

**Foreword to *Coming Home--The Experience of Enlightenment in Sacred Traditions* by Lex**

**Hixon**

"Enlightenment is the awakening to our primal harmony or, in another mystical language, to our rootedness in the Divine." Thus begins what is, in my opinion, the single best introductory book ever written on the world's great mystical traditions, a book you now hold in your hands. As Lex Hixon himself makes quite clear, this book is not an attempt at an academic survey or a textbook of the historical and doctrinal details of each of the world's great wisdom traditions. There are many excellent books that already do this (among which Huston Smith's *The Religions of Man* may especially be mentioned). Nor is it an attempt at a philosophical justification of the mystical or enlightened state (W.T. Stace's *Philosophy and Mysticism* does so brilliantly). Nor is it even a general anthology culled from the various traditions. Such anthologies--Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* is still the best--are very important, because they demonstrate that however different the various wisdom traditions might outwardly appear, they nevertheless inwardly share certain profound and crosscultural insights into the nature of absolute Spirit or Godhead. And the supreme insight shared by all of the great wisdom traditions is simply this: absolute Spirit or Godhead is the ultimate source, essence, and identity of each and every individual being, of you, of me. It is the Being of all beings, the Subject of all selves and the Suchness of all objects, the Supreme Identity, prior to this world but not other to this world. To put it simply, absolute Spirit is one's own True Nature or Original Face, which is the face of the cosmos as well. There is only God. And so these anthologies eloquently proclaim.

Important and extremely valuable as all those approaches are, Lex Hixon's cuts at right angles to all of them--not replacing or displacing them, but complementing them. Lex simply assumes the truth of divine Spirit as manifested in and through the various wisdom traditions, and then, instead of telling you all the historical details and doctrines of the various traditions, he simply invites you to release yourself into Spirit as it manifests itself through each of these wisdom traditions. Each chapter is thus devoted to a particular path, a particular contemplative tradition, from Taoism to Krishnamurti, from Zen to Plotinus, from Vedanta to Sufism. And while each chapter gives enough historical background to orient the reader, the real purpose of the chapter is, in a sense, to talk you into the contemplative awareness that is the mystical heart of each tradition but that is itself beyond all talk. In other words, to use thinking to tease us out of thinking, to dive to the very heart of the particular wisdom tradition and grasp, or rather be grasped by, or released into, the openness or illumined nature of the very Divine itself. Lex is primarily interested, not in doctrine, dogma, or ideas about Spirit, however relevant they all might be, but rather in the vulnerable, open, empty, free, illumined, and direct experience or realization of Spirit itself, standing free at the Heart, outshining the world, radiant to infinity, timeless as eternity. It is this timeless experiencing or basic awareness that Lex wants us to glimpse.

Because Spirit manifests itself only in and as the world of form--of apparently separate things and apparently different events, of seeming separation and isolation and alienation--it is therefore in the world of form, with all its diversity and apparent separation, that we must begin our search for the One beyond the Many, the One without a second, our Primordial Ground. Therefore, in our present world of form we need a vehicle, a "yana," to take us to the formless shore beyond (even if the final realization is only that no vehicle was necessary or even possible). It is for this purpose that the

world's great mystical traditions or paths have come into existence. They are not beliefs, not theories, not ideas, not theologies, and not doctrines. Rather, they are vehicles; they are experiential practices. They are experiments to perform (and thus see "through form"). They are something to do, and then be, not something to merely think and then believe. Ultimately, there are no mystical doctrines or mystical beliefs whatsoever; there are only mystical experiences and insights, all springing directly and immediately from the flow of one's own primordial experiencing in this very moment, moment to moment, illuminating all that is, like sunlight on the clearest of crystal autumn days. Illumined, enlightened, brilliant.

This is the genius of Lex's book. Instead of dwelling on the forms and doctrines and details of the various traditions, essential as they most definitely are, he takes us gently but almost immediately to the unending conclusion of each and every tradition--namely, the nature of contemplation, the mood and experience of enlightenment itself. Using the terms and sometimes the actual practices of each of the particular traditions or vehicles that he is discussing, Lex invites us, in each chapter, to release (or let go of) all forms and concepts and names and thoughts, and to tacitly acknowledge and actually feel that which is always prior to thought and sensation--namely, our own primordial experiencing or basic awareness, which is the presence and flow of Spirit itself. This fundamental and universal consciousness--Spirit itself--you and all beings possess fully at this and every moment. It is what you see before you see anything else, what you feel before you feel anything else, and what you already know before you know anything else. It is your simple and bare awareness in this moment before you manipulate it, name it, judge it, or in any way fiddle with it. It is always the case prior to your attempts to grasp it. And therefore, ultimately, there is no path to this primary, basic, and ultimate consciousness-- how can you travel to that which is always

already the case, fully present everywhere and everywhen? There is no way to walk to your own feet. Rather, the various traditional paths are ways to exhaust the seeking mind, exhaust the attempts to grasp in time that which is timeless or eternal, exhaust the attempts to grasp in space that which is spaceless or infinite, exhaust the "great search" for Spirit in order that Spirit itself may shine forth of its own accord, announcing that it is simply the immediate and illuminating Presence of your own awareness, the Being beyond your individual, suffering, and seeking being. But this "beyond" is actually very close--as Eckhart said, "God is closer to me than I am to myself." God or Spirit is simply your ultimate Self or Consciousness now lighting the words on this page--a Self (or no-self) that is one and undivided in all sentient beings.

This enlightened understanding and realization is what each of the world's great wisdom traditions attempts to transmit to those who would consent to perform the great experiment in their own souls. And it is the timeless conclusion of this mystical experiment that Lex presents in each case. Thus, in chapter after chapter, Lex takes us from surface thinking and the world of will and seeking and forms to a deeper or contemplative understanding, itself devoid of form or seeking or restriction, an unlimited act of unknowing. And in that openness, flashes of enlightened mind can shine forth, taking you so radically beyond yourself that you actually discover yourself, your True Self or Original Nature, which is as close as your present experiencing and your own basic awareness in this moment. Not a moment from now, but this moment. To abide as that Awareness, moment to moment, in the simplicity and luminosity of the present, without will or effort, is to be ushered into a magical world you never left, and thus to understand what it means to be "Coming Home," a homecoming that is said to lead from time to eternity and from death to immortality.

This is a simple book, a brilliant book, an eloquent book. It explains and itself epitomizes the best of the world's great mystical traditions. And in centering on the heart of enlightenment, it blazes the path of no-path. In the traditional Tibetan gesture of welcome and gratitude and deep appreciation, I touch my forehead to my friend Lex's--he who is "rooted in the Divine," as this book so eloquently testifies.