

The background of the image is a watercolor wash. It features a large, dark blue area on the left side that transitions into lighter, more ethereal blue and white washes on the right. The edges of the colors are soft and irregular, characteristic of watercolor painting. The overall effect is serene and artistic.

# One Bright Pearl

—THE DALAI LAMA

# Overview of Buddhism and the Meaning of Life

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1. Practical Approaches



2. Effective Care



3. “One Bright Pearl”



4. Nothing Left to Lose

# The three trainings

Within a structure of the traditional three trainings of ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom are detailed instructions on how to take an ethical approach to life, how to meditate and calm the mind, and on the basis of those how to develop a correct understanding of reality.

The title of the work refers to the essential Buddhist understanding of the basis, the nature of the mind as clear and aware, unobstructed by disturbing emotions. This quality is possessed by all sentient beings.

HHDL on Buddhaghosa's Path of Purification



# Two types of meditation: Serenity and Insight

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Calming the Mind and Discerning the Real

Calm abiding and special insight=                      Zhi gnas and lhag mthong

Samatha and vipassana OR Shamatha and vipashyana

“consciousness and understanding” in sutta passage to follow . . .

A deity asked:

The inner tangle and the outer tangle—

This generation is entangled in a tangle.

And so I ask of Gotama this question:

Who succeeds in disentangling this tangle?

The Bhagavan  
replied:

When a wise man, established well in virtue,

Develops consciousness and understanding

Then as a bhikkhu ardent and sagacious

He succeeds in disentangling this tangle.

(S I 13)

# Buddhaghosa

Purification here means Nibbana which being devoid of all stains is utterly pure.

In some instances the path is taught by insight alone, sometimes by jhana and understanding, sometimes by kamma . . . But in answer to this question it is taught by all three.

Standing on the ground of virtue and taking up with the hand of protective understanding exerted by the power of energy the knife of insight understanding well sharpened on the stone of concentration might disentangle, cut away and demolish all the tangle of crazing that had overgrown life's continuity.

# Concentration and Absorption

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Udraka : First, Second, Third, Fourth Jhanas  
(Dhyanas)

Arada Kalama: Formless Absorptions: Limitless Space, Limitless Consciousness, Nothingness, Neither Perception nor Non-Perception

Pliancy, bliss, one-pointedness, clarity or lucidity

Weakening of subject/object experience . . . . into nonduality

Nonduality and ineffability







Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism by Denma Locho Rinpoche and Leah Zahler



The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, volume 3

# William James

“The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will. ... An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence.”

Distracted by devices!

# Yogacara = Cittamatra

Yogic practice is linked to the philosophy that there is nothing that is other than mind.

In Cittamatra, the delusion of subject/object duality is fundamental ignorance.

This short presentation will suggest a connection between (1) concentration and (2) nondual or unitive philosophies.

And will do so as usual in this series without sticking to Buddhadharma.

# Discursive or not so much?

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Whether you are proud or ashamed that you have only read a handbook, you will never become a buddha without reading a yakload of books.

Kadampa saying quoted by Tsongkhapa

When you get to this point in your practice, you no longer rely on books.

Geshe Gendun Lodrö

In literature of dhyana, fluctuations (g.yo ba) (or instability) of mind can refer to distraction .. Or to discursive conceptuality

# One Bright Pearl

Master Xuansha often taught with the saying, “The entire universe in the ten directions is one bright pearl.”

Once a monk asked him, “Master, you often say that the entire universe in the ten directions is one bright pearl. How can a student like me understand this?”

The master said, “The entire universe in the ten directions is one bright pearl. What is the use of understanding?”

# Dogen on “One Bright Pearl”

This grass or that tree are not grass and tree,  
nor are the mountains and rivers of the world  
mountains and rivers; they are one bright  
pearl...

do not doubt that you yourself are the bright  
pearl by thinking, “I am not the bright pearl.”

Confusion and doubts, affirmations and  
negations, these are nothing but the  
ephemeral, small responses of ordinary folk .

. .

But still, they are the bright pearl appearing  
as small, ephemeral responses...



