is not based on scripture nor any canonical text but rather on oral tradition, ceremonies and rituals that prescribe and cement their relationship with the sacred and the transcendent realities.

For the Yoruba, the first source of knowledge is embedded in the notion of the cosmos described as *aye*, literally the world, which could mean the inhabited world, the invisible and unseen world of the spirits and the ontological world. And this world-cosmos, acting as an agent force, connects the heaven above with the underworld space of the ancestors below, and the inhabited world provides the space where humans live and act. *Aye* is also a metaphorical world that refers to an entity that is difficult to unravel, that contains both good and bad forces which are capable of effusing both fear and attraction. It is the active place of the numinous, a mysterious world, that yet fascinates its inhabited beings so the very notion of religion which Rudolf Otto described as *tremendum et facinans* exists precisely in this space where both the living, ancestral spirits and gods interact. It is also the abode of the forces of nature, trees, mountains, lakes, seas and oceans, which are often thought of as personalized nature-beings that are capable of various actions and activities that may be both detrimental and benevolent to the human inhabitants. The humans themselves, men and women, children and adults, live and have their

existence in this cosmos.

The purpose of the religious life is to ensure that there is equilibrium in this world between the benevolent and the malevolent forces that control life and which human beings also relate to with the major purpose of ensuring their existence and their survival. This equilibrium also relates to the humans who live in the world. For example, children and adults are viewed as having complimentary relevance in the affairs of the world. A Yoruba proverb says, "The creation of the world in the sacred land of Ile-Ife was made possible through the wisdom and deeds of both adults and children (Omode gbon, agba gbon, ni o fi da Ile-Ife)." It is a proverb often invoked to show that the wisdom of children and adults also matter in the affairs of the world. The religious tradition recognizes both the natural and the social worlds, the spiritual and the secular realm, and it generally speaks to all aspects of life--ethical, moral knowledge, metaphysical realities, visible and invisible entities, all of which are interconnected.

The world of the gods and the goddesses, the *orisa*, play an active role in the religious lives of the Yoruba. Numbering about 201 or 401 depending on the region, the *orisa* control the activities of the universe. A substantial number of them specialize in different aspects of human activities and natural phenomena. We may mention some of the primordial deities: Ogun, the god of war and metal, and the patron of professionals who use instruments made from metals; Obatala, the god of purity, the molder of human beings, and the most senior of the deities; Sango, god of thunder and lightning; Osanya, the god of herbal medicine and healing.

There are a number of female deities such as Osun, goddess of the river Osun, and perhaps the most popular female deity and the patron deity of a Yoruba town named Osogbo. Another popular female deity is Yemaja, a river goddess in Nigeria who became the goddess of the ocean in the New World. There is also Aje, the goddess of prosperity, market economy and fecundity.

Other deities instrumental to divination are Ifa, the divination deity and the custodian of human knowledge, and Esu, the god of communications and the crossroads. Most of these deities are found in every Yoruba town or city.

Recently Islam and Christianity have taken over the social, political

and economic control of towns and cities in southwestern Nigeria, where in the past the propitiation of these deities was mandatory. In fact, the essence of religion in the tradition is offering rituals and sacrifices to the deities in exchange for the blessings they bestow on the living, the primary ones which are *ire-owo*, the gift of prosperity and money, *ire-omo*, the gift of fecundity and multiple children, and *ire-alaafia*, the blessing of long life, peace and tranquility during one's existence. A devotee offers sacrifices and performs rituals daily for the gods and goddesses, particularly during their festival days.

The ordinary Yoruba will leave offerings in front of tangible representations at shrines of the deities not only to ask that they bestow praises on him but also to request tangible gifts and the opportunity to maintain harmony and peaceful relations. In this tradition, humans are active agents, both in the propitiation of the gods and in formulating the requests from the gods. Today, many affairs of the deities have been relegated to minority status, and they are actively propitiated by only a very few.

In addition to the world of the gods, the *orisa*, the domain of the ancestors is also quite central to Yoruba beliefs and practices. The ancestors by definition are the departed members of the lineages, clans and families who are believed to have reached a superior state of being because they have accrued and earned significant spiritual capital as a result of their good lives on earth. They are viewed as having died well and thus are celebrated by the living. Consequently, they have been transformed into supernatural entities who are now in the position to intervene in the affairs of the living, hence the idea that ancestors can be venerated or "worshipped." The Yoruba offer propitiations to the ancestors and they plead with them to favor them in the quest for their needs in life. In that sense they are similar to the *orisa* but they are more immediate to the living than the *orisa*. Every time I visit my home village in Ute-Owo, Nigeria, I always visit the grave of my parents and grandfather located in the Saint Stephens Anglican Church compound where I quickly offer prayers of thanksgiving and request.

To further illustrate the centrality of ancestorhood in Yoruba religion, let us discuss their views on reincarnation. The Yoruba view children who are born immediately after the death of their grandparents or parents as

possible re-incarnations of the recently deceased. They are given names that reflect this belief in the second coming of the recently deceased, such as Babatunde, which means "the father has come back" or Yejide "the mother has come back." I should add here that my son who was born after the death of my father was given such a name, and also my junior brother who was born after the death of my grandfather. It is very common for the Yoruba to assume that these children not only come with the blessings of the deceased ancestors but also bear their physical traits and moral character.

The collective celebration of deceased ancestors often takes place in annual ceremonies referred to as *Egungun*. The annual Egungun masquerade performance traditionally coincides with the harvest and rainy seasons when there is a change in the natural order of the physical landscape. Various lineages in the community will display the ancestral masquerades of their particular lineages. The masquerades portray the character and ethos of each lineage and showcase their sacredly held myths and traditions. For example, in my mother's hometown of Oke-Igbo in the Ondo state of Nigeria, there are masquerades referred to as Egun Olomo, which means the "one with plentiful children." The bearer wears a heavy, multi-colored robe and a mask that has a circular wooden top around which are carvings of young children. The songs and the dance associated with this particular mask refer to the very cardinal quest and principle of the Yoruba tradition, which is fecundity, the procreation and the blessing of children. Another example is Egun Ile Kuole, one of my ancestral Egungun in my maternal grandmother's lineage, who represents the oldest founders of the city and portrays his sacred power, war prowess, deep knowledge of medicine and longevity. Egun Ile Kuole is both so feared and respected that generally other masquerades give way to him when he is performing.

Yoruba religious tradition is also deeply embedded in a moral ethos, which are prescriptions that guide the behavior and actions of people. They are moral customs, codes and taboos that guide day-to-day conduct. *Iwa*, which means character, is germane to Yoruba life. Good character, *iwa rere*, is considered to be the most important attribute of a human being. In this culture, *Iwa* trumps physical beauty, which is *ewa*, and riches, *owo*.

As a Yoruba proverb says, *Iwa rere leso eniyan*, (Good character is human beauty). To have good character is to have it all.

In traditional Yoruba teaching, the notion of sin, *ese*, in the Western Christian sense is absent. However, the Yoruba determine what is morally right and wrong through taboos and prohibitions. So when the Yoruba refer to something as *ewo*, an abomination, they are referring to what is forbidden and what is morally wrong or what should be avoided. The Yoruba notion of evil is very strong. An evil is personalized and described as an entity that connotes those types of behavior that are unhealthy for human living. This entity, *ajogun*, may refer to many evil forces both natural and physical, like disease, loss and death, trouble, debt and curse, *epe*. These are all the various attributes that connote evil in the society. These are metaphoric references to prohibitions that are necessary for living a good life, which is cardinal to Yoruba human existence.

We must remark that Evangelical Christian references to Esu as Satan is contrary to traditional or indigenous Yoruba thought. Esu, a complex ubiquitious deity, is one of the most prominent deities in Yoruba religion. Esu was never regarded as Satan but rather as the messenger of the gods and carrier of sacrifices. He is the sacred mediator whose double dealing makes him the most feared deity in the Yoruba pantheon. The missionary translators of the Bible mistakenly chose him to symbolize Satan and the devil in their translations of the Bible into the language of Yoruba.

