

CHAPTER 1

"THE UNFOLDING OF THE PLAYFUL ILLUSORY MANIFESTATION OF TRUTH ON THE EARTHLY PLANE." (Lalita vistara sutra)

BETWEEN ILLUSION AND INTELLIGENCE

"What can we know?
What should we do?
What can we hope for?"
Immanuel Kant¹

1.1 INTRODUCTION

For time immemorial people have sought to find the ultimate truth under the name of Wisdom, fountain of youth, God, eternal bliss, happiness, nirvana, heaven, etc. There are innumerable systems, usually called religion, which pretend to be in the possession of that truth. But alas, **reality is not truth, and nothing in reality is truth.** This mysterious relationship between truth and reality is the theme of this book.

To hold any knowledge or system of any kind for absolute truth is one of the preferred activities of what is called **maya or illusion** in Indian philosophy. This concept is so powerful that it is being represented by the Goddess Maya, the greatest, earliest and most powerful of all Gods and Goddesses, who, if taken as knowable truth, is the ultimate illusion.

My 'personal' insight that '**Reality Is Not Truth**' is the foundation of this book. I will show how the most advanced theories of human insight, from the Indian Upanishads of three thousand years ago and older times, to modern quantum theory support this view. I will also show that if we assume that life has meaning for an actual individual human being, and I suppose almost everyone assumes that, then human thinking cannot ever lead to absolute knowledge about the actuality of **What Is**, from the smallest atoms to the beginning of the universe, from human freedom to human reality. Conversely, if there is meaning to a human being, then there is also meaning to the smallest pebble of sand, atom, and particle in the universe.

The unknowability of the truth which underlies reality was seen in many ancient cultures, and has now been confirmed by the discoveries of quantum theory early in the twentieth century. I will show why it is impossible for human thinking to arrive at cogent knowledge about the most urgent, i.e. meaningful, questions of human societies. In order to do this we must explore the issues in a somewhat circular fashion and be clear about some basic assumptions.

¹) "*Was können wir wissen? Was sollen wir tun? Was dürfen wir hoffen?*"

Figure 5, Tara, standing on double lotus in clouds



TARA, in Tibetan mythology and Buddhism, personifies the wisdom of the universe, and the wisdom of enlightenment itself. Thus, she is often called the mother of the Buddhas. She is the Goddess Lotus (Padma). The posture of her right hand indicates the granting of gifts. Her left hand is raised and makes the symbol of teaching the Wheel Of Law. The cause of human suffering lies in the illusion of the ego, the confused self.

Tara is a figure who in Indian mythology is represented by the Goddess under many names: Shakti, Devi, Parvati (in her beautiful manifestations), as Kali and Durga (in her fighting and wrathful manifestations). In the Western world she is Aphrodite or Medusa, and in Egypt, which is one of the origins of the Mother Goddess, she is Isis. In Tibet she is also the consort of Avalokiteshvara when he appears in his male form. Both together embody the complementary oneness of opposites. See the section "Tara and Avalokiteshvara as Transcendental Images" on page 157 and 499.

One of these assumptions is that our thinking should be consistent with the findings of science, in particular quantum physics, because thinking is based on material processes in and of the brain, which must follow the laws of physics. Quantum physics generally governs microscopic processes at the atomic level and smaller. **The rules of quantum theory are supposed to be of unlimited generality.** As material processes can be subdivided into three modes of operation I will assume the same for thinking. Actually, I will show that it is *possibly* the other way around: Because our thinking operates in three different ways, whatever it discovers in reality and beyond will fall into the same three categories. I call them **mechanical, generative, and creative modes of operation, or movements.**

It turns out that the ancient insights of the **Indian Upanishads, Tantra Buddhism, Greek philosophy, and idealism support such a view.** This is why I use mythological and philosophical ideas of those areas throughout this book. They provide complementary models for the ideas presented and help the reader to look into his or her own mind to find the same mystery, to which some of the great philosophers of all times allude.

Mind you, it is quite a rare and precious event to find a truly great philosopher in one's life. It is rather easy to fall for ideas which appear to be profound and true, but which are actually a form of deceptive propaganda. To see the difference between wisdom and a pathological foolishness often requires more than following the so-called truthful path of a "holy" man or book. We always have to investigate carefully for ourselves. And this can only happen if we are able to free ourselves from much of the conditioning of the culture and religion into which we are thrown by the accident of birth.

While we contemplate our thinking and sensing processes we use our own mind-body as the basic laboratory and reference for all our thinking, sensing, and acting. The problem is that the 'setup' of the experiments, the underlying theories and ways to look at results, are conditioned by human thinking and society: language, morals, education, indoctrination, and even genetic instructions. The confusion, ignorance, and illusion which this conditioning produces is called maya in India, a power which is personified in the '**Goddess Maya.**' All of what we call reality is affected by her. I will show in *Dancing With Maya* how we can live in a reality, knowing that it is not truth, and yet have meaning in our lives. **The relationship between reality and truth is a dynamic tension, for which I use the term complementary.**

The passionate loving embrace, Yab-Yum, between the Buddha and his consort in Tantra Buddhism is an extraordinary example of esthetic ideas which express this complementarity between truth and reality just like the advanced formulas of quantum field theory or the texts of the Upanishads. These symbols are metaphors that attempt to communicate the mystery of human thinking more directly to the senses and our intelligence, which is more than the intellect.

To dance with Maya is an act of freedom, to deny her is the essence of illusion. To find the harmony between freedom and meaning, **between Nothingness and Oneness,** is the invitation by Maya to dance with her.