# Dogen on “One Bright Pearl”

Xuansha’s expression has made it clear that our own minds and bodies are the one bright pearl, and so we realize that our minds are not “ours.”

Who can be anxious as to whether birth and death are, or are not, the bright pearl?

Even if there is doubt or anxiety, they are the bright pearl. There is not a single activity or thought that is not the bright pearl . . . .

# The Way and its Power

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The Way ( 道) that can be followed (dao) is not the enduring and unchanging Way (dao).

With no name, it is the source of heaven and earth; with a name, it is the mother of all things.

Remaining without desire, you see its subtle mystery; remaining with desire, you see its external appearance.

These two [mystery and appearance] come from the same place but have different names.

This sameness is called the deep mystery.

Deep mysteries, and again deep mysteries – The gateway of many subtle mysteries.



# Turning Back to the Source

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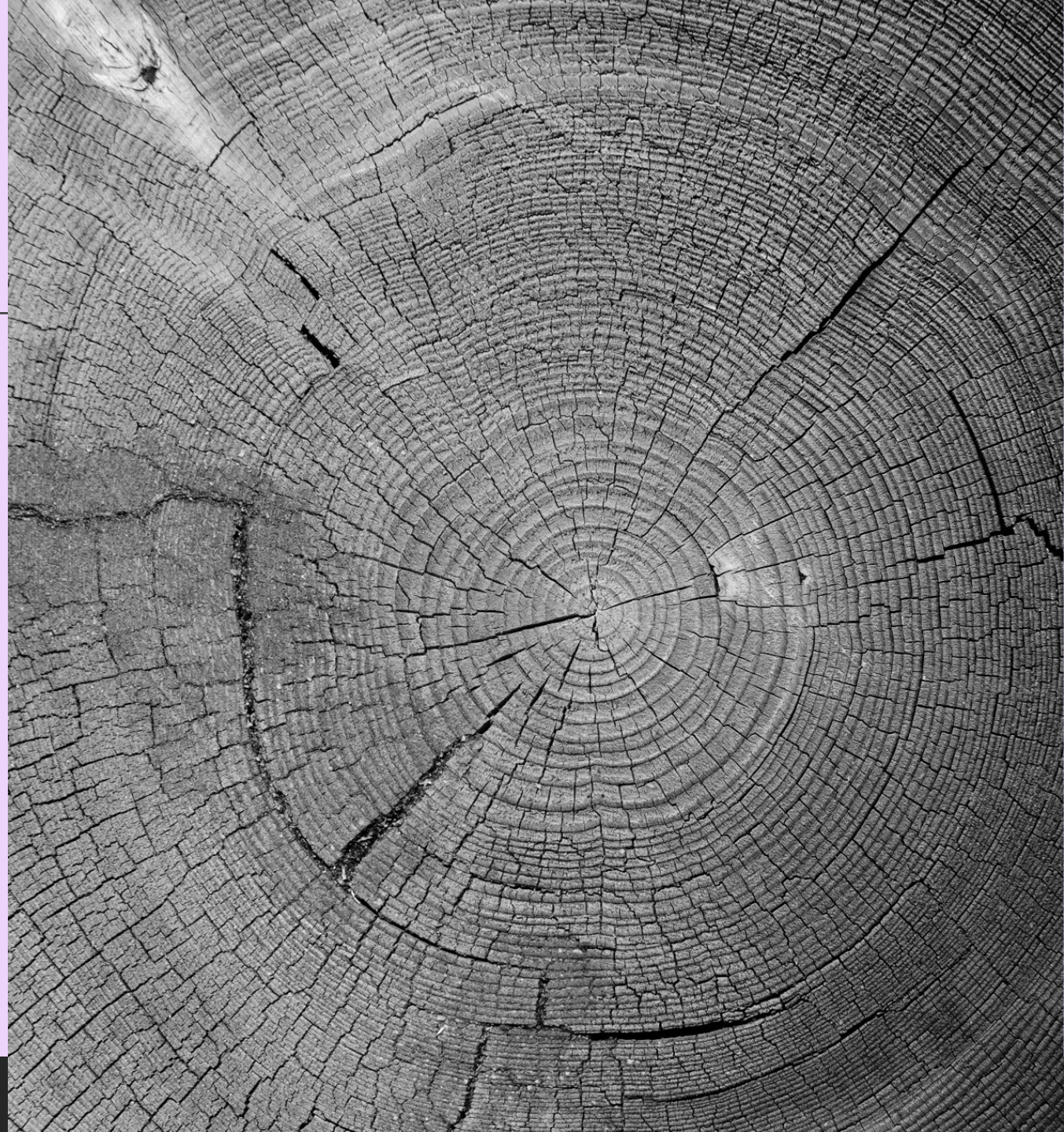
A thing complete, born before  
Heaven and Earth . . .

