

The Tao of Gnosis



Part 1 – The Perennial Philosophy

Chapter 1 The Mystery

Before the beginning was The Mystery. The Mystery was before God, before space and time, before creation, before the cosmos, before consciousness and concepts.

Pagan and Christian myths of origination imagine God as a Big Mind which thinks, or imagines, or articulates, or dreams the cosmos into existence. The Christian teacher Ptolemy describes the first event in the origin of the cosmos as the “stillness” of the “Primal Parent,” which *The Secret Book of John* describes as “pure, immeasurable Consciousness, stirring to issue a thought.” *Jesus and the Lost Goddess (JLG), pg 131*

Consciousness is the fundamental concept at the heart of Gnostic metaphysics because it is the prerequisite for existence. We can understand this from our own direct experience, because were we not conscious, nothing would exist for us, nor would we exist for ourselves. *JLG, pg 131*

Yet the ultimate source of all cannot be Consciousness. Plotinus explains:

Consciousness is always inseparable from that which it is conscious of. Eliminate the object of Consciousness, and Consciousness disappears with it. So what we are seeking cannot be Consciousness, but something that rejects the duality inherent in Consciousness. That which is prior to Consciousness must be something on the further side of Consciousness.

JLG, pg 131

If Consciousness arises with its object, it cannot be the ultimate source. Plotinus asks: “Who has begotten such a child as Consciousness?” There is no answer to this question. The ultimate source of all is The Absolute Mystery. Because it comes before Consciousness, it is not something we can be conscious of. It is, therefore, utterly unknowable. *The Secret Book of John* explains that “it is superior to God.” It cautions that we should add “as it were” to every description we attempt of The Mystery. *JLG, pg 131-132*

Because The Mystery exists before the primal duality of knower (Consciousness) and known, the ancients called it “the One.” *JLG, pg 132*

*Something mysterious and perfect existed before the universe was born.
Silent and immeasurable, standing alone, unchanging, eternally present.
It is the mother of the universe.*

I do not know its name, so I call it the Mystery.

Forced to describe it, I can only say, “It is great.”

If flows through all things, inside and out, and returns to the origin of all things.

Tao te Ching, 25

The mystery that can be spoken of is not the true Mystery.

The Mystery is beyond words and beyond understanding.

Words may be used to speak of it, but they cannot contain it.

The Mystery existed before words and names, before heaven and earth, before all things.

It is the mother of all things.

Therefore, to see beyond boundaries to the subtle heart of things,

Dispense with names, concepts, expectations, and differences.

*The Mystery and its many manifestations arise from the same source –
subtle wonder within mysterious darkness.*

This is the beginning of all understanding.

Tao te Ching, 1

*Looked at but not seen, listened to but not heard, grasped for but not held,
formless, soundless, intangible, subtle.*

The Mystery resists analysis and defies comprehension.

Its rising is not about light. Its setting is not a matter of darkness.

Approach it, and its beginning is not seen. Follow it, and its end is not seen.

Perceive its ancient, subtle heart, however, and you become master of the moment.

You can't know it, but you can be it.

Realize where you come from, and the beginning of wisdom is yours.

Tao te Ching, 14

The Mystery is infinite and eternal.

Why eternal? It was never born, thus it can never die.

Why infinite? It does not exist for itself, thus it is present for all beings.

Tao te Ching, 7

All things end in the Mystery, as rivers flow to the sea.

Tao te Ching, 32

Before time and space were, the Mystery is. It is beyond is and is not.

How do I know this? I look inside myself and see.

Tao te Ching, 21

*The great Mystery flows everywhere.
All things are born from it, yet it doesn't create them.
All things depend on it for life, yet it is never depleted.
It clothes and feeds all things, yet does not act like their master.
It nourishes infinite worlds, yet it doesn't hold onto them.
Since it is merged with all things and hidden in their hearts, it can be called humble.
Since everything in existence returns to it, it can be called great.*

Tao te Ching, 34

Chapter 2

Creation and Duality

In Gnostic mythology, the process of creation begins when The Great Mystery desires self-knowledge. To become conscious of itself, it makes itself simultaneously a subject and an object. As Simon Magus explains, The Mystery “became manifest to itself from itself and so passed into a state of duality.” The unknowable knows itself by manifesting as the knower and the known, the looker and the looked at, witness and experience. *JLG, pg 133-134*

Wanting self-knowledge, the One becomes two. The Mystery becomes the viewer and the mirror. It reflects on itself. From these two – thinker and thought – comes the cosmos. *JLG, pg 159*

There are different ways of describing this primary duality. A duality is one thing in two states, a pair of concepts which arise simultaneously. The primary duality of Consciousness and its object is the archetype of all subsequent dualities of complementary opposites. *JLG, pg 133*

The desire for self-knowledge is only one way of imagining the motivation behind The Mystery coming into manifestation. Valentinus imagines the motivation behind the manifestation to be love.

Since the Mystery was creative, it seemed good to it to create and produce what was most beautiful and most perfect in itself. For it was all love, and love is not love if there is nothing to be loved.

The nature of The Mystery is to love, but this remains only a latent potential unless there is something to love. So The Mystery objectifies itself to give itself something beautiful to love, and in so doing becomes love. *JLG, pg 181-182*

Imagine The Mystery as a fathomless ocean of potentiality. In a state of stillness the ocean is one transparent, undifferentiated whole. This is equivalent to the stillness of deep sleep, in which Consciousness has no object and is therefore unconscious. Consciousness arises from the depths of The Mystery as the ocean begins to undulate from somewhere in its depths. Eventually waves arise on the surface, each individual wave representing an individual psyche (mind). *JLG, pg 136*

The arising of Consciousness from The Mystery happens archetypally “in the beginning.” It manifests on the human level in each of us every morning when we wake up from the deep sleep of unconsciousness oneness and find ourselves to be both Consciousness and its object. In the depths of our being, something mysteriously stirs to break the silence of the unitive state of deep sleep and we find ourselves no longer unconscious, but a conscious witness of our experience. *JLG, pg 200*

*Out of silent, subtle Mystery emerge images. These images coalesce into forms.
Within each form is contained the seed and essence of life.
Thus do all things emerge and expand out of fertile darkness.*

Tao te Ching, 21

*The Mystery gives birth to oneness.
Oneness gives birth to yin and yang.
Yin and yang give birth to heaven, earth, and beings.
Heaven, earth, and beings give birth to the ten thousand things.
Thus everything in existence carries within it both yin and yang
and attains harmony by blending together these two vital breaths.*

Tao te Ching, 42

*All things are born from fullness.
Fullness is born from emptiness.*

Tao te Ching, 40

Chapter 3

Human Existence and the Purpose of Our Being

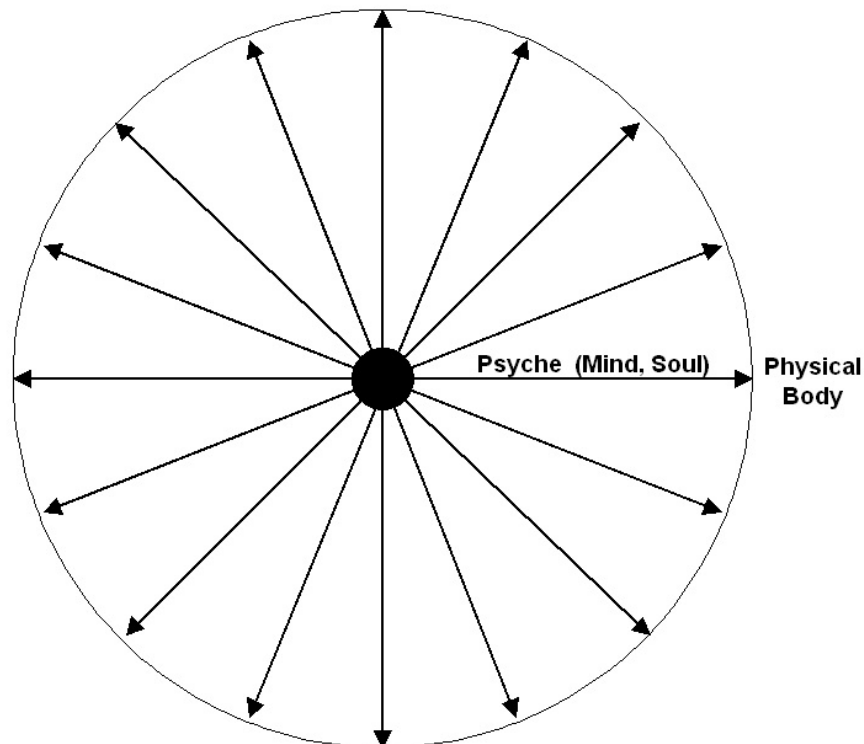
As a continuation of The Mystery's initial impulse toward self-knowledge, that part of Consciousness which has become identified with each individual human being is in the process of completing the journey of Gnosis by progressively awakening to its true nature. *JLG, pg 137*

What is the one thing – in reality not a *thing* at all – which cannot be seen, or heard, or touched, or conceived of? It is that which witnesses the seeing, hearing, touching, and conceiving: Consciousness itself. The great revelation of Gnosticism is that our essential identity is Consciousness. *JLG, pg 63*

There is nothing more obvious than the fact that we are conscious of our experiences. Our essential identity is the experiencer, Consciousness. *JLG, pg 62*

The one universal Consciousness expresses itself through all conscious beings. So, although we may all seem to be separate individuals, as Plotinus teaches, “at the inmost depths” of each of us “there is one Consciousness, unchanging and the same.” This is our shared essential identity. It is the hidden root of the tree of which we are all branches. *JLG, pg 64*

The Circle of the Self can be pictured as follows, with Consciousness / God being the center point. Each radius line represents Consciousness becoming an individual psyche, which then becomes embodied at the circumference of the circle.
JLG, pg 60



Each line that extends from the center of the circle has its source in the one Consciousness of God, and its fruition in a distinct human form, which is an image of the face of God. *JLG, pg 65*

When we look outwards to the psyche-body, we each appear separate, but actually our center is *The Center*. As Plotinus teaches, if we “hold through our own center to that center of all centers,” we will discover that our consciousness is the one Consciousness of God. *JLG, pg 64*