Yoruba interest in communalism and communitarian life is strong. They preach heavily against individualism which they believe could be the source of such unsavory attitudes as selfishness, egoism, and lack of concern for human life. This idea is often expressed in proverbs, which are thought to be the strength of Yoruba language and meaning. Proverbs enable us to unravel difficult ideas and concepts and provide deep meaning and interpretation to our thoughts. For example, they say, *eniyan kan ki je awa de* (No single person refers to himself as the collective we). There is also the notion of living in a way that recognizes the need for harmonious relationships between members of the community. The community is greater than the individual and individual rights are often subjugated to those of the collective.

Yoruba believe that human beings, *eniyan*, are the creation of the

gods and have been given divine authority to live a fulfilling life especially after he or she has chosen from heaven the appropriate *ori*, or destiny, that outlines his or her mission on earth. So in the world, when the child is born, she or he struggles to accomplish these pre-defined goals and must ensure that appropriate sacrifices and rituals are carried out. Of particular importance would be the performance of those rituals that mark transitions and critical moments of life such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. A person is also entreated to behave appropriately and conduct him or herself in such a manner that he or she will be judged to have good character. The Yoruba believe that there is a consequence or punishment as a result of misbehavior even when the act is not observed by others. These consequences are what are often referred to as *eyin iwa*, literally what results after one's action, or the aftermath of what you have done. The end results and punishment for bad behavior is reaped in this world and does not wait until you have passed to the world of the ancestors. This sets the Yoruba religious way apart from some forms of Christianity and Islam where the believer assumes that punishment is not here but in the after life.

Because of human limitations and because of the involvement of the supernatural forces in human activities, it is important for humans to be able to discern the will and the wishes of the *orisa*. Hence Ifa divination becomes very central to Yoruba religious traditions and discourse. What is Ifa divination? Ifa divination refers to a geomantic system whereby people consult a diviner, called *babalawo,* who uses the appropriate instruments of divination, *opele*, to probe into the knowledge of the gods so as to provide answers to the clients. Ifa is one of the most complex divination systems in the world because it contains a vast body of oral literature or narrative and is marked by particular signatures and messages. There are 256 chapters of these narratives, called *odu,* and each verse is called *ese Ifa*. *Odu* may run into hundreds of poetic verses that are memorized by the diviner and used and recited in the divination process. There is no human problem that *odu* has not addressed. The body of the *odu* constitutes a repository of sacred knowledge and indeed an encyclopedia of Yoruba thought, culture and society. Though not a canonical text, the *odu* talks about the gods, the ancestors, healing practices, magical medicine, cities, sacred kings, natural phenomenon, customs and traditions, gender relations, etc. One of the

most exciting parts of the *odu* is its references to appropriate medicines and healings that Yoruba priests and diviners have used for centuries to respond to the medical needs of their own people.

The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria live mainly in cities, and in ancient times there were various city-states that were founded by the aboriginal groups that trace their descent to Ile-Ife, the sacred city of the Yoruba. Yoruba religion as an urban religion is anchored in the personality and the reign of sacred kings (*oba*) who in the Yoruba mythology are indeed regarded by virtue of their descent in Ile-Ife as gods themselves. They are described as *alase, ekeji orisa*, that is the sacred being that wills sacred power (*ase*) and who is next in rank to the gods. Each city-state was governed in the traditional period by these kings who maintained their reign by virtue of their divine status. This tradition continues today in the reign of the Ooni of Ile-Ife, the Alaafin of Oyo, and numerous other kings in the Yoruba territories. The rulers are both political and religious leaders and have under them sets of lineage priests who perform regular sacrifices on their behalf to ensure the peaceful coexistence of their people, and harmony in the social and natural world. While the kings give counsel on social and religious matters, they also adjudicate cases especially through minor chiefs and subordinates who live among members of their community. Each Yoruba society is religiously, socially and culturally pluralistic as it consists of people from different places, traditions, economic and social backgrounds and religions. But this pluralism is held together by the sacred king who invokes the sacred power, *ase*, that was given to him by the gods and who also performs sacrifices and rituals to maintain the unity of the group. In addition to many rituals and festivals in various towns and communities, there is normally a central one that relates to the collective experience and unity of the group and whose performance indeed ensures that they are daily reminded of that collective experience. I have called this in my various writings the Yoruba civil religion. While its source, identity, and the performance may vary from town to town in terms of the specific gods that constitute the central values of that civil faith, they indeed achieve and have the same goal.

In addition to diviners, priests and kings, twins (*ibeji*) are also regarded as sacred beings. It is claimed that the Yoruba have the highest

recorded number of twins in the world and over centuries have developed mythology, rituals and festivals associated with twins. Growing up in my mother's hometown as a twin myself, I was socialized into the tradition by my mother's aunt, Mama Kehinde, who ensured that the weekly celebration for twins, with music and dance, and prayers with the neighborhood children, was never missed. In my mother's extended family we have six set of twins!

The arts form a significant component of Yoruba religious life. Music, dance and the material arts play a central role in Yoruba religious life along with oral literature that is invoked to give meaning and shape to the religious beliefs and practices. Each deity has its own set of music, dances and artistic objects. The arts not only signify the essence of religious life for the people, but also provide deep modes of expression of the sacred. This explains why ancient Yoruba religious art objects are found in museums all over the world. Taken from their ritual and social contexts, they are aesthetic objects for Western museums where their meaning and function are unknown to outsiders. Paradoxically, they have also become avenues for learning about a religious tradition that is generally construed as ethnic and local as opposed to global, like Christianity or Islam.

Being Religious Interreligiously
A SPIRITUALITY FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN ASIA

Peter C. Phan

Darrol Bryant has devoted a better part of his academic career to what is now commonly referred to as interfaith or interreligious dialogue. With courage and imagination, he undertook this activity as a Christian and a scholar when it was still highly suspect in academic and church circles, the more so since his partners-in-dialogue included groups that were widely reviled as heterodox, such as the Unification Church, often derisively called the "Moonies," after their founder, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. It was at one of the conferences funded by the Unification Church and organized by Professor Bryant that I met him for the first time, and I shall always remain grateful to him for making me part of these interfaith activities.

Today, especially in the post-September 11, 2001, context and in the current political instability in the Middle East and North Africa, where for good or for ill religion plays a vital political role, interreligious dialogue has become not only a fashionable and respectable academic exercise but also a necessary means to build global justice and peace. However, to practice interreligious dialogue as a way to peace, one must be religious *interreligiously*, just as, to engage in peacemaking, one must, in Thich Nhat Hanh's celebrated phrase, first *be* peace. In other words, a new spirituality that is not only religious but also interreligious is needed for our time.

In a sense, "interreligiousness" is not a new thing in Asia. What has been called, often pejoratively by guardians of orthodoxy, "syncretism" – the mixing of apparently incompatible beliefs and practices of different religious traditions – has always been as it were the spice of religious life for most Asians. Except in religions with institutional boundaries, where membership requires public renunciation of one's former religious

affiliation, such as, for instance, Christianity, multiple religious belonging is more a norm than an exception. In countries under Sinic influence, there is what is referred to as *san jiao* (three religions or triple religion), that is, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. In fact, these three "religions" are so amalgamated with one another that it is difficult if not impossible to determine precisely which doctrines and ritual practices belong to a particular religious tradition, especially when all of them have been patronized at one time or another by political authorities and popularized as "state religion." In Asia, religions function not so much as bounded institutions as cultural and social practices that respond to specific needs at particular stages of life. It is quipped that in contemporary Japan, a Japanese is born a Shinto, marries as a Christian, and dies as a Buddhist.

This brief essay focuses on interreligious spirituality as part of the practice of interfaith dialogue. Furthermore, though interreligious spirituality behooves all participants in interfaith dialogue, irrespective of religious affiliations – indeed, it is, as mentioned above, a fact of life for the followers of the so-called Asian religions – I will restrict my reflections on interreligious spirituality to Christianity and explore its possibility and contour from the Christian perspective. I begin with reflections on Christian spirituality. Next, I show how it can and should be interreligious today. Finally, I argue that interreligious spirituality is necessary for interfaith dialogue today, especially in Asia.