The 10,000 things become active

And I watch them return

Things are teeming and multifarious

But each one returns to its root . . .



Laozi  
continued:  
knowing the  
source

All under Heaven had a beginning,  
the mother of all . . .

Once you know the mother, you can  
know the sons . . .

Once you know the sons, you can  
return and hold fast to the mother.



# Non-action (*wu-wei*)

“The Way does nothing, yet nothing remains unaccomplished.”

“Ruling a large kingdom is like cooking a small fish.”

Never leading by seeking to overpower or dominate, but rather by attuning yourself to the total situation and responding sincerely and without strain

“When his achievements are complete, the people say, ‘We are like this naturally.’”

# Trained Spontaneity

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The idea of spontaneity as a life ideal seems to be the same between Daoists (like Zhuangzi) and Confucians . . . And maybe Aristotle.

Such spontaneity is not impulsiveness; it is attained through training. The butcher Ding story.

Confucians want to spell out the kinds of moral virtues we seek to embody, to spontaneously enact. “At 15 I set my heart on learning . . . At age 70 what my heart desired and what was **right** came into alignment.” (Analects)



# Flow of Mihály Csíkszentmihályi 1970

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In the zone . . .

A person performing some activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity.

Flow is characterized by the complete absorption in what one does, and a resulting transformation in one's sense of time.

Flow is the melting together of action and consciousness; the state of finding a balance between a skill and how challenging that task is.

# Soko Morinaga: Original Face

One of the most famous koans is “Show your original face before the birth of your mother and father.” Everyone realizes that this means, “What is the original and constant self?” But in due course the teacher will shout, “I’m not asking for explanations. Get rid of your theories and show me your original face!”

In order to instantly apprehend situations, I had to pass through the fear of death. [My practice was so rigorous] that a voice would whisper warning, “If you go on like this, you might die. You had better stop.”



# No “me”

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But it did not turn out that way. One night I sat in the middle of the night, a lump of fatigue on a zazen cushion, both body and consciousness in a haze, and I could not have roused the desire for satori if I had wanted to, when suddenly the fog cleared and a world of lucidity opened itself. Clearly seeing, clearly hearing, yet it was a world in which there was no “me”!

I cannot fully explain it; to venture an explanation would be to err somewhere. But I am sure that in that instant the heart with which I was born came into play in its purest form.

# Marshall Davis: nondual Christianity

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(Marshall Davis is a retired evangelical Baptist minister with a doctoral degree. He lives in rural New Hampshire writing on what he calls “nondual Christianity.”)

Nondual Christianity is experiential Christianity, an immediate experience of oneness with God, Christ, with all of creation. It is not pantheism because it is not any sort of religious philosophy. It is not an intellectual understanding; it is a direct apprehension of the Divine.

Divine Reality is beyond the reach of human language. Yet you have to describe it somehow; if you are going to try to communicate the Unspeakable, you have to use language. In Christian language, I write about **the Unity we already have** with One “in whom we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28)

# Presence beyond theology

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We refuse to consciously acknowledge what we intuitively know to be true. We have intentionally forgotten who God is and who we are.

In Christian spirituality this experience of Oneness is usually called “union with God” or “communion with God.” I usually call it Awareness, the Kingdom of God, or Presence.

Christians who have tasted this reality do not know how to describe it using the usual language of American Christianity. And non-Christians tend to stereotype Christianity as dualistic, legalistic, and overtly concerned with dogma. But Christianity is nondualistic at its heart.