When ineffable Consciousness at the center witnesses its multitude of forms, it falls into identification with each psyche-body. Thus the one center appears to itself as many separate individuals at the circumference. Consciousness dreams the dream of the cosmos, and then identifies with all of the different characters in the dream. *JLG, pg 135*

When it looks out to the circumference along a particular radius, the common center appears to itself to be the center of that particular radius. As Consciousness witnessing an individual psyche-body – the center in relationship to a particular radius – we *appear* as individual beings. *JLG, pg 65*

The ego – the idea of ourselves as a separate individual – is a necessary stepping-stone in our evolution toward Gnosis. We don’t undermine a child’s ego, but encourage the development of a self-image. Human beings beginning the process of spiritual maturation need the ego which shapes their world. Yet ultimately we must transcend the ego to discover our true essence as Consciousness. *JLG, pg 163*

The Gnostic path to self-knowledge is discovering that this separate psyche-body is not our true Self, and progressively becoming aware of our essential nature as Consciousness. It can be imagined as the process of moving our point of identification from the circumference of the circle up the radius to the center and realizing ourselves to be what we have, in reality, been all along: Consciousness. *JLG, pg 68*

Our shared essential identity is an ineffable Mystery, completely beyond description. But from the human perspective, on the circumference of the circle, The Mystery appears to be our center. Relative to our experience as a psyche-body, it appears as Consciousness. Relative to our existence as separate beings, it appears as the One. Relative to our desires, it appears as the Good toward which, knowingly or unknowingly, we all aspire. Relative to our feelings of happiness and sadness, it appears as perfect Bliss. Relative to our experience of rejection and acceptance, it appears as unconditional Love. Relative to our feelings of attraction and repulsion, it appears as incomparable Beauty. *JLG, pg 66*

For the Gnostics, the quest for self-knowledge is identical with the quest to know God, because when we discover our deepest identity, we discover that we are God. *JLG, pg 63-64*

Our essential nature, then, that we have so far described using the language of psychology as “Consciousness,” and the language of theology as “God,” could equally be described in the language of philosophy as “Oneness,” or in the language of ethics as “Goodness,” or emotionally as “Love,” or aesthetically as “Beautiful,” and so on. But when we reach beyond all such necessarily inadequate descriptions, we can only say that at the heart of each one of us there lies

the same Mystery. *JLG, pg 63-64, 67*



Plato describes our two states of being as “being” and “becoming.” Consciousness is *being*. We experience this as the sense of *I AM*. It is unchanging presence. It is what we *are*. Psyche, on the other hand, is what we *experience*. It is an unfolding succession of changing experiences. It is impermanence. It is perpetually in the process of *becoming* something else. The Mystery as Consciousness is *being* what it is. Consciousness witnesses itself as a psyche-body in the process of *becoming* what it is. We are *being* witnessing *becoming*. *JLG, pg 137*

The purpose of the teachings of the Gnostic Christians is to guide us on a journey of becoming until we stop identifying with the psyche-body and become aware of our deeper nature, as the mysterious source of all. This fulfills the primal aspiration which inspired the creation of the cosmos. When we know we are The Mystery, The Mystery knows itself. *JLG, pg 139*

Conscious Oneness is not a regression into the absolute Oneness of the primal Mystery, but an evolution toward the recognition that the apparent duality is actually one essence necessarily appearing to be two. Gnosis is the realization of unity through duality. The primal duality at the beginning of creation is the One appearing to be two. The mystical marriage at the fulfillment of creation is the two knowing themselves to be One. *JLG, pg 148*

When we all wake up by achieving individual self-knowledge, when all the seeds of consciousness trapped in the cosmos of appearances realize Gnosis, then The Mystery will achieve universal self-knowledge. *JLG, pg 146*

In *The Book of Thomas the Contender* Jesus tells Thomas, “Whoever has not known himself knows nothing, but whoever has known himself has simultaneously achieved knowledge about the depth of all things.” *The Gnostic Gospels (TGG), pg 19*

*In the beginning was the Mystery. All things issue from it. All things return to it.
To find the origin, trace back the manifestation.
When you recognize the children and find the mother, you will be free of sorrow.
Use your own light to return to the source of the light.
This is called practicing eternity.*

Tao te Ching, 52

*Every being in the universe is an expression of the Mystery.
All spring into existence unconscious, perfect, and free,
then take on a physical body and let circumstances complete them.
That is why every being spontaneously honors the Mystery.*

*The Mystery gives birth to all beings, nourishes them, maintains them, cares for them,
comforts them, protects them, develops them, ripens them, completes them,
then takes them back to itself.*

*Creating without possessing, acting without expecting, guiding without interfering.
That is why the love of the Mystery is inherent in all things.*

Tao te Ching, 51

If you want to know The Mystery, look inside your own heart.

Tao te Ching, 70

Chapter 4

The Existence of Evil and Suffering

Evil is an unavoidable by-product of the process of creation itself. Consciousness is only possible with the duality of subject and object. Implicit in this primal duality is every other duality, including good and evil, pleasure and pain, suffering and joy. The One is the Good. When it arises as the two, it inevitably becomes the good and the bad. *JLG, pg 168*

The root of all evil is duality, separation, objectification. The essence of all goodness is the urge to resolve duality into unity, which we experience as love. When the One divides itself, the impulse that arises is to reunite, and that impulse toward reunification is love. Without evil (separation), there would be no love (reunion). Good and evil arise together. *The Gospel of Phillip* teaches: “Light and darkness, life and death, good and evil, are pairs of mutually dependent siblings who exist only in relationship to each other.” *JLG, pg 168-169*

There is no absolute evil. The only absolute is the Good. Evil exists relative to the absolute Good. Being is absolutely Good. Experience is relatively good or bad. For the One, everything is absolutely Good. For the parts, everything is relatively good or bad. And what appears to be relatively good for one part of the whole can be relatively bad for another. As the philosopher Antiphon jokes darkly: “Incontinence is bad for the incontinent but good for the doctors. Death is bad for the dying but good for the undertaker.” When an eagle kills a rabbit so that it can eat and live, it is good for the eagle but bad for the rabbit. The original Christians symbolized the cosmos as a snake eating its own tail – which is good for the head but bad for the tail!
JLG, pg 169



Bad experiences can be important turning points on the journey of awakening. Often the spiritual quest is motivated by suffering. We are trying to get away from a situation we don't want. Suffering and joy are the “stick and carrot” which goad and cajole us along the path of life.
JLG, pg 169

Sophia explains: “Bad fortune is often more use to someone than good fortune. Good fortune always seems to bring happiness, but deceives you with her smiles, whereas bad fortune is always truthful because by changing she shows her true fickleness. Good fortune deceives, but bad fortune enlightens.” *JLG, pg 170*

In the world of duality sooner or later everything must turn into its opposite. Day becomes night. Living things die. Good fortune turns to bad fortune. Good fortune deceives us into investing our happiness in necessarily transitory appearances, which must ultimately disappoint. What appears to be bad fortune, on the other hand, can inspire us to seek out a deeper source of joy by discovering the perpetual bliss of our permanent essence. *JLG, pg 170*



Our human imperfections are due to our ego. We are flawed human beings on a journey of evolution to manifest our perfect essence. It is the ego (or the shadow-self it creates) which causes human beings to act badly. The cause of the terrible things human beings do is simply lack of Gnosis. Humans perpetrate evil because we do not know who and what we really are. “Bad” people are aspects of the Oneness who are convinced they are the separate ego and so end up hurting themselves and others in a misguided attempt to serve their own selfish interests. *JLG, pg 164, 167*

When we are aware of the Oneness, guilt and blame are irrelevant. When we know the Good, we no longer see evil and evil-doers, just ignorant people who are as yet unaware of the goodness of their essential nature and the unity of all things. *JLG, pg 167*

This is the tragi-comedy of the human predicament. We are all God, but most of us think of ourselves as a somewhat shoddy person. We have completely identified with the body we appear to be on the circumference of the circle, and have no awareness of our essential nature as Consciousness at the center. When we identify with the ego-self, we attempt to gratify and protect the particular person we mistake ourselves to be. We seek what is good for this limited idea of who we are, regardless of the consequences to others and the entirety. The wise, loving, impersonal presence that is The Mystery of God becomes an ignorant, selfish, separate person. *JLG, pg 67-68*

The human condition is filled with poignant irony. We struggle to preserve our individual identity at all costs, exhausting our energies on survival and status, and yet it is this very individuality, based on the perception of our separate existence, that is the source of our difficulties. Hence the paradoxes in Jesus’ teachings about our escape from this plight: “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same will save it.” *Inner Christianity (IC), pg 66*



For Christian literalists, we are born in sin and need reforming by being made to adhere to a strict code of beliefs and behaviors as laid down by religious authorities and apparently approved by God himself. Should we fail to live up to God’s expectations, we could well find ourselves spending the whole of eternity suffering horrendous punishments. The approach of the Christian Gnostics is the complete opposite of this. Ptolemy explains that our essential nature can’t possibly be damned, no matter what we do:

Consciousness cannot be corrupted, regardless of the behavior it has to pass its time in the company of. A piece of gold does not lose its beauty when it is put into filth, but keeps its own nature, since the filth can’t harm the gold. JLG, pg 173-174

We don't get into the Kingdom of Heaven as a reward for obeying the rules, but by recognizing that this is already the eternal home of our essential Self. We are "spiritual not by behavior, but by nature, and we will be preserved no matter what." We are saved not because of how we act, but by being what we are. *JLG, pg 174*

For Gnostics, therefore, becoming good is not about obeying some written moral code, but about purifying ourselves of the egotism which obscures our natural goodness. To do this we must become conscious of our covert selfish motivations, which are rooted in our identification with the ego. *The Gospel of Phillip* explains:

As long as the root of evil is hidden, it is strong. But if it becomes known, it dissolves. If we ignore it, it takes root in us and brings forth its fruit in the heart. It exerts this power because we have not recognized it.