Christian Spirituality as Self-Transcendent Life in the Spirit

In its broadest sense, spirituality refers to the human capacity for self-transcendence that is actualized in acts of knowledge and love of realities other than oneself. More narrowly, it refers to the religious way of life by which one enters into communion with the transcendent reality, however this is interpreted and named (e.g., Emptiness, the Holy, the Ultimate, the Absolute, Heaven, or God). More strictly still, it indicates a particular way of living out one's relationship with this transcendent reality, through specific beliefs, rituals, prayers, moral behaviors, and community participation (e.g., Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, etc.). There is no generic spirituality, untethered from a historical and particular

tradition and community. Even when one attempts to construct one's own spirituality, one can only do so by drawing upon various elements of pre-existing spiritual traditions. In other words, the institutional dimension of spirituality is essential to any spiritual quest. In Christian tradition, this institution is called 'church.'[1] Thus, spirituality is constituted by the threefold reality of human self-transcendence toward the Ultimate within a particular religious tradition.

The spiritualities of Asian religious traditions also embody all these three connotations, though each in its distinct way, either theistic or a-theistic, personal or impersonal, transcendent or immanent.[2] So does Christian spirituality, which may be defined as a particular way of relating to God as Abba/Father, mediated by Jesus of Nazareth in his ministry, death, and resurrection, and made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit, who has been poured out upon the community called church. In other words, Christian spirituality as relationship with God is *pneumatological* (empowered by the Spirit), *Christological* (mediated through and modeled after Christ), and *ecclesial* (realized in the church).

Christian spirituality is essentially life in the Spirit. Spirit is not antithetical to the body and matter. According to Paul, "spirit" (*pneuma*) and spiritual (*pneumatikos*) – from which 'spirituality' is derived – are the opposites of "flesh" (*sarx*), "fleshly" (*sarkikos*), and "soul-ly" (*psychikos*), but not of "body" (*soma*), "bodily" (*somatikos*), and "matter" (*hyle*). The Pauline opposition is not between two ontological orders: the incorporeal and the immaterial on the one hand and the corporeal and the material on the other. Such metaphysical dualism did not attach to the use of *spiritualitas* until the twelfth century. Rather, the opposition is between two ways of life, one that is led by and functions in accord with the Spirit ("spiritual") and therefore leads to life, and the other opposed to the Spirit ("fleshly") and brings about death. Christian spirituality then is essentially life in communion with God empowered by the Spirit of Christ, by whom men and women are made sons and daughters of God by adoption, and brothers and sisters of Christ, into whose image they must be fashioned. Such a life is adorned with the Spirit's gift of virtues (1 Cor 13:13; Col 1:9; Rom 8:21; Gal 5:13; 2 Cor 3:17), fruits (Gal 5:23-24), and charisms of different kinds to build up the Christian community (1 Cor 12:4-11; 28-30;

Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:11-13).

Christian Spirituality as Interreligious Spirituality

It is important to note with regard to Christian spirituality that the divine being with whom Christians enter into communion is neither one nor plural, but, to use the expression of Vedantic philosophy popularized in Christian circles especially by Raimon Panikkar, "advaitic." In terms of the Christian faith, God is neither a solitary monad (as in the Unitarian belief) nor a multiplicity of beings (as in the polytheistic tradition) but "trinitarian." This divine transhistorical trinity manifests itself in history, to use Panikkar's memorable coinage, as a non-monistic and non-dualistic "cosmotheandric" reality, the *mysterium coniunctionis* of the divine, the human, and the cosmic.[3]

As a consequence, Christian spirituality is necessarily threefold in its structure and cannot be reduced to any one of its three elements. Moreover, because of its intrinsically plural character, Christian spirituality is fundamentally open and receptive to other spiritualities, learning from and enriching them in turn, with their distinct emphasis on the divine (e.g., in Hinduism), or on the human (e.g., Confucianism and Buddhism), or on the cosmos (e.g., Daoism). Thus, the attitude of Christianity toward other religions is neither exclusivistic (which is dualistic) nor inclusivistic (which is monistic) nor pluralistic (which is both) but advaitic. In other words, Christian spirituality is neither exclusively Christian nor inclusively religious nor pluralistically pan-religious but advaitically interreligious.

Because Asia is the birthplace of most if not all religions, and because Christians form but a tiny minority of the Asian population, Asian Christians, more than their fellow-believers in any other part of the globe, cannot live their Spirit-empowered lives apart from non-Christian religions. At first, most missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, were pessimistic about the spiritual values of these religious ways of life. But the goodness of non-Christians (some of them are holier than Christians!) with whom many Christians share their daily life intimately as family members gives the lie to the church's age-old teaching that non-Christians are heathens destined for hell, that Christianity is the only true and universally valid way to God, and that non-Christian religions are infested

with superstition and depravity. Clearly, non-Christians are good and holy, not in spite of but *because* of the beliefs and practices enjoined by their religions. From the Christian perspective, these elements of truth and grace must be regarded as fruits of the Spirit, who is the gift of God and the Risen Christ, but who is active outside of, albeit not independently from, Jesus and the church, in ways known to God.

Consequently, Asian Christian spirituality must be carried out in a sincere and humble dialogue with other religions to learn from, among other things, their sacred scriptures, doctrinal teachings, moral and spiritual practices, prayers and devotions, and monastic and mystical traditions. It is to the credit of the Society of Jesus that many of their members were the first missionaries in Asia to develop a Christian spirituality in dialogue with Asian cultures and religions. Jesuits such as Francis Xavier and Alessandro Valignano in Japan, Matteo Ricci in China, Roberto de Nobili in India, and Alexandre de Rhodes in Vietnam, notwithstanding whatever deficiencies of their accommodationist policies, were visionary pioneers who paved the way, often at great personal costs, to a Christian spirituality enriched by other religious traditions and in turn enriching them through interfaith dialogue.

In more recent times, bold and even controversial efforts have been made to incorporate monastic and spiritual practices of non-Christian religions into Christian spirituality. In India, French priest Jules Monchanin, French Benedictine Henri Le Saux (also known as Abishiktananda), English Benedictine Dom Bede Griffiths, Belgian Cistercian monk Francis Mahieu, and Indian Jesuit Ignatius Hirudayam, to cite only the better-known ones, have been active in incorporating into their Christian experience of God as Trinity the Hindu advaitic quest for God as *sat* (being), *cit* (truth), and *ananda* (bliss). Moreover, through their Ashram Movement, they have assimilated into Christian worship and monasticism the Hindu sacred scriptures, religious symbols, ascetic practices, meditation technique, religious songs and dance, sacred art, clothing and postures.

In Japan, the resource for spiritual enrichment has been mainly Zen Buddhism. Not surprisingly, the first efforts at dialogue with Zen were made by the Quakers. Among Catholics, Jesuits Hugo M. Enomiya-

Lassalle, Kakichi Kadowaki, and William Johnston and Dominican priest Oshida have been instrumental in enriching Christian spirituality with the Zen meditation practices. Dialogue with Buddhism, especially in its Theravada branch, has been carried out extensively in Thailand and Sri Lanka. Dialogue with Islam is active in certain parts of India and in Indonesia. In countries heavily influenced by Confucianism such as China, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Korea, Christian spirituality has recently incorporated the rituals of the cult of ancestors after it had been severely condemned by the church for several centuries.