Nondualism transcends all ideas, philosophies, and religions. The Kingdom of God (Jesus’s term for nondual Reality) is beyond theology. Theologies are useful only when they point beyond themselves to the Kingdom. That is why Jesus spoke in parables.

I do not know how exactly to describe this new awareness of myself and God. Words are inadequate and even ideas fail to capture it. It is a sense of Oneness. God is perceived as Real, but not as an entity separate from me. God is not seen as an entity at all; neither do I experience myself that way. Meister Eckhart wrote, “The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me.” Seeing one is seeing the other.

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Jesus expressed his experience saying, “I and the Father are one. When you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” (John 14:9) Somehow, I intuitively understand Christ’s awareness. As the apostle Paul said, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20)

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” Paul says (2 Corinthians 4:7) There is the earthen vessel of the body; there is the consciousness of the body that we call the self. But I am neither of these and I never really was. There is just God, the Treasure in earthen vessels.

My personality is real in a temporary sense, but not an eternal one. It developed in childhood and will cease to exist when I die.



# Facing Death



Users of psychedelic drugs often report that their sense of being a self or ‘I’ distinct from the rest of the world has diminished or altogether dissolved. Neuroscientific study of such ‘ego dissolution’ experiences offers a window onto the nature of self-awareness. We argue that ego dissolution is best explained by an account that explains self-awareness as resulting from the integrated functioning of hierarchical predictive models which posit the existence of a stable and unchanging entity to which representations are bound.

Combining recent work . . . . yields an explanation of ego dissolution according to **which self-representation is a useful Cartesian fiction: an ultimately false representation of a simple and enduring substance** to which attributes are bound which serves to integrate and unify cognitive processing across levels and domains.

**Self unbound: ego dissolution in psychedelic experience**

Chris Letheby, Philip Gerrans

Neuroscience of Consciousness, Volume 2017, Issue 1, 2017, nix016, <https://doi.org/10.1093/nc/nix016>

Ordinary human experience is structured by the duality of subject-object distinctions. However, multiple philosophical and mystical traditions (e.g., Advaita Vedanta, Mahamudra, Dzogchen, Kabbalah, Sufism, Gnosticism, etc.) point to the possibility that this dichotomy may be transcended in special states of nondual awareness. Nondual awareness may be transcultural . . .

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Nondual awareness (NDA) can be defined as a state of consciousness that rests in the background of all conscious experiencing – a background field of awareness that is unified, immutable, and empty of mental content, yet retains a quality of cognizant bliss (Josipovic, 2014). This field of awareness is thought to be ever present, yet typically unrecognized, obscured by discursive thought, emotion, and perception . . .

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NDA is characterized by experiences in which the self and world are merged into a unified whole or the boundaries of the self dissolve into an empty vacuity . . . . multiple philosophical traditions, including Buddhism, suggest that NDA facilitates fundamental insights into the nature of reality and the emptiness of the self.

Such experiential insights are thought to produce profound states of bliss and promote a lasting sense of well-being. In contrast, reifying the self as substantive and an independent pole of the subject-object dichotomy is believed to contribute to suffering.

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**The Nondual Awareness Dimensional Assessment (NADA): New Tools to Assess Nondual Traits and States of Consciousness Occurring Within and Beyond the Context of Meditation**

[Adam W. Hanley](#)<sup>1,2</sup>, [Yoshio Nakamura](#)<sup>1,3</sup>, and [Eric L. Garland](#)<sup>1,2</sup>

[Psychol Assess. 2018 Dec; 30\(12\): 1625–1639.](#)

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PMCID: PMC6265073

NIHMSID: NIHMS977946

PMID: [30058824](#)