The more we awaken, the more we naturally exhibit our essential goodness, and the need to follow an ethical code is superceded. *JLG, pf 174*

Part 2 – Gnostic Christianity

Chapter 1 Gnostic Myths

The Christian myth cycle is the story of the quest for Gnosis. It is the extraordinary tale of The Mystery of God's search to know itself, of which our search to know ourselves is an echo. It is on the human level that this great drama will be fulfilled. Only when all of the seeds lost in ignorance have realized Gnosis will the journey, begun when The Mystery first stirred into Consciousness, be completed. *JLG, pg 149*

Sophia and the Logos

Sophia is the Greek word for “wisdom,” while Logos is Greek for “word.” The Greek language assigns gender to words on the basis of the word's form. Linguistically, Sophia is a feminine word and Logos is a masculine word. In the Bible, the earliest mention of Sophia is in the book of Proverbs. She is also mentioned in other books in the Old Testament. *IC, pg 138-140*

Esoteric Christianity in its earliest times saw an extremely close connection between Sophia and Christ – the Logos – so it would not be mistaken to see them essentially as the same principle. In the apocryphal book of *Sirach*, Wisdom is literally the Word of God: “I come forth from the mouth of the most high,” she proclaims. (Sir 24:3) As some New Testament scholars point out, the Gospels draw strong parallels between Christ and Sophia: Christ's use of the bread and wine echoes Sophia's cry, “Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.” (Proverbs 9:5) Paul himself equates Christ with Sophia, calling Christ “the wisdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:24) Sophia is the same as the Logos, the principle of Consciousness, the transcendental Self that experiences the world in and through us. This parallel was explicit in the early years of Christianity. *IC, pg 140-142*

The Creation Myth Revisited

The Gnostic's version of the myth of Adam and Eve differs significantly from the version taught by traditional mainstream Christianity. The Gnostics taught that the story of Adam and Eve was never meant to be taken literally, but rather should be understood as a spiritual allegory. They believed that the “fall” of Adam and Eve represented our descent into ordinary consciousness, and our loss of awareness of our divine origin. Having fallen into this error, human beings then projected their own divinity onto gods external to themselves, and thus created religion:

In the beginning, God created humanity. But now humanity creates God. This is the way it is in the world – human beings invent gods and worship their own creation. Adam, Eve, and the Serpent (AES), pgs 64-66

Gnostics read the story of Adam and Eve as an account of what takes place within a person who is engaged in the process of spiritual self-discovery. In some Gnostic myths, Eve represents the embodiment of the *psyche* or soul – the mind-emotion complex where thinking and feeling originate. Adam represents the *pneuma* or spirit – the higher, transcendental consciousness within each of us. In the majority of the known Gnostic texts, these roles are reversed. Adam is the embodiment of the *psyche* or soul, and Eve represents the *pneuma* or spirit. *AES, pg 64-66; Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition, (GNL) pg 26*

The author of *The Gospel of Phillip* wrote that death began when “the woman separated...from the man” – that is, when Eve (the spirit) became separated from Adam (the psyche). Only when one’s psyche, or ordinary consciousness, becomes integrated with one’s spiritual nature – when Adam, reunited with Eve, “becomes complete again” – can one achieve gnosis. *AES, pg 68*

In the Gnostic text *On the Origin of the World*, Eve is presented as the daughter and messenger of the divine Sophia. It is in this capacity, as messenger, that she comes as a teacher to Adam and raises him up from his sleep of unconsciousness. Likewise, in *The Apocryphon of John* Eve is a wise woman, a true daughter of Sophia, the celestial Wisdom. In this capacity she is the one who awakens the sleeping Adam. She is the source of spiritual awakening. *GNL, pg 27; AES, pg 68*

Gnostic authors told the story of Eve, as spiritual intelligence, merging with Adam and awakening him, as soul, to an awareness of his spiritual nature. Eve and Adam joined in marriage symbolizes the harmonious union of spirit and soul. According to the Gnostic text *Reality of the Rulers*, when Adam first recognized Eve, he saw in her not a mere marital partner but a spiritual power:

And when he saw her, he said, “It is you who have given me life: you shall be called the Mother of the Living [Eve]; for it is she who is my Mother. It is she who is the Physician, and the Woman, and She Who Has Given Birth. AES, pg 66

The *Secret Book of John* suggests that Adam’s experience as he awakened to Eve’s presence prefigures that of the gnostic who, sunk into a state of oblivion, suddenly awakes to the presence of the spirit deep within. The *Secret Book* concludes as Eve, the “perfect primal intelligence,” calls out to Adam, to the psyche, to wake up, recognize her, and thus receive spiritual illumination:

I entered into the midst of their prison, which is the prison of the body. And I said, “Whoever hears, let him arise from the deep sleep.” And he wept and shed bitter tears. Bitter tears he wiped from himself, and he said, “Who is it who calls my name, and whence has this hope come to me while I am in the chains of this prison?” And I said, “I am the intelligence of the pure life; I am the thinking of the virginal spirit...Arise and remember...and follow your root, which is I...and beware of the deep sleep. AES, pg 67-68

In the traditional creation myth, Eve makes a mistake by listening to the evil serpent, who persuades her that eating the fruit of the forbidden tree will make her wise like the Gods. The Gnostic text *The Testimony of Truth* reverses this interpretation. Far from the embodiment of evil, the serpent is considered the wisest creature in paradise. Another Gnostic text, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, says that not only Eve but also the serpent was inspired and guided by the divine Sophia. *GNL, pg 28*

The mainstream version of Genesis says that after eating the forbidden fruit Adam and Eve were cast out from paradise. But the Gnostic version says that “their eyes were opened” – a metaphor for gnosis. They were then able to pass on this capacity for gnosis to those of their descendants who were inclined to receive it. *GNL, pg 29*

The Jesus Story

The Story

This is how the birth of Jesus came about: His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph. Before their marriage she found she was with child through the Holy Spirit. While Mary was expecting, Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem. While they were there, the time came for Mary to deliver her baby. Because there was no room for them at any of the inns, Mary gave birth in a stable, or cave. When Jesus was born, a bright new star appeared in the heavens, guiding shepherds and wise men to his birth place.

Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth in Galilee, where Jesus grew up. As he grew, he became strong in spirit and wisdom, and God's favor was upon him.

When Jesus was about thirty years of age, a man named John the Baptist came preaching and baptizing in the wilderness, saying, "Repent, and prepare yourselves for the Lord." Jesus came to the Jordan river to be baptized by John. When Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water, the heavens opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descend like a dove to light on him. A voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

After Jesus' baptism, he spent forty days in the wilderness where Satan tempted him, but he resisted all of Satan's temptations. Following this, he spent three years teaching people about the kingdom of God, healing, and performing other miracles.

After three years of ministry Jesus came to Jerusalem. He entered the city riding on a donkey. As he rode into the city, crowds of people hailed him as their king. The Jewish priests in Jerusalem conspired to have Jesus killed, and shortly after his entry into the city he was tried before the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate and was condemned to be crucified. Following his crucifixion, his body was taken and buried in a tomb. Three days later, Mary of Magdala and some other women went to his grave. They found the tomb empty, and the risen Jesus appeared to them. Later, Jesus also appeared to his other disciples and taught them. At the end of 40 days, he ascended into heaven.

The Interpretation of the Story

Literal vs. Symbolic Understanding

For the Gnostic Christians, the Jesus story was a myth used to introduce beginners to the spiritual path. For those wishing to go deeper than the "Outer Mysteries" which were for the masses, there were secret teachings or "Inner Mysteries." These were "the secret traditions of true Gnosis" which, according to Paul and other Gnostic sources were transmitted to a small number of people by a succession of masters. *JLG, pg 2*

The Gnostics divided human beings into categories according to their level of self awareness. Paul, Valentinus, and others use the terms *hylics*, *psychics* and *pneumatics*. *Hylics*, or materialists, identify themselves with the body – the circumference of the circle of self. *Psychics* identify themselves with the psyche or soul – the radius. *Pneumatics* are aware of themselves as Spirit or Consciousness – the center of the circle. There are two stages of initiation which lead us progressively through these states of being. The first stage, known as *psychic* initiation into the Outer Mysteries, begins the journey from *hylic* awareness to *psychic* awareness. The second stage, known as *pneumatic* initiation into the Inner Mysteries, begins the journey from *psychic* awareness to *pneumatic* awareness. *JLG, pg 68*

For the Gnostics, the Jesus story is a symbolic parable in which the three main events of Jesus' life are his baptism, death, and resurrection. Jesus' baptism by John represents his initiation into the Outer Mysteries of purification. His death represents his initiation into the Inner Mysteries, in which initiates die to the false ego-self. His resurrection represents the realization of Gnosis, in which the initiate awakens from spiritual death and is reborn into eternal life through the realization of his or her essential nature as Consciousness, symbolized by the Christ. *JLG, pg 103*

To initiates of the Outer Mysteries at the *psychic* level of awareness, the Jesus story is about a Divine Redeemer who has come to rescue them. They identify with Jesus' disciples, to whom the Savior imparts his *psychic* or soul teachings, which are primarily about faith and ethics. Jesus dies and resurrects into eternal life on their behalf as a promise that they, too, will be blessed with eternal life. *JLG, pg 102*

At the *pneumatic* or spirit level of awareness, initiates of the Inner Mysteries are taught to understand the Jesus story not as a historical account of actual events which initiates should *believe in*, but as allegories for experiences they can *participate in*, and thus experience their own personal transformation. *JLG, pg 105*

The author of *The Gospel of Philip* criticizes those who mistake religious language for literal language, professing faith in God, in Christ, or in the resurrection as if these were all "things" external to themselves. *TGG, pg 133*

Major Events in the Jesus Story

Jesus' birth is heralded by the appearance of a new star. The ancients compared our essential godlike nature to an eternal star, ever luminous in the heavens. Plotinus teaches that we are all "eternal stars," explaining that "a star is the representative generated by each psyche when it enters the cosmos." The Christian *Gospel of Truth* teaches, "within you dwells the star that does not set." In the *Gospel of Matthew* Jesus teaches his disciples, "You are the lights of the world." The new star in the Jesus story is a symbol of Jesus' essential nature, which has entered the physical world from Heaven. His mission here is to remind us of our own true angelic or godlike nature, symbolized by an eternal star, and to guide us to our true home in the Kingdom of Heaven. *JLG, pg 106-107*