Interreligious Spirituality in Asia Today

From a practical point of view, interfaith dialogue as a part of Asian Christian spirituality, as a genuine opening of persons of different faiths to one another with a view to share and be enriched by another faith, serves a multiplicity of functions. It helps overcome fear of the other, removes misunderstandings of and prejudices against other religions, promotes collaboration with others in areas of life beyond religion, and enhances the understanding and practice of one's own faith. Such a dialogue takes the forms of *common living* as friendly and helpful neighbors; *common action* for the sake of peace, justice, and ecological integrity; *theological exchange* to remove misunderstandings and to enrich one another intellectually; and *shared religious experience* in which people of different faiths pray and worship together.[4]

These four dialogues do not function separately from and independently of one another. Rather, they form a single spirituality composed of four intimately intertwined activities that derive their effectiveness from one another. Nor should any activity be given priority, especially theological exchange, as is often done in the West. On the contrary, theological exchange should be preceded by, rooted in, and nourished by common living, common action, and shared religious experiences.

Of these three activities, the last, sharing of religious experiences, is perhaps the most spiritually challenging yet of vital importance. It is indeed interreligious spirituality in action. To pray and worship *together*, in the midst of religious diversity and differences, even in the very conceptualization of the Ultimate – and not simply to be together to pray,

each one in his or her own traditions – is to realize at the deepest level the fundamental unity that binds all humans and the cosmos together. It is at this level that genuine and lasting justice, peace, and reconciliation of all peoples, despite their socio-economic, political and religious differences, can be achieved. Sharing religious experiences does not require a doctrinal consensus among participants as its condition of possibility and legitimation, nor is it merely its practical consequence. Rather it is made possible by the very advaitic nature of reality, by the cosmotheandric *mysterium conjunctionis* that is beyond all religious organizations and boundaries. Thus, interreligious spirituality is the call and demand of our time of religious pluralism, which has been called the Second Axial Age.

More than anywhere else, Asia, where all the major religious traditions were born and the home of two-thirds of the world population, affords a unique opportunity for interreligious spirituality. It is the continent where Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Confucianists, Daoists, tribal and primal religionists, theists, non-theists, atheists, polytheists live and work together in all their diversities and differences. The future of Asia, and indeed of the globe, depends on whether its people are able and willing to be religious (and ironically, non-religious) interreligiously. It is an honor for me to celebrate with these reflections on interreligious spirituality the achievements of Darrol Bryant, who has devoted his intellectual and spiritual talents to interreligious dialogue, and much of it in Asia itself.

Endnotes

[1] For a study of Christian spirituality in a global perspective, see James Wiseman, *Spirituality and Mysticism: A Global View* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006).

[2] For general discussions of Asian Christian spirituality, see Virginia Fabella, Peter K. H. Lee, and David Kwang-sun Suh, eds., *Asian Christian Spirituality: Reclaiming Traditions* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992)

[3] On Panikkar's concept of theoanthropocosmic reality, see, among his many works, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004) and *The Rhythm of Being* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010).

[4] See Peter C. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005)

My Way of Jihad
JOYS AND STRUGGLES OF A MUSLIM WOMAN IN NORTH AMERICA

Idrisa Pandit

I would like to share the story of my *Jihad* (my struggle) with all of you. It is a struggle many Muslims share with me, especially if they are visible Muslims. It is a short summary of my faith journey, my jihad to discover who I really am as a Muslim woman and my responsibilities as a Muslim living as a minority in North America. This is my personal journey in the world of social justice and interfaith, some of the lessons I have learned, the joys and challenges, and above all, the people that I encountered who have made this journey meaningful. It is my confession of how people of various persuasions, faiths and cultures have enriched my life and shaped my multiple selves, all in a state of creative tension, not belonging in any one space or land. My jihad as a Muslim woman stems from Prophet Muhammad's explanation of greater jihad, a struggle of the soul, a struggle that enables me to keep striving for justice even when the road is tough and barriers seem insurmountable.

I share these glimpses with the hope that we all prize our encounters, even though they may be so different than what may be "normal" for us. I also hope that these encounters, or the risks we take to move beyond our comfort zone, will strengthen us to move beyond tolerance and will aid us in overcoming fear of the "other," something that cripples our encounter and understanding, and by extension, limits our compassion. This is my journey of faith in which my companions, teachers, and fellow travelers from many backgrounds helped shape my faith.

Many years ago, on a journey form Delhi to Calcutta, going through security check, ahead of me I spotted three nuns clad in their crisp cotton, blue bordered white saris. One of them was particularly short and when I looked carefully, I dropped my bags – something you could still do in

the pre-security hysteria days – and jumped the line to greet her. My childhood dream had suddenly become a reality. The little woman about whom I had dreamed, who had been my hero, was standing in front of me. My chance encounter with this Albanian lady, Mother Teresa, serving the most destitute in India, seemed unreal. My first real introduction to Mother Teresa had been in my moral science class, reading a required text, her biography by Malcolm Muggeridge, a book that left an impression on my young mind.

Being schooled in an Anglican school in the Valley of Kashmir, a Muslim majority state, my only formal religious education was in Christianity, not Islam, my own faith. What I learned about Islam was by process of osmosis, watching my parents, and learning by example. While I had had years of moral science and Bible lessons, the story of Mother Teresa's life had struck a chord within me, sparked a light, a desire to somehow follow in the footsteps of this amazing woman. My faith journey and my world view were fashioned in a Christian school, a Hindu college and a secular university.

Multiculturalism was added to my vocabulary in North America. In my life, multiculturalism had been the way of life. I was born in a very observant Muslim family, schooled in an Anglican school by English teachers, and lived with people from all over the world in my neighbourhood, people who were living in Kashmir as hippies, Rajneesh followers, missionaries, artists, writers, and those merely attracted by the natural beauty of the Himalayas and their desire to climb every peak in the Valley. Seeing people from all over the world was the norm, not an exception. My classmates and friends were equally diverse – Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists, Bahai, Christian. Living with one another and going to school together excluded the need for multicultural education.

Once I spread my wings and left home in my teen years, I longed for the atmosphere of my childhood. From a sheltered life of absolute social harmony dotted with expressions of political discontent, I was thrust into the capital of India, a society where religious lines were drawn very sharply and being identified as a person of a minority faith was not to your advantage. I was faced with my first challenge of religious identity, of melding with the rest without being identified as a Muslim, of keeping

up my faith practice behind the closed doors of my dorm. This meant compromise, an uncomfortable compromise, of not carrying any visible symbols of faith. The first feeling of longing and missing home crept in. I had a sudden realization of home as a place where I could be at ease with myself and be surrounded by others who are like me, an environment where questions of identity and faith never seemed to be issues for consideration. Now, being a minority in an environment charged with religious hostilities was my new reality. As tensions rose after the murder of Indira Gandhi, I remember walking up to the roof of the dorm and seeing Delhi on fire. I was rescued by some Hindu family friends from my dorm and sent home on the first flight until tensions calmed in Delhi. That road trip from my dorm to the airport was no ordinary journey. The road was blocked at several points and angry mobs would stop cars to check for Sikhs, who became an easy target for anger and revenge. Passing as a Hindu sitting next to my Marwari Hindu friends in the car, I made it to the airport and went home until a sense of normalcy retuned to Delhi. Of course, Delhi after the 1984 Sikh massacres was never the same. I had witnessed firsthand the power of hate, of families being torn apart and neighbours turning into enemies.

Five years later, I would leave yet again to a new land thousands of miles away from home. All alone, I was thrust into the small mid-western twin city of Urbana-Champaign, a university campus that truly became my window to a whole new reality and learning. The University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign was truly a place that awakened my spirit and my faith. As a newcomer to the history of the United Sates, I had much to learn. My lessons in understanding the oppression of Native Americans, African Americans and many other oppressed people of the world came from my encounters on campus with the most amazing minds. My initiation into working in solidarity with the oppressed also occurred concurrently. My worldview was expanding while I also recognized the need to deepen my own faith – not the faith I had inherited, but one that I would embrace on my own. A new country, a new culture and new issues were challenging, and at the same time enriching. It was a time full of possibilities and opportunities.