Yogis meditating on the letter A inside a thigle,  
Lukhang Temple

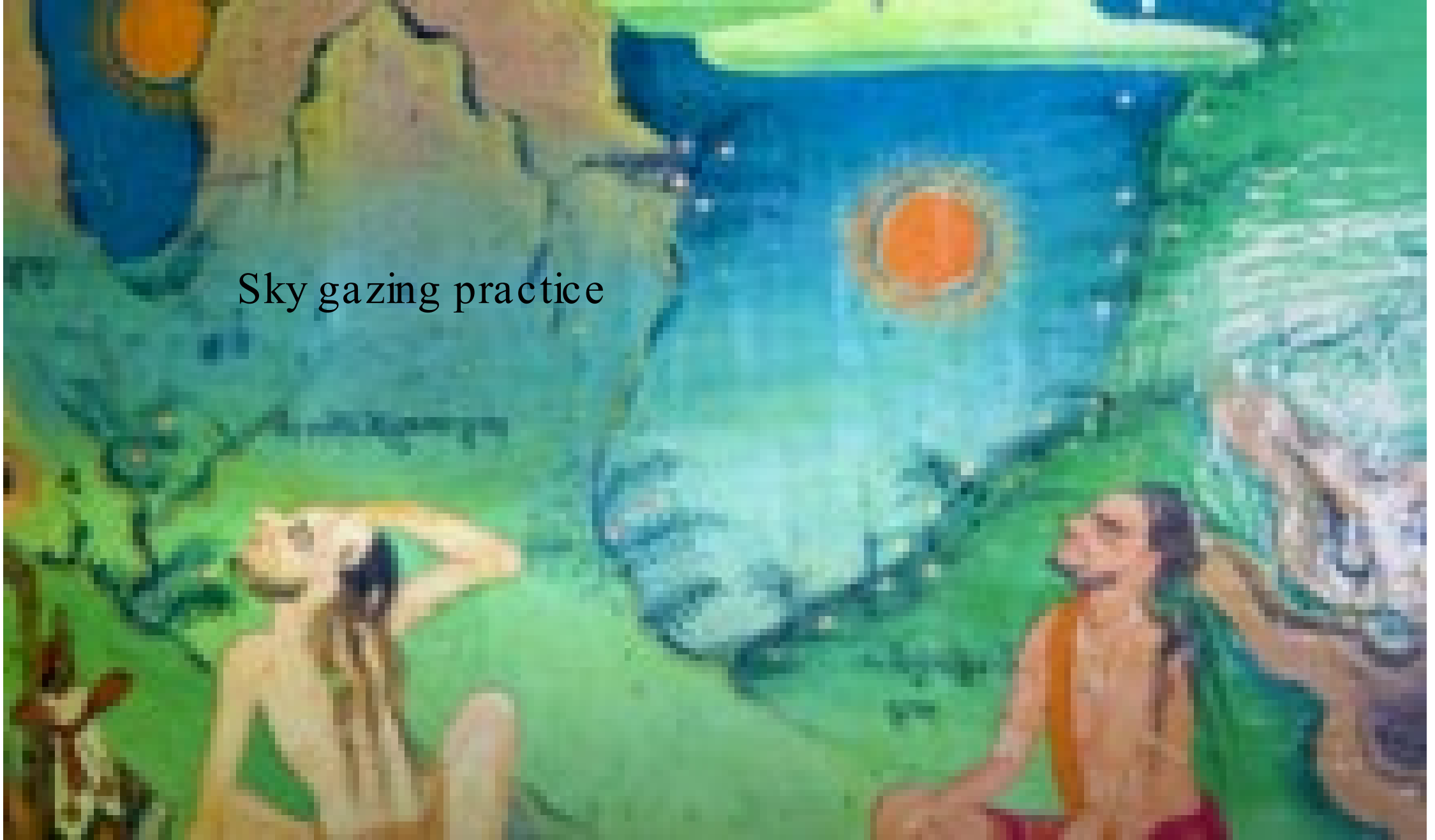




# Practicing Dzogchen

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Sky gazing practice



# Candrakirti and “Robo-buddha”

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The six perfections involve practicing virtue without (reified) seeing of agent, object or action.

But when you do merciful deeds, don't let your left hand know what your right hand does. (Matthew 6:3)

Geluk descriptions of the Buddha's inner landscape are based on Svatantrika sources!!!

Candrakirti describes the activities of awakening as like a spinning potter's wheel after the potter has gone.