The birth of the divine child represents the birth of the higher Self in the individual, the first glimmer of higher consciousness. *IC, pg 126*

There is light within a man of light, and it lights up the whole world. If he does not shine, he is darkness. TGG, pg 120

According to *The Gospel of Luke* Jesus is born in a *katalema*, which means “cave” or similar temporary shelter. The bright star which heralds Jesus’ birth, representing his true eternal nature as Consciousness, has come into incarnation in a cave. For Gnostics, the motif of the cave represents the material cosmos in which we presently live. Plato describes the human condition as one of being imprisoned in a cave, where we mistake the shadows cast by the light outside for reality. *JLG, pg 107-108*

John’s baptism of Jesus represents the Gnostic master offering initiates the *psychic* initiation of purification, symbolized by being washed clean with water. In this stage initiates work on themselves to become better people, which is the goal of the *psychic* level of initiation. *JLG, pg 112*

In the gospel story, when Jesus is baptized the voice of God announces, “This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased,” while the Holy Spirit descends upon him in the form of a dove. The dove was a widespread symbol of the Goddess in the ancient world and was adopted by Christians as a symbol of Mary. Christians of the Ophite school teach that at his baptism, “Christ and Sophia, the one enfolding the other, descended upon Jesus and he became Jesus Christ.” *JLG, pg 151*

Jesus’ three temptations in the wilderness shortly after his baptism correspond with the three levels of our being. The first temptation has to do with the physical body – the *hylic* self. This temptation comes after Jesus has fasted for 40 days. The number 40 has considerable esoteric significance, as we can see from the 40 days of rain in Noah’s flood, the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, and the 40 days between Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. In essence it refers to the full completion of a cycle. Here, however, it also has a more straightforward sense, since 40 days is roughly the maximum length of time a body can survive without solid food. Jesus has thus completed a cycle of purification, and he is at the end of the limits of his physical endurance. *IC, pg 84*

At this point the Devil suggests that Jesus turn the stones around him into bread. Jesus’ refusal to do so demonstrates his mastery of the physical body. Much of the socialization of ordinary life has to do with controlling the body’s impulses. You may be famished, but you wait until everyone has been served before you begin to eat. You may want to doze off in the middle of the afternoon, but you have a cup of coffee instead and keep working. You may feel a strong sexual pull toward your friend’s spouse, but you refrain from acting on it. These internalized social constraints, of which one’s own ego is a part, exist at the level of the psyche, which governs (or should govern) the physical body – the level below it. *IC, pg 84-85*

Jesus’ second temptation reflects temptation at the *psychic* level of our being. In this temptation, the Devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and promises him worldly power and glory.

Again, Jesus refuses. At this point we have moved beyond the purely physical level of our being. Humans cannot build such “kingdoms of the world” unless they have some mastery over their immediate physical impulses. To build a civilization of the world requires a great deal of hard work and forethought. It involves facing obstacles and overcoming them with patience and insight. These are human virtues that go beyond the physical or animal aspect of our nature. At this level our physical nature obeys our psyche, while our psyche is focused on a ruling desire for wealth, power, and glory. *IC, pgs 88-89*

Failure to master this second level of temptation obstructs further spiritual development. If Jesus had succumbed to the temptation of worldly wealth, power, and glory he would have made ambition his god and would have progressed no further, at least as long as ambition remained his god. This is a bargain that many have made for much smaller recompense than “all the kingdoms of the world.” Such a bargain is not a matter of having Satan appear with a contract to be signed in blood, but rather of the gradual compromising of one’s inner integrity for the sake of power or gain. Those who succumb to this temptation close themselves off to higher development, mainly because they cannot see its value. *IC, pg 90*

Jesus’ third temptation represents temptation at the spiritual level of our being. In this temptation, the Devil takes Jesus up to a pinnacle on the temple, and tempts Jesus to cast himself down and let the angels save him. This temptation gives us an important clue to the dangers we may confront at the spiritual level of our being. The pinnacle of the temple represents the highest level of spiritual attainment. Here the individual has successfully mastered the drives of the body and the psyche. This gives one access to tremendous power, and the miraculous begins to manifest. Most religious traditions teach that spiritual accomplishment can give one actual mastery over the physical world. Nature itself seems to obey such a person, as we can see from the story of Jesus walking on water, or the physical feats of Hindu yogis. *IC, pgs 94-95*

Suppose one does start to manifest amazing spiritual powers – or, more likely, the occasional serendipitous or even miraculous event happens: things fall into place, small signs of grace appear, one starts to experience the guidance of an unseen hand. This is a critical juncture, because if one stops at this point a kind of spiritual egotism arises, a spiritual pride that is the deadliest of the Seven Deadly Sins. Legend says that Lucifer fell from heaven because of this kind of spiritual pride. Moving beyond this temptation requires an experiential awareness that the “I” who performs such feats is ultimately the same “I” that exists in every other human being. Thus there is no separate superior self in which such pride can find a home. *IC, pg 96*

Following Jesus’ three temptations, he begins his public ministry. Between his baptism and crucifixion he takes on the role of the savior of *psychic* initiates. He performs miracles, gathers disciples, teaches parables, and gives teachings appropriate to initiates on the *psychic* level of awareness. *JLG, pg 112*

Jesus’ miracles can be viewed literally or symbolically. The Gnostic master’s role is to awaken us to the obvious miracle of The Mystery of existence, which confronts us in every moment. But those not yet ready to hear this message are given tales of magic that excite them with the possibility of life being much more than they had previously taken it to be. Which of course it is – much more. Miracle tales inspire us with a sense of mystery, and as life is all Mystery, these

smaller mysteries can take us a little closer to the truth. *JLG, pg 116*

To *psychic* initiates who are impressed by supernatural feats, Jesus' miracles are a sign of his spiritual power. To *pneumatic* initiates, Jesus' miracles are symbols which point to his true mission. For example: Jesus gives eyesight to the blind. Jesus represents the master who has the power to open initiates' spiritual eyes to the truth that they are presently too blind to see. Jesus raises the dead. This represents being rescued from spiritual death. Jesus miraculously feeds many thousands of disciples with very little food. The miraculous food represents the Gnostic philosophy, which may seem insubstantial, but which has the power to give the psyche all the nourishment it needs to truly come to life. *JLG, pg 116-117*

When Jesus arrives in Jerusalem shortly before his crucifixion, he is shown as having completed the *psychic* initiation. He rides triumphantly on a donkey, while crowds of admirers hail him as their king. The donkey was a familiar image in Pagan Mysteries, representing the lower "animal" self or ego nature. Riding the donkey symbolized that Jesus, the archetypal initiate, has fulfilled the goal of the *psychic* stage of initiation by mastering his lower ego nature. *JLG, pg 121*

The authors of the gospels portray Jesus as giving such controversial teachings that the religious authorities conspire to have him put to death. The authorities' justification is that Jesus has proclaimed himself to be the Son of God. The Gnostic claim that we are all incarnations of God is actually the denial of the separate human ego and the affirmation that in reality there is nothing *but* God. It is absolute humility. But literalists hear this claim as if it were affirming the divinity of a particular ego, which is an unacceptable affront to their own ego. It is for this supposed blasphemy that the Jewish priests conspire to have Jesus put to death. This motif is a mythical allegory. When initiates realize their true identity as God, it is time for the ego-self they previously took themselves to be to die. *JLG, pg 120*

Jesus' crucifixion represents the *pneumatic* initiation, in which initiates die to their false ego-self. His resurrection represents the realization of Gnosis, in which initiates resurrect or awaken from spiritual death and are reborn into eternal life through the realization that their essential nature is Consciousness, symbolized by the Christ. *JLG, pg 103*

Following Jesus' death and resurrection he makes various appearances to his disciples for 40 days before finally ascending into heaven. Many traditions hold that there is a period after physical death – 40 days is a common number – during which time the exterior aspects of the self gradually die. The vast majority of what we currently take to be ourselves – our ambitions, desires, preferences, beliefs, and opinions – will not long outlast the physical body in which we are incarnated. A large part of the psyche is not and cannot be immortal. To see why, simply examine the thoughts and feelings that course through your mind in a typical day. Nearly all of them relate to your body itself – its appetites and aversions – or to your social life in the world: your job, status, friends, family, and so on. Most of these aspects of your nature will not survive your body's demise. You will not be worried about your health when you are dead, nor will you care about your career or social position. Your tastes in food and sex, your manners and habits, your political and probably even your religious convictions will all be gone. Nonetheless, *something* will survive. And the period after death is the time when this sorting of the eternal

from the transitory will take place. *IC, pgs 70-71*

This sorting of the eternal aspect of ourselves from the transitory also symbolizes what follows the “resurrection of Gnosis” in our lives here and now. With the realization of Gnosis, our true Self becomes increasingly freed from its identification with the transitory aspects of our nature.

Jesus is a star born into a cave, representing Consciousness becoming physically incarnate in the cosmos. Through the process of initiation, represented by events in Jesus’ life, he dies to his separate self and resurrects to eternal life. Whereupon the cave, now his tomb, is found to be empty. He is no longer trapped in identification with the body. He has ascended from the cave, back into the kingdom of the starry heavens. *JLG, pg 108*

The *truths* toward which esoteric Christianity point – the nature of Spirit or Consciousness and its unity with all that is – are immutable. They have always been true and will always be true, just as they were long before Christianity was ever dreamt of. *IC, pg 225*

Chapter 2

The Christian Mysteries

The Outer Mysteries – *Psychic* (Soul) Initiation

The Outer Mysteries address the *psychic* or *soul* level of our being, represented by the radius in the circle of self. During this stage initiates begin to free themselves from their identification with their ego-self.