Feeling homesick and alone, I looked for people I could have some

connection with. I found a small, yet vibrant, Muslim community. Going to a mosque was a rare experience, something I had never ever done back home. The mosque in North America is often the first stop for immigrant Muslims looking for a community they can feel home at. Yet the beauty of the North American Muslim community is its diversity, especially evident on a college campus that attracts Muslims from all around the world. It was my first encounter with Muslims of Indonesia, the Arab lands, Africa and the Far East. Becoming part of this diverse Muslim family was a gift I would never have received had I stayed where I was born. My search to learn began here, and I set up a group for Muslim women from around the world – the Islamic Women's Awareness Society (IWAS). Muslim women, Native Muslims, African American Muslims, African Muslims, Asians and Arabs all got together every week to study the Qu'ran and learn from and teach one another. It was our collective effort at empowerment through knowledge.

At UIUC, besides receiving a great education, I learned the true meaning of courage by observing people of conscience: academics who put their profession on the line for speaking the truth and protecting the vulnerable, Christian pastors who made room in their churches for Muslims to pray, Jews who were most vocal about the cause of Palestinian injustice, white people who advocated for the causes of natives and African Americans. This activism and people striving together for social justice made me realize the power of solidarity in words and deeds, expressions of common humanity and dignity of people as our hope to live in harmony and peace. It was evident that divisions caused by the narrow interpretation of doctrine can be overcome through collective service. I learned about the power of interfaith, not by sitting around a table and pontificating, but rather by standing shoulder to shoulder raising slogans against injustice and war. This was the time of Desert Storm when I had to face people yelling, "Nuke her," "Go back where you came from," and the FBI was asked to gather all names of foreign students involved in dissent. The most amazing of my mentors was an elderly white couple from Decatur, Illinois, who took me in as their protégé. This couple, who I would say were like my foster parents, had been at the forefront of the civil rights movement, the issues of native Americans and vocal advocates of Palestinian rights.

Alongside them and many others, I learned to march in protest for the cause of any community experiencing injustice.

Around that same time, my own homeland, Kashmir, known as heaven on earth, was also turning into a living hell. As the struggle of Kashmir got underway, it did not stay a distant reality. Tragedy touched my family, neighbours, friends and relatives. Thrust into activism, living thousands of miles away, and gaining strength from the activism of the bold people surrounding me, I assumed the role of a spokesperson for my people, giving voice to the oppressed people of Kashmir. I learned about the history of oppression in my homeland and shared it with others. The scale and gravity of loss, death and destruction in Kashmir was incomprehensible until I returned three years later to a desolate, eerie valley of Kashmir. The tourists were gone, my neighbours had left, and sadness, depression, anger and resentment had taken over the hearts and minds of ordinary Kashmiris. The paradise was wounded and the scars were deep. The atrocities, especially against the women of Kashmir, that I witnessed and documented, stayed unexpressed. Words failed to convey the pain and vicarious trauma that I endured as a witness and continue to witness every year to this day.

Upon my return to the US, yet another grave tragedy was unfolding in the world, the Bosnian conflict. Yet again, people of conscience gathered, protested and held silent vigils. "Never again," the slogan of the Holocaust was again relevant as the worst of humankind was being displayed in the horrors committed in the name of religion.

It was during that period that I moved from Illinois to Massachusetts and landed at Wellesley College as an advisor to the College on religious and cultural issues. Sitting in a circle with a Catholic priest, a Buddhist nun, a Jewish Rabbi, an Episcopalian, a Unitarian Universalist minister and a Baptist minister, we began the journey every week of discovering each other's faith with respect and understanding. Our weekly meetings and bi-annual retreats to the Peace Abbey brought us together as people of faith, as friends and co-workers. Alongside, students from various faith traditions also designed a similar practice of engagement. To incorporate spirituality into education was a pioneering effort at Wellesley, a college campus with a strong Protestant history. The focus of the Multifaith

Chaplaincy was to adopt a pluralistic approach to faith, and the success of this program, the first ever multifaith campus program in the United States, was mainly due to the support of the administration, alumnae and the Board of trustees. Out of this effort was born Al-Muslimat, a Muslim students group.

As an advisor and counselor at Wellesley I discovered the challenges of young Muslim women, some struggling to understand and re-discover their faith, as I had struggled just a few years before, some just finding their faith, others caught in the divide between faith and culture. Some felt empowered and embraced as who they were as Muslim women and others distanced themselves from their heritage. These issues remain very much a part of the current scene of Muslim youth. My role as an advisor and counselor to women in North America has been both challenging and enlightening.

During the fateful eleventh day of September 2001, I lived just a few miles from the Pentagon and the White House. With my husband travelling, detained at a European airport for flying while Muslim, and my two young children by my side, I experienced vulnerability. I got calls from friends asking me to remove my hijab, others advising me to just stay indoors. I paid heed to neither. My neighbours reached out to me and cared for me, and my children taught me the real meaning of a human family. It was not a time to hide and be silent. I had to wrestle with claiming my faith which had literally been hijacked that day. All the war machinery pumped into full gear in the name of finding weapons of mass destruction and seeking revenge has brought untold misery, death, destruction and displacement. It never did calm the fury, but rather added fuel to the fire, highlighting the civilization and cultural divide, reviving the language of the Crusades and renewing the calls to end, in the words of Franklin Graham, the "evil" religion. The world has never been the same for any Muslim after September 11th, even for those who were closet Muslims prior to that day. While bombs were falling in Iraq and Afghanistan and anger and resentment on both sides of the divide were growing, ordinary Muslims like myself had to meet the challenge of educating our neighbours and friends about what Islam is and who Muslims really are. Once again, I was humbled to watch Jews, Christians and other people of conscience speak out against

injustice irrespective of who the victim of injustice happened to be. It is these unsung heroes who never bought into the neo-con philosophy of the permanent civilizational divide and who are never celebrated in the media that have taught Muslims like me the power of true freedom of expression in the West.

This journey of reclaiming my faith from the extremist minority and creating awareness about Islam and Muslims has become my jihad. My task as a Muslim and that of other Muslims is very hard, especially when the machinery in the business of manufacturing hate and fear is very strong and well funded. This multimillion dollar fear factory, kept alive by the likes of Robert Spencer and his protégé Hisri Ali, Daniel Pipes, David Horowitz, Pam Geller and our own Mark Spencer, drowns the voices of reason, voices that speak of a dialogue of civilizations, a coming together of community on principles of respect, harmony, understanding and above all, compassion. The inhumane crime of Andre Brevik, the Norwegian murderer, who by his own admission in his 1500 page manifesto, was inspired by the above cited self-proclaimed "Islamic experts," shows us the deadly consequences of hate mongering and manufactured fear. It is a warning that once again superiority complexes, uncontrollable egos, and the urge to maintain power and control over others will widen the chasm between people of the world and be fodder for the "civilized us" vs. the "savage them." It is indeed painful to hear ignorant statements from some who are socialized into thinking that Muslims are a threat, non-contributing members of society and civilization, and an enemy whose increasing numbers is the biggest threat to the "values" of the civilized West. These are accusations I can expect to hear at most of the events where I speak, a clear indication that the Islamophobes of the twenty first century are succeeding in spreading fear and creating a sense of alarm.

My interfaith journey continues as I walk alongside so many wonderful people of many different faith traditions who teach me about their faith, yet strengthen my own. While I hear ignorant statements from some, there is hope in others who do not let fear take over their lives and do not heed warnings of alarmists. I know that fear can be overcome, trust can be built, and knowledge and awareness can help build compassion. I know that we are capable of embracing one another and treating one another with

respect as long as we are willing to listen to one another and engage one another with equity, without the imposition of my truth as the only truth. We are capable of moving beyond the media stereotypes that, in Noam Chomsky's words, tame the bewildered herd.