# The Three Visions

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Three ways of talking to guide people toward liberating vision of the profound reality.

(1) The profound reality is the lack, absence, in things and people, of a distorted kind of existence that is in fact impossible. Called “emptiness” or “no-self.”

(2) The profound, liberating reality is the intrinsic perfection ~~and~~ buddhanature as present within all beings.

(3) The profound reality is not accessible to words and thoughts. It is ineffable and transcends all dualistic categories.

Vision # 2:  
Buddha Nature  
is profound  
reality

In vision #1, the emptiness vision, we suffer needlessly because we add something extra—inherent existence—onto the things we apprehend, thus creating the growth medium from greed and hatred.

But this medicine is experienced by many people as unduly negative, discouraging, and/or frightening.

# Good medicine?

People may feel depressed or ~~grief-stricken~~  
. . . and hearing about emptiness might  
make them more depressed.

People may feel fearful (about non  
existence/death) and hearing about  
emptiness might make them terrified.

People might have poor self-esteem and be  
best treated with a medicine that is positive  
and affirming about their innate perfection.

# Fundamental Purity of Mind in the Tradition from outset?

Luminous, monks, is the mind. And it is defiled by incoming defilements.

Luminous, monks, is the mind. And it is freed from incoming defilements.

The uninstructed ordinary person doesn't discern that as it actually is present, which is why I tell you that — for the uninstructed ordinary person — there is no development of the mind . . .

The well-instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns that as it actually is present, which is why I tell you that — for the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones — there is development of the mind.

- Phabassara Sutta in the Anguttara Nikaya



# Already Luminous but not seen as Such

Theravada commentators such as Thanissaro Bhikkhu explain the luminosity of the mind as something that comes about through the path of purification (ethics, meditation, and wisdom).

But the text seems clearly to say that the mind is basically luminous. This luminosity is not seen by ordinary persons, but the well-instructed develop the mind precisely by seeing its already-present basic character as luminous.

This seems to me to preclude the idea that the mind only BECOMES luminous through purification.

# Revealing innate perfection

The final fruit of practice has always been with us and it is not a negation.

After Buddha taught emptiness in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, he taught tathagata-garbha, buddha nature, in the “third turning of wheel.

If buddhahood were the product of the practice of the path, then like all products it would be subject to decay.

The path reveals buddhahood that has always been there.



# Luminous Consciousness as the Ultimate

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Where do water, earth, fire, & wind have no footing?  
Where are long & short, coarse & fine, fair & foul, name  
& form brought to an end?

And the answer to that is: **Consciousness without  
feature, without end, luminous all around**: Here water,  
earth, fire, & wind have no footing. Here long & short  
coarse & fine fair & foul name & form are all brought to  
an end.

- Kevaddha Sutta of the Digha Nikaya

# Boundless Radiant Consciousness In the 1<sup>st</sup> turning

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Consciousness without surface, endless, radiant all around, has not been experienced through the earthiness of earth ... the liquidity of liquid ... the fieriness of fire ... the windiness of wind ... the all-ness of the all.

Brahma-nimantanika Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya

# Buddhanature in First Turning?

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The exact meaning of these passages can be debated and is debated in Theravada commentaries.

But looking back, it is hard not to see them as precursors to the fuller development of the idea of buddhanature . . .

And/or the mind of clear light.

# And then in 2<sup>nd</sup> turning

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The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in 8000 lines is one of the earliest known texts of the 2<sup>nd</sup> turning.

”The mind of enlightenment (bodhicitta) is no mind because . . .

in its essential original nature, mind is transparently luminous.”

# The Sublime Continuum

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“Buddha is without beginning, middle and end. He is peace itself, uncreated and spontaneously present, not a realization due to extraneous conditions.”

All beings have buddha nature because buddha wisdom is always present within beings. It is an undefiled nature free from duality.

Buddha nature is not born, does not die, suffers no harm, does not age—it is permanent and stable and immutable peace.



# One luminous pearl

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And:

“It is by nature clear light.”

- The Bodhisattva Maitreya (Asanga)
- (or, per Chinese tradition) Sthirimati)