1. Preparation: Metatonia

The spiritual journey begins with an experience the original Christians called metatonia. The term, which is found throughout the New Testament, is traditionally translated as “repentance,” a word now so loaded with religious connotations that it is difficult to hear what it really means. Metatonia is not about apologizing to God for breaking the rules, or performing prescribed penitential acts. It means “a change of heart.” It is a dissatisfaction with the way we have been and a sincere desire to be different. It is a turning point in our lives. Metatonia is the signal that we are ready to embark on the process of soul initiation. *JLG, pg 69-70*

The experience of metatonia results from our grief at having become separated from our deeper nature and thus lost in this world. *JLG, pg 93*

Without an understanding of the essential Oneness of all things, we feel lost, alone, vulnerable, and frightened. This motivates the spiritual quest. *JLG, pg 150*

2. Initiation: Baptism

Both Pagans and Christians marked initiation into the Outer Mysteries with baptism – an initiation ritual involving immersion in water, symbolizing being cleansed. During this stage, initiates are instructed in ethics, which teaches them to live a good and unselfish life, and so helps them to gradually purify themselves of the selfish ego. *JLG, pg 70*

The self-knowledge acquired in the *psychic* stage of initiation requires honest self-examination. It involves a willingness to examine our own deepest needs and desires, in order to understand our true motives.

The *psychic* initiation takes us on a journey from being a selfish individual to becoming a conscious expression of the Oneness of God who naturally expresses love for all. It teaches us to live well in the world by manifesting our essential nature, which is the Good. We presently appear to be partly “bad” because we mistakenly identify with the ego-self, the separate self. In doing so, we set ourselves apart from the Whole and become a self-serving somebody competing to achieve what is good for us. As Plato writes, “Attachment to self is the constant source of

misdeeds in every one of us.” *JLG, pg 173*

Spiritual development at the *psychic* level involves mastery of the two aspects of our separate self – the physical body and the psyche. This mastery does not mean repressing our physical or psychological needs and desires or becoming an ascetic. Rather than repressing our passions, the approach of esoteric Christianity involves learning to appropriately govern them. This means feeling our passions as fully as possible, but not becoming identified with them. This allows us to make a wise and conscious choice about whether or not to act on them. *IC, pg 87*

Take the typical experience of being cut off in traffic. A common response is to react automatically – to honk or curse at the other driver. The practice of mastery at this level would mean restraining the impulse to automatically react while at the same time *feeling the irritation fully*. If you pause to do this, you may become aware of a physical sensation of tightness or burning in your body, perhaps in your gut, or in your limbs. If you keep your awareness focused on this sensation, you will see that the irritation eventually exhausts itself and its energy dissipates. You have released the energy of the emotion rather than automatically reacting from it or repressing it. *IC, pg 87*

The method just described is a way of liberating ourselves from our usually complete and automatic identification with the passing feelings and impulses that arise in our body and psyche. You can practice this disentanglement with any strong emotion or impulse that comes up. If you do, you will find that a certain amount of effort is necessary just to remember to do the practice. Often at first you will probably forget all about the practice until well after the automatic impulse or reaction has occurred. As you progress, you may remember the practice while the emotion is arising, but still find yourself unable to disentangle from it. Eventually, however, if you persist, you will succeed. *IC, pgs 87-88*

3. Love and the Diminishing Ego

Jesus’ teachings in the canonical gospels are ethical teachings designed for those on the *psychic* level of initiation. The writers of the Jesus story use their hero to replace the barbaric “eye for an eye” mentality of Jewish literalism with a “gospel of love.” Jesus does not institute a new set of moral rules for us to obey. He simply encourages us to love more. In *The Gospel of John* he imparts to his “friends” his one and only commandment: “This is my commandment to you: love one another.” *JLG, pg 118*

The apostle Paul teaches that all ethical precepts are fulfilled if we simply follow the one commandment, “Love others as yourself.” In his letter to the Corinthians, he offers up a beautiful hymn to love:

Although I may speak in the tongues of men or angels, if I don’t love, I am like sounding brass or a tinkling symbol. Although I may have the gift of prophecy and the knowledge of every hidden truth, although I may have faith enough to move mountains, if I don’t love I am nothing. I may give all I possess to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, but if I don’t have love, it will benefit me nothing. JLG, pg 118

The First Letter of John likewise teaches, “God is Love, and those that live in God live in love, and God lives in them.” *JLG, pg 118*

Love is what overcomes the separateness of the ego-self and unites us to The Mystery which is love. It is the essence of the ethical teachings given to *psychic* initiates because love is the antithesis of selfishness. ***Becoming more loving is the surest way to transcend the ego.*** Basilides teaches us to “love everything because everything exists in relation to the Whole.” We are all One, and so we should love our neighbor as another expression of our shared essential Self. *JLG, pg 118-119*

The teachings of love attributed to Jesus are so familiar that it is easy to miss just how radical they are. Jesus teaches that we should love our enemies. We should repay evil with kindness. We should completely forgive those who wrong us. We should offer more than is asked of us. We should not lend money, but rather give it away to someone we know we won’t get it back from. *JLG, pg 119*

The kind of love Jesus teaches should not be confused with what generally passes for love in our world, which, more often than not, has its origins in the ego-self. When we meet someone who we think will satisfy our deepest needs – someone who makes us feel good – our hearts are filled with warm feelings toward them. We say we love them, when what we really mean is that we need them, or we love the way they make us feel. We care for them as long as they satisfy our needs and make us feel some special way.

Such love is conditional. We love the person for their appearance, their manner, their intellect, their body, their talents, their smell, their dress, their habits, their beliefs and values, what they do for us, or how they make us feel. Such love is also fragile. If the other person gains weight, develops some annoying habit, stops meeting our needs, or does not care for us as we think they should, our feelings can change from positive to negative and our love vanishes as quickly as it came.

The love which Jesus teaches is a very different kind of love. It is an unconditional love, a love that does not depend on another’s attributes or actions. It is not based on our wants, needs, hopes, fears, or any other aspect of our ego-self. Unconditional love is the love that springs forth when the psyche has fallen silent and we are free from fear, evaluation, and judgment. Like the peace we seek, this unconditional love is always there at our center. It is not something we have to create. It is part of our deepest nature. Pure consciousness – consciousness not conditioned by the needs and concerns of the ego-self – is pure love. We, in our essence, *are* love.

From Science to God, pg 97-99

Love is patient and kind. Love envies no one, is never boastful, never conceited. Love is never selfish, never quick to take offense. Love keeps no score of wrongs and takes no pleasure in the failings of other, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face, no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance. 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7

When we forgive another, exactly *whom* are we forgiving? Obviously, another person. But, as we have seen, at the deepest level of our being other people are in essence the same as ourselves.

The chief difficulty with our present state is that we perceive ourselves as separate and isolated individuals. To dwell upon the wrongs of others is to reinforce our perception of this fragmented state. Indeed, one could say that the refusal to forgive is one of the linchpins that perpetuate the human condition of separation, conflict, and suffering. *IC, pg 182*

The purpose of *psychic* initiation is to help us transcend ethical *ideas* about how to be good and discover the essential loving goodness that we *are*, so that we can live spontaneously from the heart. *JLG, pg 175*

I have just these things to teach – motherly love, simplicity, patience, humility.

These are your greatest treasures.

With motherly love, you reconcile all beings in the universe.

With simplicity, you return to the source of being.

With patience, you accord with the way things are.

With humility, you can lead.

Venture with love and win the battle. Defend with love and you are invulnerable.

Heaven's secret is motherly love.

Tao te Ching, 67

The Inner Mysteries – *Pneumatic* (Spirit) Initiation

The Inner Mysteries address the *pneumatic* or spirit level of our being – our shared Consciousness at the center of the circle of self.

The secret teachings of the resurrected Christ, which are designed to be taught to *pneumatic* initiates of the Inner Mysteries, are found in Gnostic texts. *JLG, pg 118*

For initiates of the Inner Mysteries, Jesus is a universal “everyman” figure whose initiations, struggles, and triumphs represent every initiate’s initiations, struggles, and triumphs on the path of awakening. *Pneumatic* initiates identify with the figure of Jesus himself – the perfect initiate whose symbolic life is the archetypal story of every spiritual seeker. The Jesus story is the story of “Jesus the Initiate,” the savior who rescues us by example. By imitating the allegorical story of Jesus, we are led through the process of initiation until we realize Gnosis and become a Christ. *JLG, pg 102-103*

Jesus represents the potential for Consciousness made actual in a conscious being. *JLG, pg 75*

Jesus proclaims that his mission is to make his disciples one with God as he is one with God, so that “all is perfectly one.” *JLG, pg 72*

*The Mystery is like a well, used but never used up.
Out of this mysterious well flows everything in existence.
Blunting sharp edges, untangling knots, softening the glare, settling the dust.
It evolves us all, and makes the whole world one.*

Tao te Ching, 4

1. Preparation: Philosophy

While the *psychic* initiation teaches us how to live as an apparent part of the One, the *pneumatic* initiation reveals to us that essentially we *are* the One. *JLG, pg 176*

Initiation into the Inner Mysteries involves the transmission of esoteric philosophy. “Philosophy” literally means “love of wisdom.” For the Gnostics philosophy was not an intellectual exercise, it was a spiritual practice. It was about revelation, not theories. It involved a rigorous examination of the mysteries of who we are and what life is. It questions our deepest assumptions and fundamentally changes how we perceive ourselves and our lives. It is a process of using the reasoning mind, which is an aspect of the psyche, to guide us beyond thoughts altogether, to Consciousness itself. It disperses the confusion which obscures our true nature. Clement of Alexandria teaches, “Philosophy purges the psyche and prepares it for Gnosis.” *JLG, pg 70-71, 176*

Under the transforming impact of mystical philosophy, initiates learn to “disengage” from the psyche, and so no longer identify themselves with their passing experiences. Instead, they

identify with the experiencer, witnessing the unfolding thoughts, feelings, and memories that make up the psyche. When we are able to do this, we realize that we are not living our lives at all. Life is living through us. We are Consciousness aware of The Mystery spontaneously expressing itself as a sequence of psycho-physical experiences. We are not a person who does this or thinks that. Thoughts and actions arise in our experience and we observe the show.