1.1.1 THE FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS OF WISDOM

"Look at the do-gooders and righteous! Who do they hate most? The one who breaks their canons of values, the destroyer - but that is the creator!".. "I want to join the creators, the harvesters, the celebrators: I want to show them the rainbow and all the steps to the Man beyond (Übermensch)."...This Zarathustra had spoken from his heart, when the sun was high at noon: and he looked up, questioning - because he heard the sharp call of a bird. And lo! An eagle soared through the air in wide circles, and at him hang a snake, not like a prey, but like a girlfriend: because she was encircling its neck. "They are my animals!" said Zarathustra and was happy deep in his heart. "The proudest animal under the sun and the most intelligent animal under the sun - they are looking for

news. They want to find out whether I am still alive. Truly, do I still live? I found it more dangerous among people than among animals; dangerous paths walks Zarathustra. Let my animals guide me!"
(Friedrich Nietzsche)²

After I had studied quantum field theory and obtained my doctorate in physics at the university of Karlsruhe in Germany, my thirst for scientific knowledge was temporarily satisfied but only to leave me with a much greater thirst for meaning. I did not know that at the time, but, guided by some good destiny, I took off to an exploratory journey to Mexico. I did not know what I was looking for, but, strangely enough, I carried a complete edition of the works of Friedrich Nietzsche in my backpack, and carried the whole twelve volumes in and out of the Copper Canyon in the Sierra Madre. I was fascinated by his beautiful and powerful, inspired language together with his sarcastic irreverence for any institutions of state, education, or religion. One idea, which captivated my imagination, was his profound trust in the "**unknown and unknowable God.**" The other idea was contained in his appeal to every human being to "**become who you are.**"

In a little apartment in Oaxaca, Mexico, where I stayed with a friend for more than six months, I painted those words on the wall. I saw that the relationship between "**the seer**" introduced by the Yaqui Indian and brujo (shaman, sorcerer, magician, wise-man, mystic) Don Juan³ was very close to Nietzsche's idea of the "Super-man and Super-woman" (**Übermensch**). I see this notion as a metaphor for "**Man and woman who have gone beyond the conditioning of reality.**"

It was there in Oaxaca that Maya revealed herself to me.

Later, back in Germany, I delved into Indian, Tibetan, and German philosophy, and I rediscovered the German existential philosopher Karl Jaspers. In his philosophy there is one sentence which highlights his ingenious insight into the mind of true human beings of all times, namely that "**there is no existence without transcendence.**" **One does not truly live up to the human potential, one does not exist, unless one can see transcendence which gives meaning to reality.**

It took me a while to find out that these statements were about the fundamental complementarity of all Being. They were made by Western philosophers but have also quite a tradition in Asian Indian philosophies where they culminated in some forms of Mahayana Buddhism, the so-called Vajrayana or Tantra Buddhism. It is in Tantra Buddhism that the ideas of complementarity have found their most profound and beautiful expressions. They include the complementarity between sensuality-spirituality, God-Man, God-Goddess, Matter-Spirit, Oneness-Nothingness, and so on. Heinrich Zimmer says of this Tantra philosophy:

It is "an extraordinarily sophisticated application of the Aryan-Dravidian synthesis⁴, which shaped both the Buddhist and Brahman philosophies and practices of the medieval period, and to this day inspires not only the whole texture of the religious life of India but also much of the popular and esoteric teaching of the great Buddhist nations, Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan."⁵

I use the ideas of some of the great philosophers of human history to penetrate into this uncertain mystery of Maya. I show that the modern theories of quantum physics and the old metaphysical ideas of East and West are rooted in the same or at least similar ideas, the same genius of the human mind. What separates us is less important than what makes us one. **I understand the Man of Power of the Yaqui Indian, Nietzsche's Superman (Übermensch), and the Tibetan**

²) Translated by FW from Friedrich Nietzsche, "*Also sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spoke Zarathustra)*" chapters 9-10.

³) In "*The Teachings of Don Juan*" (CCM) and "*A Separate Reality*" (CCS) by Carlos Castaneda.

⁴) Aryan tribes started to invade India during the second millennium B.C.E. They did not penetrate much to the south of the Ganges, where the culture of the aboriginal dark skinned Dravidic tribes survives to this present day.

⁵) Zimmer, ZP, page 219.

'sages,' male and female *Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Yoginis⁶, and Dakinis⁷* as metaphors and ciphers for human beings who have learnt how to live in reality in awareness of transcendence. The oneness of human thinking comes to the fore in women and men who have transcended the conditioning of their particular times and cultures, their reality.

Nietzsche's Zarathustra, the destroyer who is the creator, is of course *Shiva*, the dancing God, and *Maya-Shakti-Kali*, is his female representation, or he is her's (See pages:60, 346, 494). They are both separate and one.

1.1.1.1 THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONNECTION

Thinking about ideas like "*Become who you are*" can only have meaning if we comprehend that such notions are of a different category than those used in everyday language. A different way of thinking which uses reason much more freely and creatively is implied. I try to draw attention to such thinking here. Guided by direct observation of thinking I introduce the idea of three qualitatively very different modes, corresponding to three categories of thinking. We must be aware of such differences if we want to understand the world and ourselves. I call the different operations **mechanical, generative, and creative thinking modes⁸**. These modes of thinking are closely related to degrees of uncertainty which characterize them. **Briefly put: In mechanical thinking certainty is possible, in creative thinking it is not. Generative thinking is sub-certain and falls between the two extremes.** (See 1.4.5.2 page 73)

To these various modes of thinking correspond different kinds of possible functions, values and meaning. Unless we recognize these differences we are confused, and our societies are confused. Knowledge, science, philosophy, mathematics, religion are created through thinking but have different functions according to the predominant modes of thinking which create and maintain them. Unfortunately, language itself has no built-in characterization of the different categories. Much of human confusion, self-deception, and deception can therefore be traced back to a confused interpretation of language. Such confusion can have horrific consequences. At the least they create confused and confusing 'realities.' In spite of the tremendous discoveries of science in recent times the general confusion in human thinking and behavior does not seem to have changed to any appreciable degree. I see some of the metaphysical and spiritual ideas, which have been present in human consciousness throughout the ages, as attempts to clear up this almost all-pervasive confusion.