I pray that true compassion for each other will guide us all in taking a step towards ending ignorance and challenging ideas that breed mistrust. We have no option but to move beyond our closed communities and build harmonious relationships with one another, irrespective of our differences of faith, culture, language and ethnicity. Such relationships can bloom in an atmosphere of trust and true understanding where we do not all become alike; instead, we cherish one another just as we are, with all our differences and unique gifts. The question I will keep asking myself as long as I live is "Am I standing up to injustice and oppression, or, are my actions and inactions promoting injustice?" This not the time to rest, since hate threatens harmony in our communities and fear casts its dark shadow. Justice is the guiding principle of my life, and as a Muslim I will continue to strive in my jihad to live up to the Qu'ranic commandment:

O those who have believed
Be one who is staunch in equity
As witnesses for God
Even against yourselves
Or ones who are your parents or nearest of kin.

The Way of the Ways

Frank K. Flinn

Most, if not all, of the religions of the world see themselves as a "way." There is the mysterious *Tao* of Taoism. The 1st century writing called the *Didache* or "Teaching" points to the "way of truth" and the "way of falsehood." This writing is almost certainly of Judaic origin but was adopted and adapted by early followers of Jesus of Nazareth. The term *derek*, way or path, takes on deep religious and ethical meanings in the Hebrew Bible. The way through the Red Sea is the way to salvation. In I Corinthians 12.31 the Apostle Paul tells the community "And now I will show the most excellent Way" which he follows with the hymn to love. The Maya point to the *sachbe,* the Milky Way, as showing a pattern for the conduct of human life on earth. To this day, the living religions have places of pilgrimage – Mecca, Chichen Itza, Chartres, HaKotel or the Western Wall, Guadalupe, Shaolin, Uluru or Ayres Rock, etc. – to which devotees periodically make their "way" on the route to salvation, or forgiveness, or sacred memory of the ancients, or enlightenment.

Whence this apparent religious motivation to see life as a way? We cannot be sure but my guess is that the "way" originated in Africa multiple millennia ago when our ancestors left the womb of the rain forest and ventured upon the steppe in search of another and new destiny. There must have been nostalgia for the womb forest (Eden?) but the bipeds who took to the unsearched plains knew that the true "way" was onward, forward, and often upward. There were stations on the way – oases, valleys, mineral lodes – but the path went forth to a Mt. Zion or Mt. Kailas or Mt. Fuji.

Today there is much written that "it is the journey, not the destination, that counts." This cliché is fallout from the McCluhanesque-type mania that the "medium is the message." I have never for a minute felt comfortable with this creed. The departure place, the stops along the trek, and the end point all make up essential moments of the way. We may have only faint recollections of whence we came, and only vague intimations or fantastic

premonitions – the mandala that is Mt. Meru, the New Jerusalem – of the destination, but the beginning abides as the tether of our existence and the end is the lodestone mesmerizing our feet onto the path. The present – the journey – is the tensor between the two.

To remind them of that primal journey, most religions of the world have found places of pilgrimage through which they relive the aboriginal discovery of the way. To go on pilgrimage or walkabout, as the Australian Aborigines say, is to undergo the primordial ritual. In Arnold van Gennep's formative language, one separates from the everyday, the familiar, the convenient and the comfortable and sets out for the Santuario de Chimayo in New Mexico or the Islands of the Sun and Moon at the southern rim of Lake Titicaca. The journey is the transformative place in-between, the *limen* or threshold between the social self and the non-self and the former self and new self. Sometimes, when you travel to the sacred shrine of another religion, the journey is to an *other* self of which one was not aware before the journey. It is a Pass-over in the most literal sense of the term. Biblical scholars now tell us that the small Israelite tribes, after escaping the clutches of the Pharaoh overlords, wandered up to the top of the Gulf of Elat where they merged with the *Shasu* (e.g., "foot walkers" or "nomads") of Yahweh.

Recently, my spouse Alice and I visited Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat with good friends. At Angkor Thom, we crossed the Bridge of the Churning of the Milk of the Ocean and ascended the main temple Prasat Bayon where we came face to face with the giant Buddha visages. Suddenly we became aware of the difference between eastern and western religious traditions, between entering Chartres cathedral and looking *up* to heaven and coming into immediate, direct contact with the blissful Buddha at Angkor Thom. The otherness of Buddhist religious experience has become an immediate part of our lives. In the West, we tend to look up to heaven. The Buddhism of Angkor Thom takes you up into heaven through meditation and enlightenment. This latter experience is not foreign to the West. The Jewish and Christian mystics all speak of the immediate encounter with God – *devekut* or "cleaving [to G-d]" in the Kabbalah, *unio mystica* or "mystic joining" in Christianity, and *wusla* or "arriving" in Islam. But by and large, the western mystical experience is restricted to

adepts and hedged in by the overarching teaching upholding the infinite gap between the eternal Creator and lowly creature. In the East, even the humblest of pilgrims and smallest of children are invited to ascend into the heavenly realm to discover the Buddha-within echoed in the blissful gaze of the Buddha-without.

Sometimes the way is a trek across a desert or through a jungle thicket. Joseph Campbell shows how the "hero" (I prefer the term "sojourner") must undergo wandering, lostness, spiritual struggle and wounding before returning to glory and peace. The way exacts the price of losing one's self, home and status, in order to find a truer if not the true self. It is the wandering sage or prophet who receives the vision of the Red Road (Black Elk), the commandants to guide life (Moses), or the revelation of the true path to the Beloved (Rumi). To maintain or regain this itinerant purification, many religions make the re-enactment of a journey, procession or Passover as the key ritual of religious expression. The ancient Israelite Song of Miriam (Exodus 15) commemorates not only the crossing of the Reed Sea but also the annual procession across the Jordan and up to the Sanctuary and Mountain of Inheritance in Jerusalem. Even in the congested stasis of the urban grid, the Feast of Booths (Sukkoth) puts Jews outside their homes beneath a tent-like covering, ready once again to sojourn in the desert to encounter the one who causes to be all that is. The command of the Hajj sends devout Muslims away from their abodes to circle the Kaaba and sojourn on the Plain of Arafat. Fixed and settled, we are still on the way.

Some sages and holy persons embrace the itinerant life as the essence of religious expression. They are spiritual journey-men in the literal sense. Francis of Assisi invoked the saying of Jesus that "the foxes have holes and birds their nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9.58) as the motto of his earthly existence. From that followed his vow of absolute poverty that meant not only poverty of goods but also of dwellings. His was no abstract poverty but a gift of all he had to the poor and a taking to the way of the road. Freedom from subjection to the material comes by materially liberating those who are subjected and freeing oneself to find the Way. The perpetual peregrine or wandering pilgrim has little need of encumbering possessions of power. (The sedentary overlords of the Vatican

could never understand this, always suspected the Franciscan ethic and wound up forcing the followers of Francis into a monastery type of life like that of Benedict of Nursia who required his followers to take vows of stability.) Francis finds his Hindu counterpart in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, a Bengali scholar and saint who took to the roads and paths of East India singing the praises of Krishna with ecstatic devotion (*bhakti*) and seeding a social revolution. Both find their Mahayana Buddhist fellow traveler in Nichiren, who composed his deepest treatises sojourning in exile. In Sufi Islam there is Shams Tabrizi, the wandering mystic who sparked in Rumi al-Din an endless torrent of poetry on the Beloved. Only on the Walkabout does the Australian Aborigine "sing" the tracks and markings of the ancestors of the Dreamtime. This journey shows the initiate what rituals to perform, what foods to eat or not eat, and how to determine one's identity in the clan. The way to keep the Way alive is to literally go on the way or to be forced on the way.

Religions are always trapped between fixing the holy in a place (Rome, Mecca, Varanasi, Bodh Gaya) or going with the flow of ever expanding experience and horizons. They sometimes try to fix belief itself in adamantine creeds. In the first millennium, Christians set about nailing down the teachings about the Christ in conciliar statements. The moment a statement was set down, it opened a Pandora's box of other possible statements, some "orthodox," some "heretical." The formula *homousios*, "of the same being" with the Father, at the Council of Nicaea (325) answered Nestorius' ambiguous expression (*homoios*, "like unto") but later had to be qualified by the formula "fully human, fully divine" of Chalcedon (451), in turn amplified and modified by the formula "two wills, human and divine" at the Third Council of Constantinople (680-681). The council theologians failed to realize that the Greek term for statement (*logos*) itself has a stabilizing element (*onoma*, noun or name) and a dynamic element (*rhema* or verb, derived from *rheein*, to flow). Things are and also become. Western thought has always shifted between being and becoming, stasis and kinesis, fixed dogma and ever-changing opinion, permanent dwelling and crossing over. Seeing religion as a "way" keeps this tension taut and open to reform and renewal and reception of the new.