JLG, pg 71

In our normal waking lives, we habitually focus on *what* we experience, rather than *that* we are experiencing. But when we focus on the permanent presence that witnesses our ever-changing experiences, we become conscious of Consciousness. *JLG, pg 74*

To develop this awareness of ourselves as the witness of our ever-changing experiences, it is more important to be clearly and consciously aware of our passing experiences (whatever they may be) than to try to have any *particular* experience. *IC, pg 116*

When we confuse what we *are* with what we are temporarily experiencing in our psyche-body, we create the false self, the ego-self. In the *pneumatic* initiation, initiates learn to disidentify with the ego-self by cultivating a state of contemplation in which they discriminate themselves as the experiencer from everything they are experiencing. The person we took ourselves to be is seen as part of the stream of experience being witnessed by impersonal Consciousness. In this state we are no longer subject to suffering and death, for we know that only the body can suffer and die, and the body is only a temporary appearance in the permanence of Consciousness.

JLG, pg 123-124



There is nothing we can *do* to bring about a primal revelation of the Unknowable One, because what obscures the realization of Oneness is the idea of ourselves as autonomous agents separate from the One. We must, therefore, completely disidentify with the active personal ego and passively witness Consciousness.

To receive a primal revelation of the Unknowable One, withdraw to the rear of activity.

Become perfectly still in that place. Any desire to be an active agent will cause you to fall from the inactivity of the Unknowable One.

We enter this state of deep meditative contemplation by withdrawing our awareness from the circumference of the circle of self and turning it toward the center of Consciousness.

JLG, pg 177-178

When we know ourselves to be Consciousness, we know ourselves as the eternal still center around which moves the cosmos of unceasing change. In *Pistis Sophia* the enlightened initiate declares:

Even if the physical world moves, I shall not move. Even if it is destroyed, I shall not be destroyed. For the light is in me and I am the light.

When we know ourselves to be Consciousness we are no longer an object in the world, we are the light which illuminates creation. *JLG, pg 125*

When the waters are still, the light is reflected perfectly, without refracting into multiplicity. When we look into the reflection of a still psyche, the light of Consciousness sees itself. We see nothing but God. We see that all is one. We see what we are. *JLG, pg 88-89*

When the turbulence of the mind and emotions has subsided, consciousness becomes clear and still, and the presence of God can be felt. Although, as we are constantly reminded, God is everywhere, we are rarely aware of this fact because our constant mental agitation makes it impossible to experience God's presence. Practically all esoteric techniques of prayer and meditation are aimed at stilling the mind so that the Absolute can be experienced within. This stillness is by necessity the absence of thoughts, feelings, and sensations. It is a blank spot in consciousness. *IC, pg 165*

In the daytime sunlight, physical objects are illumined with great clarity. The mundane activities of everyday life require just such clarity of vision. On the other hand, our subtle and more far-seeing night vision is overwhelmed by that very clarity. The celestial luminaries, though present, are hidden by the bright light of day. It is only seldom that we can see the contours of the moon in the daytime, while the light of the stars is totally hidden. When the sun has set and the night sky reappears, the objects close at hand here on earth become shadowy, while the light of the stars that are light-years away becomes visible to us. *GNL, pg 217*

Likewise, when our awareness is held captive by the constant barrage of sounds, sights, sensations, and habitual thought patterns that make up our normal everyday lives, we are unable to perceive the subtle spiritual level of our being.

*Colors blind the eye. Sounds deafen the ear. Flavors numb the tongue.
The wise observe the world but trust their inner vision.
They allow all things to come and go. Their heart is as open as the sky.*

Tao te Ching, 12

Be still, and know that I AM God.

Psalms 46:10

*Empty your mind of all thoughts. Cultivate stillness. Breathe harmony. Become tranquility.
As all things rise and fall, rise and fall, just witness their return to the root.*

*Each separate being in the universe returns to the common source.
Returning to the source is called tranquility. This is known as the constant cycle of life.
If you don't perceive the constant cycle of life, you stumble in confusion and sorrow.
When you perceive the constant cycle of life you naturally become tolerant, impartial,
amused, kindhearted as a grandmother, dignified as a queen.
Immersed in the wonder of the Mystery, you can deal with whatever life brings you.
And when death comes, you are ready.*

Tao te Ching, 16



We are presently like sleepers caught up in a dream that disappears when we awake through the realization of Gnosis. By realizing that life is like a dream in Consciousness, we cease identifying with the ego-self, our dream persona. We then find ourselves to be Consciousness witnessing the joys and horrors of life, knowing that they are not happening to what we are, but only to what we temporarily appear to be. *JLG, pg 125*

As we explore the deep psyche through the Inner Mysteries, reaching further and further back along the radius toward the center and experiencing deeper and deeper levels of the psyche, the magical quality that we associate with dreams starts to break out in our everyday experiences. Mundane reality becomes mythic and meaningful. Everyday life becomes transformed into a mythic adventure in which initiates have the feeling of being led by some invisible force. They begin to feel the presence of mythical figures in their lives, with whom they develop a personal relationship. These mythic figures, embodying the deeper levels of the Self, become inner guides on the journey of awakening. Such figures are not “unreal.” They are powerful psychic realities, as many Christians know from their personal relationship with Christ. *JLG, pg 74, 80-81*

2. Initiation: Crucifixion

Jesus’ crucifixion represents the death of the initiate’s ego-self identity. *When Jesus dies, the Christ resurrects.* The true Self cannot die. Only the false self dies. By dying to what we are not, we come to life as we really are. These mythic motifs express the fundamental idea that in order to commune with the Oneness of God, we must stop identifying with the separate self. In *The Apocryphon of James* Jesus teaches: “None of those who fear death will be saved, for the kingdom of the heavens belongs to those who put themselves to death.” Initiates of the Christian Mysteries were taught to die as a separate self so they could resurrect as the Christ. *JLG, pg 122-123*

In the Jesus story it is through dying on the cross that Jesus frees himself, and therefore all who follow his example, from the cave of the cosmos. Thus, the cross is the means of redemption in the Christian story. *JLG, pg 155*

The purpose of Christian initiation is to awaken within us an awareness of our essential nature as Christ. *JLG, pg 77*

According to *The Gospel of Philip*, whoever achieves Gnosis becomes “no longer a Christian, but a Christ.” *TGG, pg 134*

3. Gnosis: Resurrection and the Sacred Marriage

Resurrection

The image of the resurrected Christ represents the realization of Gnosis. In the Greek language the word for resurrection, *anastasis*, also means “awakening.” The resurrection of Christ symbolically represents the awakening of the Christ within. *JLG, pg 76*

Christian initiates were offered a profound way of truly coming to live life without fear. If we willingly sacrifice the idea of our essential identity as that of a physical body, we will discover our true immortal identity, here and now. We will know that death is impossible. We can never *not be*, since we are *Being* itself. By dying as a separate ego-self now, we put an end to death forever. *JLG, pg 123*

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through Christ.

1 Corinthians 15: 55, 57

The grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ.

Mosiah 16:8

To be “saved” is to be preserved, to be made permanent. When the original Christians talk about being saved, they are talking about realizing the permanence of our essential nature. When we discover that we are the permanent presence of Consciousness, not the temporary ever-changing psyche-body, we know that we are truly safe. *JLG, pg 71*

Gnosis is the understanding that we are utterly safe, because essentially we exist outside of the human predicament altogether. When we are aware of this, we can let go of our conceptual reality and live in The Mystery, allowing life to continually surprise us with its infinite innovations. *JLG, pg 183*

Whoever can see through all fear will always be safe.

Tao te Ching, 46

The Gnostics describe the state of being identified with the physical body, which we normally think of as being awake, as being asleep. Plotinus explains that to incarnate is to fall asleep. We think we are awake, but we are really asleep and dreaming. We think we know who we are and what life is, but really we are lost in an illusion. We need to resurrect. We need to wake up. We need Gnosis. *JLG, pg 76-77*

When we awaken to Christ Consciousness, we will know heaven as an every-present reality. Heaven is the center of the circle of self, where we permanently exist as the Christ. Heaven and hell are both here and now, depending on whether we are spiritually dead or spiritually awake. Paul explains, “When anyone is united to Christ there is a new world. The old order has gone. The new order has already begun.” *JLG, pg 77*

The Treatise on the Resurrection teaches:

The Savior swallowed death. You must be perceptive, for by this I mean that he laid aside the corruptible cosmos. He exchanged it for the incorruptible eternal realm. He raised himself up, having swallowed the visible by means of the invisible, and gave us the way to our immortality. This is why Paul said we have suffered with him, and arisen with him, and ascended with him.

Jesus has “swallowed the visible cosmos” by realizing himself to be “invisible” Consciousness, within which the cosmos has its existence. If, as Paul urges, we can understand the mystical

meaning of this allegory and imitate Christ, we will also discover that we are immortal.
JLG, pg 126

I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.
Galatians 2:20

Paul teaches that “those who have identified with Christ through baptism have assumed his identity, for in Christ we all have one and the same identity.” *JLG, pg 105*

The Treatise on the Resurrection declares, “The resurrection is a revelation of what *is*.” We do not exist within the cosmos. The cosmos exists within us. We are Consciousness conscious of the cosmos. When we realize this we can declare triumphantly, as Jesus does in *The Gospel of John*, “The victory is mine. I have conquered the cosmos.” *JLG, pg 126-127*

The resurrection is not a future event. It is the awareness of our true identity as Consciousness, which can only happen right here and now. The future and the past are imaginings in Consciousness. We can only be aware of our true nature and identity in the present moment. *The Treatise on the Resurrection* explains:

The resurrection is the transformation of things, and a transition into newness. Flee from the divisions, and you already have the resurrection.

If we abandon the idea that we are a separate person, we will find that we are already resurrected. *The Treatise on the Resurrection* urges us:

Realize that you are resurrected already. Are you, the real you, something that can decay? Why don't you examine yourself and see that you have risen? JLG, pg 128

The Gospel of Thomas includes the following exchange between Jesus and his disciples:

His disciples said to him, “When will...the new world come?” He said to them, “What you look forward to has already come, but you do not recognize it.” ...His disciples said to him, “When will the Kingdom come?” Jesus said, “It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is.’ Rather, the Kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it.”