1.1.1.2 THE MYTHOLOGICAL CONNECTION WITH INDIA, CHINA, AND TIBET

The confusion of human thinking and acting is a central object of Indian philosophy. This confusion has a name and is represented by the most powerful of all Gods⁹ and Goddesses. When **She** represents this confusion she is called **Maya**, but this is just one form and name of the many she carries as Mother Goddess, Maya-Devi, Shakti, Shri, and so on. She is all action, the creator of

⁶) Yoginis and Dakinis are divine females who move on the highest level of actuality. They are helpers of the Buddhas, and their task is to persuade people to wake up to their spiritual nature.

⁷) See the beautiful Yogini Vajravahini on page 369 in section 5.2.5.1.

⁸) In the quantum physical operator language of theoretical physics, we have developed a description of quantum-fields, which has many similarities with the three operations of human thinking. I will make the case that this resemblance is no coincidence. For more on *operators* see the glossary on page 516 under *Lie algebra*.

⁹) 'God' and 'Goddess' are only appropriate notions in the context with Hindu philosophy and religion, not with Buddhism. In Buddhism there are no Gods. Buddhas are no Gods. They are human beings who have awakened to the truth of *What Is*. The Gods and Goddesses referred to in Tibetan or Tantra Buddhism should be considered as personified and deified energies, used as teaching devices.

actuality and reality, of time and thought. As such, she is also the mother of confusion, but not in the sense that she creates confusion, but that she creates the **condition for confusion which is reality**. The basis for such thinking is the insight that **any action which leads to consciousness leads to duality**, which is the quintessential setup for certainty but also for confusion, permeating all reality in as much as it is the object of consciousness.

The greatest confusion exists between the certain and uncertain categories of the human thinking process itself which is responsible for creating consciousness and its world. It is just one manifestation of the fundamental problem which arises when the mind grapples with the mystery of reality and truth, sensuality and spirituality, and many other apparently opposing dualities. Much of the confusion arises in thinking because of one of its intrinsic functions to rationalize and to make everything certain. In this process thinking tends to overlook its own properties, which allow for a thought to be forgotten, hidden, recovered, and so on, properties which I later discuss as the *suspending* powers of thinking. In mythological stories these properties are subconsciously represented by the lives and deeds of Gods, Goddesses, and demons. If we don't understand the metaphoric ground in these myths, we miss their point. **The numerous Gods and Goddesses are manifestations and externalizations of human thinking rather than separate entities**. These Gods and Goddesses do not have static characteristics but are dynamic energies which can change their form, powers, and names. **To place these powers outside of ourselves as completely separate forces is the prime confusion about reality. They are part of us and they are us, and we are they, ultimately unknowable**.

In some of Indian and Tibetan art this problem of mis-understanding is alleviated by representing spiritual ideas in artistic form, as architecture and decoration of temples, through paintings and sculptures. These expressions can bypass the intellect and speak directly to the senses. Just as the sight of a beloved person has an immediate effect on the psycho-somatic being of the lover, filling him or her with affection, desire, passion, and general well-being, so does the sight of a beautiful deity affect the mind of the worshiper. The rationalizations of the Gods and Goddesses (or their rejections) are the result of the dominance of mechanical thinking. Where this rationality is likely to lead to confusion, as in spirituality, the mind's own capability to transcend reality can be more efficiently expressed through poetry, paintings, and sculptures, in combination with each other. This deed has been achieved in a unique way in much of Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan spiritual art with a tradition of almost three thousand years. The Upanishads, Shaktism, Hindu and Buddhist Tantra, and Taoism contain ideas which comprise philosophy, mystic insight, spirituality, and art in a unique blend and vision which ultimately tries to clear up the confusion of human thinking about itself, reality, and truth. I will show here that modern physics has elements in it which can be seen as supporting those mystic insights. To show the various modes of human thinking in action, I use all three different approaches mentioned: philosophy, mythology, and theoretical physics.

1.1.1.3 THE THEORETICAL PHYSICS CONNECTION

The connection of these metaphysical ideas with theoretical elementary particle physics lies in the fact that in physics all major quantities, energy-time, momentum-space, etc. can be categorized according to their *compatibility* with each other, **their simultaneous measurement**. The rules of quantum physics apply to all observable and non-observable real and actual systems in all generality. In its terminology two quantities are compatible if they can be measured simultaneously with arbitrary accuracy, limited only by the precision of the measuring instrument.

There are three different categories of physical quantities:

(1) Those that **can be measured simultaneously** to arbitrary **accuracy**, limited only by the measuring apparatus; in classical physics all quantities fall into this category. There, any mechanical system can be completely determined by the knowledge of the coordinates and velocities. This is the domain of Newton's laws, modified by Einstein's theories of relativity. This is the domain of causality, certainty, and separation. The world is being analyzed into separate objects connected by causal, continuous links, even though continuity and separability cannot both be correct simultaneously.

(2) There are those quantities which are **complementary**. The Heisenberg uncertainty relations and the Schrödinger equation¹⁰ are characteristic for these quantities.¹¹ The accurate measurement of one quantity limits the simultaneous determination of the other. In quantum-physics observations at the atomic level cannot be made with arbitrary theoretical precision. (Even if one could construct an ideal measuring instrument, one could still not make those measurements.) The knowledge of the position of an electron with precision Δx allows only a precision of $\Delta p/\hbar$ **at the same time**. This means that the results of observations, carried out with different experimental setups, cannot be combined into a unique picture which would correspond to actuality in a one to one relationship. However, the different pictures must be considered to be complementary, i.e. only the totality of all observations does justice to the actuality, even if they seem to contradict each other, in the sense that they cannot be merged into one **unique** image in a reality. As the best images we can obtain in reality stem from physical observation at the quantum level, we must conclude that reality as a whole can also not be a unique image. This includes dynamic changes. Reality is fundamentally as non-certain and complementary as the complementary images which constitute and generate it.