Sometimes the way leads up to the heights; sometimes it leads to the

depths. Atop Mt. Sinai Moses encountered the G-d of the Fathers who announced the divine presence as "I am who am," a phrase perhaps better translated as "I am the one who brings about all that is." Buddhist, Hindu and Bon believers ascend the Himalayan escarpment above Nepal to circumambulate Mt. Kailas, abode alike of Shiva and Parvati and the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and Bon spirits. Pilgrims to the Buddhist shrine at Borobudur, an embodiment of Mt. Meru, ascend from the world of errant desire at the foot (*kamadhatu*), to the world of forms in the five square platforms (*rupadhatu*), and the formless world in the top three circular platforms (*arupadhatu*) until they reach the crowning stupa, which is empty.

Parallel to this physical/spiritual ascent is Bonaventure of Fidanza's spiritual/physical *Roadway of the Mind into God* which takes the meditator on divinity from the realm of *sensatio* (sensual experience that shows the traces of the divine in nature), *imaginatio* (finding the divine through the divine image in humanity), and *intellectus* (the contemplation of the eternal divine ideas). Where the Buddhist path ends in an emptiness of the self (Pali *anatta*, "no-self"), the Christian mystic arrives at a *unio mystica*, a divine fullness and effulgence. The Eastern path evokes a fulfillment that requires emptiness; the Western, a completion that overcomes self-centeredness.

The Way of ways is not only up. It can also be down into John of the Cross's "dark night of the soul." Classic myths and folktales have episodes that classic Greek and Roman writers called the *katabasis* ("journey downward") or *nekyia* ("night journey") to the underworld, like Odysseus' descent to Hades (*Odyssey*, Book 11). It is the journey through "the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23.4) during which the self cries out "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me" (Psalm 22.1). Many saints and sages have travelled through this time of dryness of soul, disorientation, and spiritual regression. Carl Jung saw it as the "retroversion of the consciousness mind into the deeper layers of the unconscious psyche." Eric Erikson saw it as regression in favor of growth, during which the psyche re-integrates the unresolved aspects of the personality.

The challenge is immense. The dilemma is keeping faith when there are no longer any comforting beliefs on which to hang that faith. The risk

remains that the soul will not dare the night journey and become trapped in a permanent eddy of spiritual stagnation. But for those who endure, there is the promise of those green pastures of bliss and blessing.

Sometimes the Way leads toward taking another way in order to find again one's own way. Many are unaware that Mahatma Gandhi first crossed over to the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain in the New Testament before he set upon his Hindu path. Only later was he empowered to cross back once again into the heart of the Bhagavad Gita. In dialogue with D.T. Suzuki, Thomas Merton passed from his own rich Cistercian mystic tradition into the trackless steppes of Zen meditation in order to return to Christian meditation with a deepened, leaner spirit.

By the end of the second millennium, Christianity had become wedded to, or at least accepting of, the use of force and violence as a legitimate means of defending and spreading the faith. Only by passing over into Gandhi's non-violent force of truth (*satyagraha*) was Martin Luther King, Jr. able to rediscover the principle of active non-violence that lies at the heart of Jesus of Nazareth's teaching. Gandhi found Krishna by journeying toward Christ, and Martin Luther King, Jr. found Christ by passing over to Krishna. It is no accident that both Gandhi and King achieved and expressed their convictions by marching non-violently on foot to Dandi and Selma.

These three wayfarers of the 20th century perhaps mark the future path of the Way in a world of global destinations. The only way to find one's own way is to encounter others on their ways, to understand those ways, and indeed, to discover in those ways signposts either absent or obscured in one's own way.

The Way remains open and beckons all.[1]

Endnote

[1] It is my great privilege to contribute this essay in honor of M. Darrol Bryant, classmate, co-author, and life-long mentor on the Way of the Wider Ecumenism.

Gratitude

Pamela O'Rourke

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a step
…..Living that journey begins with a single word …Yes
Yes I accept the key but stand in front of air
with no door to open
no experience no temple no festival in front of me
I look for the unexplainable the understandable
the inexhaustible through the door of dialogue.
I stand upon this granite rock and wave my key in the winds
I am ready I boldly call out
To be changed to be a part of another
(will I be ready enough? I whisper inside)
My monologue is ready to diverge
The symphony is tuning
A new key is sought
Let the Haj, the pilgrimage, the journey begin
Outwardly I am wifemotherteachergrandmother
Inwardly I am
Seekerpilgrimstudentlover
The life boat is ready
Adrift

Let us begin
"..And when old words die out on the tongue, new melodies break forth
from the heart; and where the old tracks are lost,
new country is revealed with its wonders" Tagore

The first person I met at Hamdard was the gardener.
We shared a flower-tree conversation with gestures and nods -
he kept saying gee and nodding, smiling. A gentleman of the earth.

Every encounter multiplies to 2,3,10 people in a minute. Every conversation seems to take a philosophical bend - something deeper here… Chipmunks, birds, dogs, a cat,
cockscomb in brilliant pinks, silver oak, magenta powderpuff trees…
gardens coaxed and nurtured lovingly from the dirt contrast with the barefooted barely clad children……..
Every moment of life is an engaging opportunity, a chance to dialogue and find one another.

The journey that we made together will go on and on in my life…
what has ended in essence has just begun.
You have shown me not one but many ways to enter India
many paths to follow and to enjoy her questions
as well as her confounding answers.
You have taught me how to dialogue with a mystery.

The key turns in my hand and the song of India is an a cappella in many keys.
Dialogue becomes easy… understanding takes a little longer.
You have shown me a very special world
through your friendship and your friendships
You are making a difference in this world- one person at a time.
The key is turned
The lock is loose …..
I am singing
Thank you for this song

Contributors

Pamela O'Rourke is an innovative and creative teacher, mother, and friend. She was a student of mine in Religion & Culture, but discovered her vocation as a teacher of the aged. Pamela initiated classes on a wide range of topics at retirement centers in the KW area. She has travelled with me to India on several occasions and produced the most poetic diaries of our ventures in dialogue with the religions and cultures of India.

Ursula King is Professor Emerita of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Bristol in England. She has also been a visiting Professor in Norway and the USA, and lectured around the world. Educated in Germany, France, India, and the UK, she is widely known for her studies in women's spirituality and feminism, Hinduism, and Teilhard de Chardin. Her publications include *The Search for Spirituality: Our Global Search for a Spiritual Life* and *Spirit of Fire: the Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin*. I have known Ursula since the early 1980s.

James Gollnick is Professor Emeritus from St. Paul's University College at the University of Waterloo. He was educated at Marquette University, Die Freie Universitaet (Berlin), and St. Michaels in the University of Toronto. We met at St. Michaels and became colleagues at Waterloo where Jim was the Director of the Spirituality and Personal Development program. He has kept dream journals since the late 1960s. He is the author of several books including *Religion & Spirituality in the Life Cycle* and *A Time to Dream: Dreams, Religion, & Spirituality*.

Dennis Hirota is a Professor of Shin Buddhism at Ryukoku University in Kyoto, Japan. He was the Head Translator for *The Collected Works of Shinran* (1997) and together with Yoshifumi Ueda wrote *Shinran: An Introduction to His Thought.* He is a leading Shin Buddhist scholar known internationally for the depth and clarity of his writing. We met in the late 1990s at an international conference in Japan on the *Lotus Sutra*.