That “Kingdom” symbolizes a state of transformed consciousness. *TGG, pg 128-129*



The Gnostic Christians did not understand “hell” in the same way as the literalist Christians. Christian Gnostics teach that *this* world is the underworld. We come here many times, progressing through many lives in an ongoing process of spiritual maturation which reaches fruition in the realization of Gnosis. Those who do not realize Gnosis in this life are reincarnated here to continue their evolution. Those who do experience Gnosis in this life realize their essential nature to be Consciousness. They don't continue to make the error of identifying with their physical body, thus they have no need to return to the underworld [except as guides or teachers]. The path of remembering our true nature leads to Heaven. The path of forgetting our true nature leads back to the cave of the cosmos. In each incarnation, our higher Self, aware of our present level of development, fashions for us a life that will give us the opportunities we need

to evolve toward awakening. *JLG, pg 109, 111*

The literalist Christians taught that those who understand and believe in the message of Jesus will one day resurrect in their physical bodies. The Gnostic Christians taught the complete opposite. It is precisely those who *do not* understand the Christian message who will return again to a physical body. *JLG, pg 128*

The Sacred Marriage & Unity Consciousness

In the Gnostic version of the creation myth, Gnosis is an inner union represented by the marriage of Adam (the psyche) and Eve (the spirit). *AES, pg 66*

Life is paradoxical by its very nature, and so are we. As a body we are in the cosmos, but as Consciousness the cosmos is in us. Gnosis is “looking in two directions at once,” as Plotinus explains, and simultaneously being aware of our essential identity as The Mystery and our temporary appearance as a person. It is a mystical marriage in which these two aspects of our nature commune as one. We are conscious of the rich variety of our ever-changing experiences while simultaneously bathing in the permanent bliss of our ineffable being. *JLG, pg 75, 172*

Our present problem is that we are “intent upon the fragment and severed from the Whole,” as Plotinus puts it. We are aware of being a person, but not of being The Mystery. The purpose of the Christian way is to bring us to an awareness of the One, the Good, The Mystery – however we choose to describe the indescribable. *JLG, pg 173*

Consciousness has the power of thought and also the power of suspending thought and looking to the One. When we look in both ways at once, we know who we are. We are the Whole becoming conscious of itself through the part. We are the One seeming to be some-one. We are universal Being appearing to be a human being. We are the Mystery of God experiencing itself as a person. We are the “One in many forms” on a journey from The Mystery of unconscious unity, through the separate ego’s experience of conscious diversity, to the enlightened sage’s conscious awareness of unity in diversity. *JLG, pg 178*

*I am the sun as my eye is a part of me.
That I am part of the earth my feet know perfectly, and the sea is in my blood.
In my breath is the breath of all life.
The same stream of life that runs through my veins runs through the world
and dances in rhythmic measure.
It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth
into numberless blades of grass,
and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.
It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean cradle of life and death in ebb and flow.
My life is from the lifeblood of the ages, dancing in my blood at this moment.*

D.H. Lawrence, Tagore



Gnosis is the knowledge that all is One. But this does not mean that we suddenly experience the world as an amorphous blob. Rather, we understand that the essential Oneness necessarily expresses its infinite potential as the rich variety of life. Realizing that we are not a person does not mean we suddenly become some sort of disembodied nobody. Rather, we know that we exist on many levels. We are The Mystery expressing itself as Consciousness witnessing psyche, within which we appear to be a person living a life in the world. *JLG, pg 73*

The Gnostic way is not about withdrawing from the world or the personality into some abstract, impersonal void. It is about progressively expanding our awareness back to its source in The Mystery and being all that we are. Gnosis is consciously knowing in our everyday lives that we exist simultaneously as body, psyche, **and** the Consciousness that lies at the center of everything. Usually we move our awareness each day from the center of the circle of self to the circumference and back again, passing through the states of waking (circumference), dreaming, (radius), and deep sleep (center). Through the process of initiation, we learn to maintain in our waking lives on the circumference an awareness of also being the radius and the center. *JLG, pg 74*

Gnosis is becoming aware of our divinity, but not by rejecting our humanity. To know the One we must escape from identification with the separate self, yet this process of spiritual awakening can only happen to an individual. Gnosis is not retreating from life, it is valuing human incarnation as a precious opportunity to commune with the Oneness through the multiplicity, to discover the Good through the good and the bad, to find love through separation. Gnosis is not being the One *instead* of being a separate individual, but *as well*. It is living as both God and a human being, after the mythical example of Jesus. *JLG, pg 178*

The awakening of our true Self takes place in the matrix of the world; it is not separate or apart from it. Ultimately the world is sanctified and elevated by this process. Much of the process of spiritual transformation heightens the basic polarity between spirit and matter. This differentiation is necessary, but if we stop here our spiritual growth ends. The higher Self and the world become rigidly oppositional, locked in duality. Only if this duality is ultimately transcended and the final unity of the Whole is realized can our full illumination take place. *IC, pg 148*

Far from rejecting the world as worthless illusion, Gnosis is participating fully in the process of redeeming creation. The Christian Gnostic Marsanes teaches, "In every respect the sense-perceptible cosmos is worthy of being saved in its entirety." Gnosis is playing a part in creating Heaven on Earth. Christian mythology sees this ideal as being realized at the end of time, when all the seeds of Consciousness have recognized their true identity and the whole of creation is united in Gnosis. This state of *Absolute* Gnosis is, then, something we can only realize together. We are all One. This means that until all beings are freed from ignorance and suffering, none of us can be fully free from ignorance and suffering. *JLG, pg 178-179*



The *psychic* and *pneumatic* initiation combine to teach us how to be “in the world but not of it.” To help us understand what this means the ancients likened life to a play. A modern version of this analogy would be watching a movie. Our present problem is that we completely identify with the hero in the movie. That’s great in the enjoyable parts, but when things get frightening we get scared. It feels like we’re actually going to get done in by the bad guys. The *pneumatic* initiation leads to the reassuring revelation that we are not actually in the film – it’s just a movie. Yet to simply be a disinterested witness of life would be as crazy and unsatisfying as sitting in a movie theater constantly reminding ourselves that the characters and the story aren’t really real. That defeats the whole point of going to the movies. In the same way, withdrawal into detachment defeats the whole point of life. *JLG, pg 180*

There is a third possibility, however, which is the marriage of the two understandings. We abandon ourselves to the drama of the movie, yet retain an implicit awareness that it is only a movie. This, of course, is exactly what we do when we go to the movies, and it enables us to enjoy the movie, even the scary parts. Small children often can’t watch frightening movies, because they believe them to be real. In the same way, the spiritually unaware get so completely swept up in the drama of life that they live in constant fear and anxiety. *JLG, pg 180*

The realization of Gnosis enables us to be “in the film but not of it,” and so appreciate it without reservation. Free from fear, we are able to enjoy the extraordinary show we have created for ourselves without souring our pleasure with constant anxiety. We can take the risks that living demands, because we know that while our ego struts its stuff on the stage of the world, winning and losing, suffering and celebrating, laughing and crying, we are the unchanging witness who watches. *JLG, pg 180-181*

There is one important aspect, however, in which this movie analogy breaks down. To sit in a movie theater is not, in itself, an especially ecstatic experience. But to commune with Consciousness is to bathe in the bliss of our being. To experience the rich variety of experiences offered by life is a wonder, but to be conscious of The Mystery is to have found the source of all joy. Plotinus explains:

Consciousness has two powers. First to know its own contents. Second to know that which transcends it. The first way of seeing belongs to Consciousness when it is sane. But the second is Consciousness in love, transported and drunk with nectar. Satisfied and fulfilled, it dissolves in contentment. Better to be drunk than too solemn for such delights. JLG, pg 181

It’s easy to get a picture of Gnosis as an abstract theory about life. But the spiritually awake are heady with intoxication, not conceptualization. They are drunk with love, not sober with intellectual understanding. The purpose of Gnostic philosophy is to open us to the experience of ecstasy. The followers of the Christian sage Montanus were said to possess “an infinite number of books,” but called ecstasy the only true Christianity. *JLG, pg 181*

We are The Mystery wanting to love and be loved. Everyone is searching for love, whether they know it or not. There is nothing better than love. It feels good because it is the Good. Love is what happens when we connect deeply with another sentient being, because love is the way we experience the mysterious paradox of being the One appearing to be many. Love is The Mystery aware of The Mystery, so when we plumb the depths of our being we fall in love with ourselves.

Plotinus says:

Beauty evokes wonderment, delicious longing and trembling with delight, so when you see that you are beautiful within, what do you feel? What is the Dionysiac exultation that thrills through your being? These are the emotions of someone enchanted by the spell of love.
JLG, pg 182

There is something extraordinary about the physical level of reality. Behind the objectivity of the physical cosmos we intuit hidden subjectivity. When we look into someone else's eyes, we intuit (but cannot see) Consciousness looking back at us. Everything else we experience is an appearance – a fleeting, relative reality. But when we connect with Consciousness through another person we confront The Mystery. Absolute subjectivity meets absolute subjectivity by appearing to itself in separate forms. The Mystery has emanated so far that it meets itself in other forms. *JLG, pg 203*

The Relationship Between the Inner and Outer Mysteries

Initiation into the Outer Mysteries is about exploring our individual psyche and experience. Initiation into the Inner Mysteries is about discovering the experiencer – Consciousness, the ground of all our experience. *JLG, pg 69*

Initiation into the Outer Mysteries is about working on ourselves to become a better person. Initiation into the Inner Mysteries is about coming to understand that we are not a person. We are impersonal Consciousness or Spirit. *JLG, pg 70*

Through their initiation into the Outer Mysteries, Christians discover that they are not their physical body only. Through their initiation into the Inner Mysteries, they discover that they are not their personal psyche either. In the realization of Gnosis they understand that they are not even the impersonal witness. They are not a *self* at all. They are The Absolute Mystery. *JLG, pg 73*

The *psychic* initiation teaches us how to live as a human being with compassion for all beings, because we are all parts of the One. The *pneumatic* initiation teaches us to transcend the separate self and become aware that essentially we *are* the One. *JLG, pg 173*

What is the purpose of having Inner and Outer Mysteries? Initiates in the Outer Mysteries can easily misinterpret the teachings of the Inner Mysteries. The danger in telling those who are still completely enmeshed in the ego-self that they are really God is that this will lead to inflation of the ego, rather than transcendence. The ego starts to believe it is Lord of the universe. The history of religion is full of such ego-mania passed off as spirituality. *JLG, pg 69*

When the wise hear of the Mystery they immediately embrace it.
When average people hear of the Mystery they half believe it, half doubt it.
When foolish people hear of the Mystery, they laugh out loud.