(3) There are those *quantities (ideas)* which cannot be measured, because they belong to dimensions where time, space, matter concepts as even potentially observable break down, which is at distances of about 10^{-35} meters.¹² **Neither the rules of causality (predictable with certainty and objectively verifiable), nor quantum theory can penetrate into this area and be experimentally verified.**

It is because of the existence of categories (2) and (3) that there is **mystery in the world** together with freedom. This is the fundamental No-thing-ness aspect of nature. Everything that can appear in the framework of space-time-thought follows the same physical laws of nature. All things come from, or are unfolded by the underlying ocean of immeasurable energy, so-called quantum fields, in unobservable ways. This is, so it seems, as close as we can get to the idea of No-thingness and Oneness of All, of *What Is*, of *Being*.

All **phenomena** of reality are being recognized as such through the thinking human brain in conjunction with the senses, which are all material processes. Therefore, the human brain itself must be operating in similar ways, obeying the same laws of physics and beyond, representing, unfolding, and enfolding Nothingness and Oneness. Thus, one should also be able to discover the same categorization introduced above in the brain's operations and in the thinking processes themselves.

¹⁰) See section 6.3.3.1 page 444.

¹¹) These ideas are discussed in greater detail as we go along, particularly in chapter 6.

¹²) This length is called the Planck length, it is the smallest possible length. See glossary, black hole. Even at much longer distances like the 'diameter' of an electron which is about 10^{-18} meters, time and space become sub-certain quantities.

By all indications it seems that some mystics throughout the ages were able to *observe* or intuit these categories in thinking. Many scientists would reject category three.¹³

My interpretation of physics is not as far fetched as it may seem for the modern reader. In ancient Greece and Asia this relationship between energy and God or Goddess, the oneness and mystery of all, must have been closer to human consciousness than it is today.

The syllable 'Phy' **means action** in Greek, an acting oneness of nature from which we are not separate. This feeling for nature and oneness with it was prevalent in early Greece, even until the time of Aristotle. The word physics should imply this same oneness, and actually until the 18th century, physics and philosophy were inseparable. In Sanskrit the word 'shak' means about the same as 'phy' in Greek. The word Shakti became to mean action, energy, but is also the name of the Female Goddess: Shakti, Devi (Goddess).

Another one of her names is Maya; the root 'ma' in Sanskrit is related to the word for measure.¹⁴ We also derive our word 'magic' from it. In Greek philosophy the idea of measure was as important as in Buddhist philosophy. The sophists in Greece maintained that "***The measure of all things is man.***" Plato held against this that "***the measure of all things is God.***"¹⁵ "What he meant with "God" is not quite clear. The feeling that "there is nothing at all in the universe including matter and human consciousness in which there is not God or Goddess" has always been an essential part of the perception of all mystics of East and West.

I will make a case in this book that philosophically speaking "***The measure of all things is Maya-Shakti.***" My point here is that the study of physics should not exclude considerations of thinking and spirituality. The reality of physics, particularly so in its most advanced forms of quantum field theory, tries to tackle the innermost movements of matter and is forced to enter fields of philosophy or spirituality. **Heisenberg has 'proven' that the concept of causality is non-certain in the context of quantum physics, or in other words, that causality does not exist in a fundamental sense, i.e. at the level where Nothingness creates, maintains, and reabsorbs the dimensions of potential reality: time, space, matter, and thought.**

1.1.2 TECHNOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

The Western worldview has advanced the idea of individual freedom and human rights to successes which we have never before seen in the history of mankind. The Western ideas of freedom, business, free enterprise, rational government, technology and science, law, education, social values and so on are spreading around the globe like wildfire. These ideas are not promoted or sold by power hungry colonialists but are eagerly embraced by people who see beneficial values in them. A great number of positive developments for the largest number of people have their roots in European ideas, similar to those mentioned above. People all over the world spread them through modern communication devices, like radio, television, fax machines, and computers, inventions of the technological and computer revolution of the Western world.

But any idea needs to be balanced, lest it becomes destructive. The perfect match for ideas of pragmatic free enterprise, for example, comes from ideas which have been around for a few thousand years as well. Actually, it is the idea of balance, of harmony, and of a middle path between extremes, which needs to be energized during any period of rapid human development and change.

In our times, around the turn of the second to the third millennium of the Common Era, we witness the accelerating breakdown of illusory absolute values and customs. Through the free flow

¹³) See Bohm, DBCC, "*Causality and Chance in Modern Physics,*" and BQT, "*Quantum Theory.*"

¹⁴) The Sanskrit word 'ma' also means mother, and is as such known in all Indo-European languages.

¹⁵) Plato: *Laws*; book 4.716 c.

and exchange of information among the nations of the world everyone on this globe can be in immediate contact with everyone else. Constraints of time and space have lost their limiting power, when it comes to communication of data, information, news, etc. Values of one country are exposed to the glaring light of another country without the conditioning forces of tradition, habit, and age old power structures being able to exercise control. What works in one country can be transferred and adopted by another.

In the past, a religion or belief system could dominate in a civilization that was rooted in the absolute ideas and dogmas of that specific religion. No other really different belief system was available for comparison. It looks as though all that may soon be gone forever. This has caused a great deal of confusion about some fundamental questions which ultimately boil down to questions of "what is reality?; what are values?" Today we see a slow breakdown of many dogmatic belief systems, much to the dismay of those who administer them to their own benefit.

There is great fear among believers in the supremacy of their particular God. All values may be relative, and may be there is no unquestionable idea on which our mind can rely as anchor-point for our lives. Women may be equal to men, what blasphemy! As long as this fear brings about more scrutiny and investigation of taboo institutions and belief system, it may be beneficial.

The comfort of certainty, which absolute values of the various religions used to offer, is slipping away. The great Nothing, a power of emptiness and meaninglessness, as so nicely illustrated in the "Infinite Story" by Michael Ende, seems to be threatening our lives and creates alarm in the circles of undisputed or absolute power and influence. Once again we hear the battle cry of 'spiritual' and nationalistic institutions to return back to the old values and holy books.

