

## Clarifying the Mind

Universal Worship, June 11, 2023

### HINDUISM:

What is called liberation

Is simply the ripeness of devotion, O Lord.

Having taken the first steps toward that,

We are even now almost liberated.

With my mind spilling over with your devotion,

Let any difficulty come my way.

But should I feel separate from you,

I would not want

Even an endless chain of happiness.

-Shivastotravali of Utpaladeva 16:19-20 (trans. Bially)

### BUDDHISM:

Zen masters in India said that mindlessness is Buddha. A Zen master of China said that mind itself is Buddha. He was not saying that the mind that jumps from one thing to another and the intellect that gallops off in any direction are what Buddha is. Students in recent times often misunderstand this point.

-Dogen Zenji, *Eihei Kôroku* (trans. Cleary)

When ordinarily preparing ingredients, do not regard them with ordinary [deluded] eyes, or think of them with ordinary emotions. "Lifting a single blade of grass builds a shrine; entering a single mote of dust turns the great wheel of the dharma." Even when, for example, one makes a soup of the crudest greens, one should not give rise to a mind that loathes it or takes it lightly; and even when one makes a soup of the finest cream, one should not give rise to a mind that feels glad and rejoices in it. If one is at the outset free from preferences, how could one have any aversions? Even when confronted with poor ingredients, there is no negligence whatsoever; even when faced with scanty ingredients, one exerts oneself. Do not change your mind in accordance with things. Whoever changes their mind in accordance with things, or revises their words to suit the person [they are speaking to], is not a person of the way.

-Dogen Zenji, *Tenzo kyôkun* (trans. Griffith Foulk)

## ZOROASTRIANISM:

When I held Thee in my very eyes, then I realized Thee in my mind, O Mazda, as the First and also the Last for all eternity, as the Father of Vohu Mana, as the true Creator of Asha, and Lord over the actions of life.

-Gathas 31:8 (trans. FA Bode)

## TAOISM:

Empty yourself of everything.

Let the mind become still.

The ten thousand things rise and fall while the Self watches their return.

They grow and flourish and then return to the source.

Returning to the source is stillness, which is the way of nature.

The way of nature is unchanging.

Knowing constancy is insight.

Not knowing constancy leads to disaster.

Knowing constancy, the mind is open.

With an open mind, you will be openhearted.

Being openhearted, you will act royally.

Being royal, you will attain the divine.

Being divine, you will be at one with the Tao.

Being at one with the Tao is eternal.

And though the body dies, the Tao will never pass away.

-Taoteching 16 (trans. Feng/English)

## INDIGENOUS:

Too many human beings in the modern world have been in the pursuit of the industrial and material dream severed from our Indigenous Spirits. We have forgotten how to live in harmony on our Mother Earth, and have thus lost touch with our Indigenous Roots and our intimate connection to one another and all Life!

We are all part of the ancient Sacred Circle of Life, and therefore we are all Indigenous Peoples of Mother Earth. The essential truth of this reality cannot be denied no matter how we look at it; it is simply an irrevocable truth.

To embrace and reclaim our Indigenous relationship to all Life is to remember and lovingly celebrate our sacred relationship

with our Mother Earth, all relatives of our One Human Family and our kinship with all Life.

-Chief Phil Lane, Jr. and Corinne Stone, *Protecting and Restoring the Sacred*

#### JUDAISM:

A person once came to the Maggid of Mezeritch with this problem. "My mind is always straying. How can I control my thoughts?"

"See my disciple, R. Zev of Zhitomer. He will help you," the Maggid answered.

And so, the person journeyed to see R. Zev. He arrived in Zhitomer at night, and only with difficulty was he able to locate R. Zev's house. Finally he reached the tzaddik's home and banged loudly on the door, anxious to be invited in from the cold.

There was no answer. He banged again, and still no answer. Upset, he continued to bang with all his might, but no one inside responded. Annoyed, but with no other alternative, he was forced to spend the night outside.

In the morning, R. Zev welcomed him warmly. The visitor told the tzaddik why he had come and R. Zev invited him to partake of his hospitality for as long as he desired. He was more than slightly curious at the difference between this reception and the cold shoulder he had been given the previous night, but in deference to the tzaddik, he remained silent.

He stayed at R. Zev's home for several days, sharing talks with the tzaddik and learning from observing his everyday conduct. But one thing bothered him. He had come with a specific intent, to learn how to control his thoughts, and R. Zev had not given him any instruction with regard to this matter.

Finally, he broached the question to the tzaddik. "The Maggid sent me here for a reason," he told his host. "Why haven't you taught me how to control my thoughts?"

"But I already have," answered R. Zev.

"When?"

"The first night you came, you banged and banged on the door to my home, trying to come in. I knew you were there, but decided not to let you enter. And I kept to that decision no

matter how hard you banged. That's the secret of controlling your thoughts.”

-Chassidic story retold by Shloma Majeski

#### CHRISTIANITY:

Do not be conformed to this world,[a] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.[b]

-Romans 12:2 (trans. ESV)

a: Greek *age*

b:Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

#### ISLAM:

Spiritual excellence is the essence of faith, its spirit, and its perfection by perfecting presence (*al-hudur*) with Allah Almighty, and mindfulness of Him (*muraqabatih*), encompassing fear of Him, love of Him, knowledge of Him, turning to Him, and sincerity to Him.

-al-Tuwayjiri, *Mawsū'at Fiqh Qulūb* 1:785

#### TRUTH:

Learning is just like making knots of ideas, and the thread is not smooth as long as the knots are there. They must be unraveled; and when the thread is smooth, one can treat it in any way one likes. A mind with knots cannot have a smooth circulation of truth. The ideas which are fixed in one's mind block it. A mystic, therefore, is willing to see from all points of view in order to clarify his knowledge. It is that willingness which is called 'unlearning.'

The sense of understanding is one and the same for all of us. If we are willing to understand, then understanding is within our reach. Very often, however, we are not willing to understand, and that is why we do not understand.