Tao te Ching, 41



Only a literalist interpretation of the Outer Mysteries survived the Romanization of Christianity in the third and fourth centuries. All other forms of early Christianity, including the teachings of the Inner Mysteries, were systematically eradicated as heresy by the powerful Roman Catholic church. However, there is evidence that these two interpretations of Christianity – the Outer and Inner Mysteries, the literal and symbolic interpretations – existed side-by-side in early Christianity.

Ptolemy and Heracleon, the leading teachers of the Western school of Valentinians, claimed that “Christ's body,” the church, consisted of two distinct elements, one “spiritual” [*pneumatic*], and one “non-spiritual” [*psychic*]. This meant, they explained, that both gnostic and non-gnostic Christians stood within the same church. Ptolemy taught that Christ combined within the church both spiritual and unspiritual Christians so that eventually all may become spiritual. Meanwhile, both belonged to one church, both were baptized, both shared in the celebration of the mass. What differentiated them was their level of understanding. Uninitiated Christians mistakenly believed that Christ would save them from sin, and had risen bodily from the dead. They accepted him by faith, but without understanding the mystery of his nature – or their own. But those who had gone on to receive Gnosis had come to recognize Christ as the one whose coming revealed to them that their own nature was identical with his – and with God's. *TGG, pg 115-116*



Gnosis is a relative experience of The Absolute Mystery. It actually is not a *state* of having awakened, but a *process* of continually awakening to deeper levels of Self-discovery. As individuals in time, Gnosis is a temporary recognition of our eternal nature. Gnosis is always something we are growing toward or falling away from. Without the interference of the distorting ego we don't “miss the mark.” We are born along by the natural flow of life. But sooner or later our self-orientation pulls us back into identification with the ego. We persevere with the *psychic* process of personal transformation to prevent this regression from occurring so often. The Christian way is to progressively and increasingly transcend. *JLG, pg 179*

Pythagoreans call the two levels of initiation “the active life” and “the contemplative life.” The Christian way is being “at once an active and contemplative image of God,” as Theodotus puts it. It is living both the active life of perfecting the evolving psyche-body **and** the contemplative life of being the eternal essence, as complementary aspects of an ongoing process of spiritual awakening. In actuality, it is not about passing *through* the *psychic* and *pneumatic* levels of realization to reach Gnosis, because Gnosis is not about arriving anywhere. It is an ongoing process of transformation and transcendence, becoming and being, actively perfecting and passively appreciating. *JLG, pg 179*

The Gnostic Christians symbolized the realization of Gnosis as a mystical marriage because Gnosis is living life as a love affair of complimentary opposites. It is marrying together the

psychic path of transformation and the *pneumatic* path of transcendence. *The Authoritative Teaching*, a Christian text, states that “the worst vices are ignorance and indifference.” Ignorance is living without an awareness of the Oneness. Indifference is retreating from life. Gnosis is the opposite of ignorance and indifference. It is communion and compassion. Communion is knowing the essential Oneness of The Mystery. Compassion is loving the many appearances of The Mystery. The mystical marriage is living in communion and with compassion. Gnosis is being the One loving the all. *JLG, pg 179-180*

Gnosticism includes expressing our natural compassion by doing all we can to ameliorate the terrible suffering we encounter, yet at the same time knowing that, despite all appearances, all is well. It is understanding that everything arises from and is returning to the Good. It is trusting that ultimately good will come from bad, and choosing to play an active part in that process. We can't fully understand The Mystery of life, but we can come to trust in it completely, and this transforms everything. *JLG, pg 183*

Chapter 3

The Fruits of Gnosis

Natural Goodness

When we realize Gnosis, we discover that our essential identity *is* the Good. In moments when we experience this, we spontaneously act well as a natural expression of our being. We no longer identify with our separate ego-self, so we are literally “selfless.” We know that we are one with all that is, which is the experience of all-embracing love. *JLG, pg 73*

While we are still identified with the ego-self, in a sense all of our actions are ultimately selfish, whatever their outward appearance of righteousness. When we stop identifying with the ego-self, our actions are no longer distorted by the illusion of separation. *JLG, pg 175*

As our realization of Gnosis deepens we no longer abstain from evil out of fear of punishment or do good from hope of reward, but naturally express the Good, living spontaneously out of love, for someone aware of the Oneness cannot help but express unqualified love for all beings. *JLG, pg 175*

*Those who are interested in service act without motive.
Those who are interested in righteousness act with motives of all sorts.
Those who are interested in propriety act, and receiving no response
they roll up their sleeves and use force.*

*When the Mystery is lost, there is goodness.
When goodness is lost, there is morality.
When morality is lost, there is ritual.
Ritual is the husk of true faith, the beginning of chaos.*

*Thus the wise concern themselves with the depths and not the surface,
with the fruit and not the flower.
They have no will of their own. They dwell in reality, and let all illusions go.*
Tao te Ching, 38

*Fear is a phantom that arises from thinking of the self.
When we are selfless, what do we have to fear?
Know the universe as yourself, and you can live anywhere in comfort.
Love the world as yourself, and you can be entrusted with all things.*
Tao te Ching, 13

*When people lose sight of the Mystery, codes of morality and justice are created.
Cleverness and strategies emerge, and hypocrisy appears.
When families forgo natural harmony, parents become pious and children become dutiful.*
Tao te Ching, 18

*Throw away religiosity and knowledge and people will benefit a hundredfold.
Throw away morality and justice and people will return to natural love.
Throw away industry and profit and there won't be any thieves.
If these three aren't enough, just stay at the center of the circle
and let things take their course.*
Tao te Ching, 19

*Open yourself to the Mystery, then trust in your natural responses.
Everything will fall into place.*
Tao te Ching, 23

*Yield and stay centered. Stay whole, and all things return to you.
Only in being lived by the Mystery can you truly be yourself.*
Tao te Ching, 22

*The primal eternal Mystery is unnameable simplicity.
There is nothing under all of heaven that can subjugate it.
If powerful men and women would remain centered in the Mystery,
all things would be in harmony. The world would become paradise.
All people would be at peace, and the law would be written in their hearts.*
Tao te Ching, 32

*The Mystery doesn't do anything, yet through it all things are done.
If you abide in it, the whole world will be transformed by itself, in its natural rhythms.*
Tao te Ching, 37

*Giving birth, nourishing life, having without possessing, acting with no expectations,
leading without trying to control.
These are the profound virtues of the Mystery, and of the Mystery's best beings.*
Tao te Ching, 10

*Lead a people by following the Mystery. Win the world by letting go.
The more prohibitions you have, the less virtuous people will be.
The more weapons you have, the less secure people will be.
The more laws there are, the greater the number of scoundrels.*

*Therefore the wise say, "I let go of the law, and people become honest.
I let go of religion, and people become serene.
I let go of all desire for the common good, and the good becomes as common as grass."*
Tao te Ching, 57

*Allow the Mystery to carve you into a vessel for its use.
Then you can serve the world without harming it.*

Tao te Ching, 28

Wisdom

*The wise keep their minds always at one with the Mystery.
That is what gives them radiance.
The Mystery is ungraspable. How can their minds be at one with it?
Because they don't cling to ideas.
The Mystery is dark and unfathomable. How can it make them radiant?
Because they let it.*

Tao te Ching, 21

*The wise are as chaotic as a muddy torrent. Why "chaotic as a muddy torrent?"
Because clarity is learned by being patient in the presence of chaos.
Tolerating disarray, remaining still, gradually one learns to allow muddy water to settle
and proper responses to reveal themselves.*

Tao te Ching, 15

*The wise give themselves up to whatever the moment brings.
They know they are going to die and have nothing left to hold on to –
no illusions in their minds, no resistances in their bodies.
They don't think about their actions. Their actions flow from the core of their being.
They hold nothing back from life, therefore they are ready for death
like a person is ready for sleep after a good day's work.*

Tao te Ching, 50

*Those who use the Mystery to influence others don't rely on force or weapons.
For every force there is a counterforce.
Violence, even well-intentioned, always rebounds on itself.*

*The wise do their job and then stop.
They understand that the universe is forever out of their control,
and that trying to dominate events goes against the flow of the Mystery.
Because they believe in themselves, they don't try to convince others.
Because they are content with themselves, they don't need others' approval.*

Tao te Ching, 30

*If you realize that all things change, there is nothing you will try to hold on to.
Trying to control the future is like trying to substitute for the master carver.
Those who try to substitute for the master carver rarely escape injury to their own hands.*

Tao te Ching, 74

*If you want to become full, let yourself be empty.
If you want to be reborn, let yourself die.
If you want to be given everything, give everything up.*

Tao te Ching, 22

*The wise are content to serve as an example and not impose their will.
They do what is right without acting righteous.
They point without piercing, straighten without straining, enlighten without blinding.*

Tao te Ching, 58

*The wise simply remind people of what they have always been.
They help all creatures develop naturally and do not interfere.
They care about nothing but the Mystery, thus they can care for all things.*

Tao te Ching, 64

*The wise are detached from all things. That is why they are one with all things.
Because they act without self-interest, they are perfectly fulfilled.*

Tao te Ching, 7

*Nothing in the world is as soft and yielding as water.
Yet for dissolving the hard and inflexible nothing can surpass it.
The soft overcomes the hard. The flexible overcomes the rigid.
The gentle overcomes the strong.*

Everyone knows this is true, but few can put it into practice.

Tao te Ching, 78

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