In order to address some of these fears I embark on a speculative journey through cultures and psychological attitudes. In a playful comparison and dialectic synthesis of Oriental and Occidental thinking I attempt to use varying experiences of our common histories to understand ourselves better. It is a contemplative study and proposal of some uncommon ways of looking into ourselves and our realities.

I use many myths and symbols from India, which is so creatively and beautifully rich in them, to illustrate our **own spiritual thinking**.¹⁶ Some Indian thinkers have been pondering the question of the illusory nature of reality for more than four thousand years, and we have records of their spiritual passion. India probably has the oldest and richest philosophical tradition of any country. The writings of the Veda¹⁷ alone occupy more than six times the volume of the Bible. The myths and symbols serve the same purpose for speculative thinking as the examples from mathematics and science, which I use to illustrate the power of *formal thinking*. Furthermore I see in some of Indian and Tibetan mythology and its artistic expression an astonishing representation of the various modes of thinking. The longing for oneness among what is separate, the power to create, destroy, and resurrect under a different form seem to be the fundamental themes which permeate those cultures.

I try to transcend the cultural and personal differences among individuals and societies so that we can explore the transcendent mind which we have in common. In this I wish to comprehend the human mind and our illusions, frustrations, and fears. I hope that this will not lead to another set of absolute values but rather to the insight that **for consciousness there is an unresolvable harmonic**

¹⁶) In chapter 7 I provide additional information on Indian mythological concepts, in as much as they relate to the ideas developed in this book.

¹⁷) 'Veda' means 'knowledge and wisdom.' There are four parts to the texts of the Veda: The Rigveda (the wisdom of praises), the Samaveda (the wisdom of the songs), the Yagurveda (the texts of sacrifices), the Atharvaveda (the wisdom of magic). Within each Veda there are four sub-divisions: Mantras (hymns and prayers), Brahmanas (directions for the use of the mantras), Aranyakas ('forest' texts for the forest dwelling hermits), and Upanishads (secret teachings). From a philosophical and spiritual point of view the Upanishads are the most important ones.

tension between the realities which our mind creates and the unfathomable truth of which the same mind is an integral part.

We human beings, as tribes and races, have all been victors and victims in the past 10,000 years. We don't know which paths our ancient ancestors have walked or what triumphs and defeats they have experienced. But we can realize that we all participate in the true adventure, an adventure, which the human mind has been creating since the first human being asked the question:

"WHO AM I? WHERE DO I COME FROM? WHERE AM I GOING?"

In different times, under different circumstances, we have found a variety of temporary solutions to our problems and our dreams. Some of those dreams may have been universal, and it may be of help to rediscover them. My goal is to reach more clarity, more honesty, and more freedom in our thinking and in our value systems.

In some respects I also try to follow Nietzsche's prophetic ideas in his work dedicated "to the free spirits"¹⁸:

"the various worldviews, manners and cultures are to be compared and experienced side by side, in a way that was formerly impossible when the always localized sway of each culture accorded with the roots in place and time of its own artistic style. An intensified aesthetic sensibility, now at last, will decide among the many forms presenting themselves for comparison: and the majority will be let die. In the same way, a selection among the forms and usages of the higher moralities is occurring, the end of which can only be the downfall of the inferior systems. It is an age of comparison! That is the pride - but more justly also its grief. Let us not be afraid of this grief!"

1.1.3 EASTERN AND WESTERN APPROACH TO PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Philosophy is a field of human endeavor with its own independent origin between scientific thinking and the trust in divine revelation. Love of wisdom engages all movements of human thinking, sensing, and acting. During the classic Greek period wisdom became more and more an endeavor for thinking alone. Pleasure, which comes through the senses, became ever more suspect during the following Christian period. Nevertheless, there are great examples in Western churches and temples which are tributes to beauty, though mostly to celebrate the glory of God.

There are some exceptions to the rule notably the temple Hagia Sophia of Constantinople built by the Roman emperor Justinian (527-565 C.E.).

The Hagia Sophia is a remarkable artistic and spiritual representation of the idea of wisdom combined with beauty. This church was dedicated to Holy Wisdom and was designed to surpass any other church or temple in **beauty**. This was achieved by using innumerable precious stones and thirty six tons of gold in its decoration. Being located at the junction point between Eastern and Western religions and civilizations it is a symbol for both. Beauty, wisdom, spirituality and craftsmanship have converged into one masterpiece of the European and Asian genius. It is a legacy and reminder of what we could and should do. The history of this church shows that the human spirit fails most of the time in reality and instead of oneness brings about fragmentation. Most of its interior decorations have been stolen during the many upheavals and conquests of the middle ages. The worst damage occurred at the hands of Venetian and French nobles at the ransacking of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1203 C.E. The last remnants of its decorations were taken by the Turks in 1453 C.E., who converted the church into a mosque.

¹⁸) Nietzsche, Friedrich: "*Menschliches Allzumenschliches*," "Human, All-too-human," NMM, Aphorismus 23.

The oneness of beauty, sensuality, spirituality, and wisdom was never vanquished in India, whose temples and sculptures show the unique blend of these great human qualities till today.

The love of wisdom, the startling revelations of the human mind about its own mysteries and those of the surrounding world and universe, have been catalysts for artists and philosophers in their creation of works of beauty and spirituality.

But it seems as if beauty and its enjoyment has always been stifled by guilt and fear, the other great motivators in the creation of organized spirituality. Wars, natural catastrophes, starvation, sickness, and death must have been dominating the consciousness of peoples at least as much as their search for enjoyment and pleasure. These fears and pleasures had to be held in check, lest they would lead to the collapse of society. Thus, the giving and receiving of the most intense pleasures, i.e. sexual pleasures, was turned into a degrading, humiliating, and sinful activity. When men were the "perpetrators" their behavior was ignored, frowned upon, or more or less tolerated. If women were the 'sinners' they were usually severely punished. The conditions of meekness, poverty, and death, on the other hand were given a positive twist.