Doboom Tulku was the long time (1980-2011) Director of Tibet House in New Delhi, India. Tibet House is a Cultural Centre established by HH the Dalai Lama. Born in Tibet, he made his way to India in 1959-60. A Buddhist lama or monk, he directed the work of Tibet House for three decades. Currently, he is the Director of the World Buddhist Cultural Trust in Hyderabad, India. In the mid-1980s he became my guide into Tibetan Buddhism.

Mary Pat Fisher is the prolific author of the widely used world religions textbook *Living Religions*, now in its eighth edition. She has also authored *The Art of Seeing*, *Color*, and *Women in Religion*. Mary has been a resident at Gobind Sadan (House of God) for decades after becoming a follower of the Sikh teacher Baba Versa Singh (1934-2007) in the late 1970s. Gobind Sadan has become a vibrant inter-religious community in India attracting people from across the world.

Marcus J. Borg held the Hundere Chair in Religion and Culture at Oregon State University, before retiring in 2007. He holds a doctorate from Oxford University and is the author of the best selling *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time, The Heart of Christianity* and many, many others. His books have been translated into many languages. He is a leading figure in the new quest for the historical Jesus. Now the Canon Theologian at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland, Oregon, we have known each other since we met at college in Minnesota in 1960.

Gene Reeves holds a doctorate from Emory University and was formerly the Head of Meadville/Lombard Theological School in Chicago. Gene has been teaching and researching in Japan and China since 1989. A religious philosopher, he is the editor of *A Buddhist Kaleidoscope: Essays on the Lotus Sutra* and the translator of a new edition of the *Lotus Sutra*. He is also the founder of the International Buddhist Congregation in Tokyo and a consultant to Rissho Kosei-kai in Japan. I have known Gene since we met at interfaith events in the 1980s.

Casey Clifford Rock is a friend, yoga teacher, divinity student, mother and writer. She has a MLS from the University of Toronto, an M.Div. from St. Michaels, and is a certified Kripalu Yoga Instructor. She worked as a librarian/researcher for CBC for more than a decade and raised three boys before establishing her own yoga centre. Her "Voices from the Mat" appeared in *Reclaiming the Body in Christian Spirituality*.

W. Rory Dickson is an Instructor in Religion & Philosophy at South Dakota State University in Brookings, South Dakota. I knew Rory as a doctoral student in the Laurier/Waterloo Joint PhD program. He wrote an excellent dissertation entitled "Living Sufism in North America: Between Tradition and Transformation." He was wise beyond his years and I asked him to write on the Way of a Sufi. He was one of the first graduates of new Laurier/Waterloo PhD program to get a full time appointment.

Joseph A. Adler is a Professor of Asian Studies at Kenyon College in Ohio. With a doctorate from the University of California at Santa Barbara, he is the author of *Chinese Religious Traditions* and, most recently, *Reconstructing the Confucian Dao.* We met while participating in an on-line program on *Living Religions*, where Joseph spoke on Confucianism.

M. Darrol Bryant, a Professor of Religion and Culture at Renison University College in the University of Waterloo (1973-2007), is now the Director, Centre for Dialogue & Spirituality in the World Religions. Long involved in the encounter and dialogue of the world religions, he has travelled widely including over twenty times to India. His many publications include *Religion in a New Key*, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Promise & Problems*, and an encyclopedia on *Religion in the Modern World*.

Rabbi Rami Shapiro is a poet, educator, award winning author and rabbi. He received his rabbinical ordination from Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (NYC) and holds a doctorate in Contemporary Jewish Thought. He was a congregational rabbi for 20 years and is now the Director of the Wisdom House Center for Interfaith Studies in Nashville, Tennessee, an Adjunct Professor at Middle Tennessee State College and

writes a regular column, "*Roadside Assistance for the Spiritual Traveler*." His many writings include *The Sacred Art of Loving Kindness: Preparing to Practice* and *Tanya, The Masterpiece of Hasidic Wisdom*.

Yanni Maniatis is the founder/director of the Life Mastery Institute in Morrisville, Pennsylvania. Formerly, Yanni was a librarian, publisher, and organizer of interfaith conferences and assemblies. We worked together on interfaith events from the 1970s to the 1990s. He is the author of *Magical Keys to Self-Mastery*, and his Institute conducts classes, retreats, and "inside-out journeys."

Val Lariviere has a M.A. in Religion and Culture and now works as a Costumes/Warehouse Assistant at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario. She has taught university courses in religion and film. She did a wonderful study of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* for her Senior Honors paper with me in the 1990s.

Nick Ruiter was in my class on Contemporary Theology at Waterloo Lutheran University, now Wilfrid Laurier University, when I came to Canada in 1967. He went on to do an M.A. in Religious Studies at the University of Windsor. He worked as a carpenter for many years before becoming the Spiritual Care Co-ordinator at the Dorothy Ley Hospice in Toronto.

James Duerlinger is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Iowa. He specializes in Buddhist and early Greek philosophy and has carried out studies of Tibetan Buddhism in India. He is the author of *Indian Buddhist Theories of Persons* and edited a volume on *Ultimate Reality and Spiritual Disciplines*. We first met in the early 1980s at inter-religious gatherings, and I have run into him in Dharamsala in India several times.

Siobhan Chandler is a graduate of the Wilfrid Laurier University/University of Waterloo (WLU/UW) doctoral program in Religious Diversity in North America. Her doctoral dissertation was entitled "The Social Ethic of Religiously Unaffiliated Spirituality" and explored the "spiritual but not

religious phenomenon." She taught courses at Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo before returning to British Columbia. She is working for the BC Cancer Agency, while holding a Fellowship at the Centre for Studies of Religion and Society at the University of Victoria.

Alon Goshen-Gottstein was born in England, and raised in Jerusalem. He is the founder and head of the Elijah Interfaith Institute in Jerusalem, Israel. He has his doctorate from the Hebrew University and is an ordained Orthodox rabbi. He has been active in interfaith activities for several decades. He has lectured world-wide and authored many studies, including *Jewish Theology and World Religions*. He is credited with rescuing Pope Benedict's 2009 visit to Jerusalem with an interfaith song of peace that saw the Pope join hands with Jewish, Muslim, Druze and Christian leaders. I first met Alon at a "Children of Abraham" conference in Turkey in the late 1990s.

Kendra Smith holds a doctorate in psychology. She happened upon a book on Buddhism when she was fifteen, and, as she said, "committed to it." In 1957, traveling with her husband, Huston Smith, she had her first experience with meditation, first in Burma (Myanmar), then in Japan. In addition to raising three daughters, she worked as a therapist and explored various therapeutic techniques. She is a gifted writer and a friend for more than 30 years.

Jacob Olupona is one of the world's leading scholars on the indigenous spiritual and religious traditions of Africa. Cross-appointed to the Faculty of Divinity and the Faculty of Arts & Sciences at Harvard University, he has been a friend since the 1980s. We met at international interfaith conferences and Jacob became my guide into traditional African Ways. His many publications include *Orisa Devotion as World Religion: The Globalization of Yoruba Religious Culture*.

Peter Phan holds the Ignacio Ellacuria Chair of Catholic Social Thought at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. Originally from Vietnam, he holds doctorates from the Universitas Pontifica Salensia in Rome and two

more from the University of London. He has published widely including *Christianity with an Asian Face* and edited more than 20 volumes including *Christianity & the Wider Ecumenism*. He is a leading Catholic thinker in interfaith encounter and dialogue.

Idrisa Pandit is the Director of the Studies in Islam program at the University of Waterloo. She was educated at the University of Kashmir and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (PhD) and has been active in interfaith activities in the USA and Canada. She is also the founder of Muslim Social Services in Kitchener, Ontario.

Frank K. Flinn is Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at Washington University in St. Louis. He has also served as an expert witness on questions of church and state and the legal definition of religion in North America, Europe and the Far East. I have known Frank since the 1960s and we have collaborated on a number of projects, most recently on the forthcoming series of encyclopedias entitled Religion and Society (NY: Facts On File). Earlier, Frank authored the *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* and was co-editor of *Interreligious Dialogue: Voices from a New Frontier*.