

Foreword to *The Way Ahead: A Visionary Perspective for the New Millenium,*

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THERE ARE NO OTHERS TO SAVE

Great sages from Eckhart and St. Dionysius in the West to Shankara and Nagarjuna in the East to Krishnamurti and Love-Ananda in the present have unanimously told us that the very highest state, the ultimate state, the purest spiritual state, is not Divine Knowledge but Divine Ignorance (or Emptiness). Knowledge--high or low, sacred or profane, exalted or debased--is simply a contraction in awareness. It separates seamless consciousness into one state which sees or knows, and one state which is seen or known. In this mutilated and fragmented state, we never have reality--we relate to the world by "knowing" the world "out there," seeing the world out there, grasping the world out there, as if consciousness and the world were not one and the same event.

Thus, in lesser states, we can indeed know this or that, desire this or that, visualize this or that. But you cannot know the Ultimate State simply because it is one with the Knower itself, and you cannot know the Knower any more than your eye can see itself. The Ultimate State will not split into seer and seen, and thus although you can certainly BE that ultimate state, you can never KNOW it as an object, whether object of worship, object of science, or object of hope and vision.

This is not to say that science, hope, and vision do not have their place in relative reality, for, within the dream of dualism, they are noble enough. It is to say, however, that they have absolutely nothing to do with ultimate reality and final release in Being. As the old sage Lao Tzu said, "The man of learning gains every day; the man of Tao loses every day." Loses knowing, loses

dualistic hopes and visions, loses any form of grasping or seeking and rests instead in Divine Ignorance, in the Cloud of Unknowing, which for Lao Tzu was the Great Mystery (his term), the mystery of pure awareness which can never be known or grasped and yet contains the entire majesty before your own eyes right at this moment.

This, surely, is why the aim of all three vehicles of Buddhism (Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana) is to put an end to hope and fear. It is not to gain knowledge, gain yet more objects in awareness, objects separate from subjects which then together conspire to cut asunder and tear the fabric of seamless consciousness.

But this same consciousness, upon realizing that it can never be seen as an object, is released, radically released, from the chronic headache of an eye trying to see itself. And it is precisely in that relaxation, in that uncoiling, in that releasement, that consciousness, resting in Divine Ignorance, can simply BE, in this timeless moment, that pure Divinity that our knowing and hoping and grasping had heretofore obscured.

Visions are nice in the dream world. They help turn bad dreams into pleasant dreams. But it is our visions, high or low, sacred or profane, that hold firmly the scales over our eyes and block not our knowing but our being Divine. And it is visions, lovely alluring visions, that convince us that having pleasant dreams is the same as waking up.

The great saints and sages mean this absolutely, uncompromisingly, and radically. As St. Augustine said, if anyone in searching for God sees anything, one is seeing at best angels (for they are indeed subtle or higher objects), but never, never God.

This does not mean, as I said, that holding in mind some lofty vision is of no use in this relative and dualistic world of the pleasant dream. It is just that visions, no matter how noble and

wonderful, are eventually, inevitably, ultimately perverted, because eventually, inevitably, ultimately they are not real.

And so let us hold our visions lightly. Let us not think that in changing from iron chains to gold chains we are somehow free. Let us not go into that dark night thinking that the pleasant dream is the coming of the light.

Let us do what we have to do in this relative world to make the dream more pleasant for all those caught in it. But let us finally, ultimately, release all dreams and visions and hopes, and resting in Divine Ignorance, realize that very Divinity which is always already, without any help or hope at all, our own Primordial State.

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