One may say that even though people have started from great spiritual ideas, they tended to succumb to **organized systems of metaphysical security and control, ultimately dogmas which subjugated freedom and creativity**. The enjoyment of the presence of the Gods and Goddesses took backstage to fearing their wrath and revenge. Worship of and sacrifice to deities were supposed to sustain people in their daily fears and anxieties and allow them to face sickness, calamities, and death without falling into panic and paralysis. But what was conceived as metaphysical security became a means of control among oppressive religious organizations. They created, intentionally or unintentionally, a pervasive fear and mindset demanding control, certainty, and security in all our activities as human beings. The struggle for power and control through means of deception and misinformation always played a major role in any political power structure but in organized religion as well. Fear of real or imagined dangers and guilt are great devices in controlling people. They play into the hands of those who pretend to know solutions and who sell them at a price. No wonder that all religions have had periods in which their predominant thinking approached the level of idiocy and totalitarian terror.

The search for security and certainty has had a positive impact on the development of cultures and civilizations as well. But it has also led to further deception, self deception, illusion, and even destruction. What fascinates me most in the context of human reality, is the Indian idea of Maya, the dual concept of a metaphysical idea and its representation by the Goddess.

The Asian Indian concept of *Maya*, crudely translated as **illusion, ignorance, or conditioned self-created reality**, permeates all of Eastern thinking. But illusion should not merely be seen in its negative sense. The word itself is related to the Latin word 'ludere' (to play). Like in a theater, Maya produces a play, an enchantment and spell, in which we are not the spectators but in which we are the unsuspecting puppets. To advance from puppets to conscious actors requires that we understand how our mind is working. The stage is our own consciousness, the various plays range from comedies to tragedies. The director behind the scenes is Maya-Shakti, the Mother Goddess as personified energy of reality but also of actuality and beyond. The word 'shak' means "to have force to do," "to be able." Thus, an adequate translation of 'shakti' is 'energy.' Maya-Shakti is the intelligent energy which creates out of the primordial Nothingness-Oneness the first complementing duality of Shakti-Shiva. Then she allows this oneness to separate and simultaneously creates the energy of Love, Eros, Kama, which for always seeks to reunite the two apparently separate manifestations. All this is a mysterious happening for which there is no other but a metaphoric comprehension. From there on every thing is created in the magic web of time and space. All this is Maya. The Nothingness-

Oneness of creating intelligence is the Goddess Maya. The products of her show are called maya, with lower case “m.”

Maya-Shakti puts on the dramatic show of

***"THE UNFOLDING OF THE PLAYFUL ILLUSORY MANIFESTATION
OF THE BUDDHA ON THE EARTHLY PLANE."*^{19, 20}**

And she invites us to join in the performance and dance. There is joy in this dance and playfulness and laughter. Fear and guilt are products of the confused mind, and the goal of the dance is to have insight into their origin and be free of them. Maya, in one of her many Tibetan-Buddhist incarnations as **Tara**, is a spiritual creation to help us to reach such insight.

It is the christianized Western mind which has a problem with this positive and affirming world view which puts the remedy to human problems into human hands. The Western mind wants absolute truth, here and now and forever. Thus, it tends to regard this Eastern view of the world and reality as a profound ignorance. The fundamental uncertainty in this Eastern world view is suspect to the Western mind.

But in the East this idea of uncertainty and Maya is often regarded as a positive idea. She is the essence of wisdom, represented by the female lover of the Buddha. She is wisdom (prajna), he is compassion or artistic methods (upaya). Together, in love and beauty, they form the essence of **What Is**, and of the reality, the theater, the show. The essence of this has also been called dharma.

In Tantra Buddhism the two elements of insight into **What Is**, and its expression in reality are represented by the female and male Buddhas in erotic union. Insight and wisdom is a female energy and compassion or artful, skillful means is a male energy. Together, in love and beauty, they form the essence of **What Is**, and of the reality, the theater, the show. All this is dharma²¹. It is the insight into **What Is** and the transformation of that into cipher, metaphor, and symbols, i.e. forms which accessible to the mind and senses. Whatever can enter the confines of formal conscious thinking can at best be an **expression of dharma** but never dharma itself, though the idea of dharma tries to convey the oneness between the essence of **What Is** and the perceiving mind. This oneness is the mystic non-certain 'experience' in which the conscious mind and its object merge into Oneness-Nothingness. **Of this experience the mind cannot know with certainty, because certainty requires the repeatable form in reality in which Maya is always present.**

Some statues of Tibetan and Hindu art seem to be as close to the idea of dharma as is possible for human consciousness. This whole idea of dharma and Maya has been profoundly well explored metaphysically in the East and has led to psychological insights, which we in the West have started

¹⁹⁾ From the "*Lalita vistara sutra*".

²⁰⁾ 'Buddha' should be read here simply as '*What Is*.' Even though this is a text from Tibetan Buddhism, it represents exactly the characteristics of Maya, which is a Hindu concept going back to pre-Aryan times. Tibetan Buddhism absorbed much of Hindu mythology and philosophy and recreated it with much enriched ideas.

²¹⁾ dharma: A Sanskrit term which means 'holding,' 'carrying.' In Hinduism it refers to the essence of *What Is*. For the individual being dharma is inseparable from karma, a conditioning resulting from innumerable reincarnations. In Buddhism 'dharma' is a key notion which stands for the teaching of the Buddha, the 'law.' It might also be translated as 'moral or ethical law.' The Buddha saw this law in operation, had direct insight into it, and expressed it. Buddha, dharma, and sangha (the community) are the three key elements of Buddhism.

to systematically investigate only in the last few centuries.²² I prefer to use the Western term *truth* for **dharma** and the term *reality* for **Maya**.

In the creation myths of the Rig Veda²³ we find a text which expresses this uncertainty in a most fundamental form: *the creator of What Is may not know its own origin*. It is not far from this knowing ignorance to the idea of emptiness or Nothingness. The notion of emptiness is misleading because it is a notion borrowed from reality in which it implies the existence of a container which is empty. Nothingness, on the other hand, is a notion which defies and denies all reality, and points beyond it. **The insight to be had is the difference between saying “There is nothing beyond reality,” and “What is beyond reality is Nothing.”**

From the insight of the Rig Veda one may conclude that *What Is* does not know its own origin. As thinking is being, at that level, one may conclude further that the origin of *What Is*, is unknowable. This is its essence.

The ultimate mystery forces us to say: It is neither this nor that, no opposites can contain it. Even the word "it" is already saying too much. If it cannot be thought, or sensed, it is neither thought nor thing. *It is No-Thing, Nothing*. Thus, the essence of all things, including human beings and their consciousness, are all the same, they are all No-thing. Thus, *What Is, is this ONE-NESS which is NO-THINGNESS*.

The Hindu view of Maya and the Buddhist view of the empty self with its empty reality are somewhat similar to Plato's idea of reality as shadow play. These views put human existence and values in serious question at roughly the same time in history, i.e. about 500 before the common era (B.C.E.). Nevertheless, the common view of human existence was mostly positive in these ideas, which were appeals to the divine nature in human beings and all things alive. Underneath it all, a divine oneness was felt, which can be traced back to the Egyptian Pyramid scriptures of around 2,300 B.C.E.²⁴ The idea of one truth and transcendence, one *What Is*, had started to emerge, and people were struggling to make this idea manifest in the world, through their references to Gods and other powers beyond reality.

But the oneness had to develop into a freedom from oneness in order to allow consciousness to see itself as subject, and the outside world, including gods, as objects or otherness. Once that path away from oneness had been taken, the direction towards nothingness was open. Thus, human consciousness found itself immersed in the dialectic struggle of its own making, between oneness and nothingness. This is the conscious human mind, and anything that enters its sphere will be immersed in the same dialectic. To comprehend this is the goal of a free mind.

In spite of the incredible progress we have made in the sciences, it is generally overlooked that the boundaries of our understanding have not been eliminated but merely expanded. Even though the potential of our understanding can grow indefinitely, there is a mysterious domain which is not part of the world that can ever be understood. Why that is, we can understand and comprehend by looking at how our knowledge comes about. The particular mode of thinking which allows for rational and cogent explanation is simultaneously also the limitation of that thinking. **We know from modern physics that there is a fundamental uncertainty governing the laws of nature, which cannot be overcome by any more sophisticated tools.** I am making the case that we must come to an even deeper understanding of this uncertainty in psychological and philosophical terms. *It is the*

²²) Maya is also recognized as the supreme Goddess Devi, Maha-Devi.

²³) The Rig Veda is the oldest of the Indian scriptures, 1200 - 800 B.C.E. It comprises 1,028 hymns, mostly directed to personifications of natural forces: e.g. Agni, Soma, Indra.

²⁴) This sense may go back tens of thousands of years in the case of the aborigines in Australia.

power of Maya-Shakti which guarantees human freedom. Conversely, without uncertainty there can be no freedom; without Maya reality is dead and with it human consciousness.

The world shaped by our knowledge is what I call reality. It has to be questioned as a whole: what it is, how it comes about, how it is maintained, changed, transformed, destroyed.

I refer to this reality in question as "*nothingness*." It had been felt already early in the unfolding of human consciousness that, what the mysterious oneness contained or was, were not things, that could be described. Some sages saw that the mysterious oneness was not a world of things, or reality, which is the world of conditioning.

What Is, is not conditioned, but free of any conditioning,²⁵ the essence of freedom. This is why this *oneness of What Is* could and can also be seen as a *no-thing-ness or nothingness*. (In German the word for no-thingness is "*Unbedingtheit*," which is used in the meaning of "*the unconditioned*," which means literally "*un-thinged-ness*.") The oscillation of human consciousness between nothingness and oneness had as intermediary stages the ideas referred to as polytheism, monotheism, atheism, and nihilism. The ultimate truth is not a world of things or ideas, it is not anything that could be properly expressed through cogent thought or any thought.

"The truth of Being as well as of Nothingness is that both are one."

Hegel, *Science of Logic*²⁶

The harmonic dialectic truth of this statement is what the spiritual artists in Tibet tried to achieve in their bronzes of Yab-Yum. The erotic union of a male and female Buddha²⁷, the union of wisdom (she) and compassion (he), is the ultimate image of the dialectic unity of Oneness and Nothingness. This image, the enciphered **actualization and realization** of a truth, is the mystery of Betweenness.

It is easy to misinterpret these statues and to reject them. It is just as easy to reject the ideas of oneness-nothingness. This easy rejection is the working of the conditioned mind which can only deal with "real things" in a "real reality."

Plato's shadows were the things of reality, and what created these shadows was the light, the oneness which contained no things. The things in their appearance to human consciousness were created by the human mind.

The basic mystery of all being was not seen as something which wasn't there and which should be, or as a negative void and punishing hell, imposed on us by some other gods. No, this basic mystery is what every human being and any part of the world, including gods, demons, and Buddhas truly was and is. The underlying mystery is positive yet uncertain. This mystery has to be seen or "experienced" directly without the intermediary of thought by the human mind in a logic transcending vision outside of the sphere of certain and cogent knowledge.

It was and is the dynamics of any spiritual existence: the experience of identity with the oneness-nothingness of all being, the direct perception of the mystery, leading to a profound comprehension and insight which gives liberating meaning and which sees the limitations of

²⁵) In German this can be said better: "*Das Wahre ist das Unbedingte. Was unbedingt ist, wie Nichts, ist das Freisein von allen Dingen und Bedingungen.*"

²⁶) Hegel, *Logic*; HW vol 8, page 178.

²⁷) This image and its characterization as male and **female** Buddhas may be controversial, but it is supported by the Paramasukha-Chakrasamvara Tantra. See the picture of Shamvara Yab-Yum and the text on page 367. See also Rhiethurman, "*Wisdom and Compassion*," RWC page 215.

thought together with its powers. This wisdom²⁸ is not an end but a beginning which allows new thinking, new perception, new action, which can be called compassion. In the Christian Western world such a view was never really taken seriously except by some mystics from Meister Eckehart to Jacob Boehme and Friedrich Nietzsche, very different personalities who had in common that they had "seen the Unknown God." For Boehme "Nothingness was God., the Oneness of all opposites."

I want to make the point that this insight is not something to be acquired through 'mystic' preparation and exercises. It is part of all creative thinking which operates in the mind of every human being, but it is covered up by conditioning. Put differently, **intelligent creative thinking is mysticism for mechanical thinking.** Only intelligent thinking can see the oneness of opposites as they appear to mechanical thinking.

Some Hindu and Buddhist traditions share(d) the view with many Christians that reality, the world of society, was something negative and to be avoided. Maybe this was the result of Aryan and Semitic influences. The driving force in this worldview was that the certainty about the evilness of worldly reality provided the necessary spiritual comfort. If I know through my God or religion that the world is ruled by evil, then, by following the guidance of my God, I can hold that evil at bay.

In many Eastern religions, life and reality affirming tendencies, which I summarize as the Mother Goddess aspect, were always very strong. She is called by many names, from Isis in Egypt, Ishtar in Sumer, Aphrodite in Greece, to Shakti-Maya, Lakshmi and Shri (prosperity, fortune, beauty, virtue), Uma, Parvati, Durga, Kali in Indian Asia²⁹. This idea of the Goddess Devi could never be quite suppressed by the life denying religions of the likes of Jaina, Hinayana Buddhism, or the various ascetic Yoga systems.³⁰ Even in the Greek orthodox Christian church this idea stayed somewhat alive in the form of the divine Sophia as creative wisdom, in whose honor the emperor Justinian, during the sixth century CE, built the magnificent temple, the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, today's Istanbul. In the catholic church females such as Mary, mother of God, Fatima in Spain, or La Virgen de Guadalupe in Mexico, were reluctantly tolerated as holy because the deep seated instincts of common people demanded as much. The many cathedrals called Notre Dame bear also witness to this ancient idea. In the protestant churches such ideas have no place at all. In any case, Mother Goddess symbols were found in Hacilar (Turkey) dating back to 7000 B.C.E. In Pakistan-India the earliest finds of Mother Goddess artifacts come from the Indus Valley cities Harappa and Mohenjo-daro³¹.

In India, the Mother Goddess Shakti, the energy of *What Is*, in conjunction with her other male persona Shiva³², the immovable absolute, is the creator and lover of all, and also its destroyer. They are **One**, often shown in sexual union. Shiva as well as Shakti (Kali) are also often represented as containing both aspects as **one** in themselves. Both are creators and destroyers, immovable movers.

The profound meaning of this lies in the complementarity between absolute incomprehensible transcendence and manifestation as reality. Human attempts to reconcile,

²⁸) This wisdom has been called *gnosis* in Western antiquity, *jnana* and *vidya* in Hinduism, *prajna* in Buddhism. *Prajnaparamita*, the wisdom of beyond reality, in Tantra Buddhism is the highest wisdom of Nothingness.

²⁹) Uma appeared in an Indo-Aryan document for the first time in the Kena Upanishad 600 B.C.E., she predates Aryan influences and goes back to Bronze age times; it was she, not the Vedic gods, who knew brahman, the divine essence; see page 186. For a picture of her see Figure 65 on page 397.

³⁰) I rely here on the knowledge and wisdom of Heinrich Zimmer and Joseph Campbell.

³¹) Mohenjo-daro, an ancient culture of the Indus Valley dating back to as early as 4000 B.C.E. Excavations started in 1924. The city of Mohenjo-daro is together with Harappa (400 miles away) the most important city of the Indus culture

³²) Shiva and Shakti represent two aspect of the transcendent absolute. Shakti, Kali, Durga is the female part which corresponds to the active powers of the absolute. Shiva is the more inactive contemplative aspect.

comprehend, and understand these two 'forces' and ideas have given rise to philosophy, mythology, and religion.

Figure 6
Vajradhara and Vajradhari, Brass, 9"



The similarities between the images of Shiva in India and Dionysus in Greece, both androgynous, wild, life affirming divine forces, seem to be giving us a glimpse into a possible world of a creative *harmony* between sensuality and spirituality. There is no Oedipus complex here. Nevertheless, I need to point out that female power and influence has been oppressed in Indian society at least as much as in the Western societies of yesteryear. The Aryan and Brahmanic influence since about 1500 B.C.E. has suppressed much of the original culture of the Mother Goddess. Still, the dialectic harmony between the aggressive paternal and more nature oriented Mother Goddess ideas gave rise to the Indian, Greek, and Chinese cultures.

In India, the rather pessimistic dualism of Jainism and early Buddhism, as well as Islamic influences have created and tolerated a social system of castes in which the woman was not much valued at all. She was rather enslaved to her husband, father, or brothers. From the sale of girls into prostitution to the Sati rites of widow burning, the spiritual importance of Shakti was and is turned into a farce of oppression and cruelty against women in general and against the free expression of their sensuality in particular.

I should also mention here that the oneness of Shiva-Shakti is not at all universally accepted even in India, where the social oppression and suppression of women has been at least as bad as in most other European countries. Indeed, the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, lent his name to the confusion which arises through the separation of those two energies, which are one.

He wrote:

"The male Deity (Shiva) who was in possession was fairly harmless. But all of a sudden a feminine Deity (Shakti) turns up and demands to be worshiped in his stead. That is to say that she