



## God, Tao, and Universal Mind



*Vedanta says there is nothing that is  
not God . . . the living God is  
within you . . . the only God to worship is the  
human soul in the human body.*

—Swami Vivekananda

Buddhism, many have said, is not so much a religion as it is a psychology. It is concerned with the workings of the human mind. Its business is helping people to “wake up,” to provide the tools that allow one to expand their perception of reality. Buddhism may have all the trappings of a religion—robes, altars, incense, ritual—but even though it sometimes speaks of “Universal Mind,” Buddhism does not posit the existence of God. Consequently, Buddhism has no theology—no “words about God.” Does God exist? The Buddhist is likely to answer, “It really doesn’t matter one way or another since the human predicament remains the same in either case. Our job is to dispel illusion and alleviate suffering.”

Hindus would agree with Buddhists on this point—and it’s useful to remember that Buddhism began as a Hindu sect—but when Hindus describe the process of enlightenment or “waking up,” they are more likely to describe their experience of “Samadhi,” or bliss consciousness, as being in the presence of God. Christians of all stripes—even mystics—also consider “God consciousness” as the goal of their inner quest.

Taoism represents yet another point of view. Tao is the force that permeates heaven and earth. Its ways can be known, but not Tao itself. An ancient Taoist would probably tell us that further speculation about the “divine” nature of Tao would prove to be a waste of time.

Tao is an impersonal force in the universe, just like Universal Mind. But, then, so is "God" in most, if not all, mystical traditions, including Hinduism and Gnostic Christianity. Whatever word a mystic uses to describe Ultimate Reality, he or she is rarely speaking of a transcendent Being who created the Universe and micro-manages it.

Hinduism and Gnostic Christianity (and perhaps mystical Christianity in general) use the word "God" to describe a reality that, when examined closely, is far closer to the Universal Mind of Buddhism and the Tao of Taoism than it is to the personal God of Judaeo-Christianity and Islam.

Hindus, however, have no trouble at all personalizing the impersonal God. Their religion abounds with gods and goddesses. But this pantheon of deities—at least among the mystics of India—represents God's attributes, not individual deities. Those who developed Hinduism's pantheon of gods and goddesses many thousands of years ago were probably true polytheists. Over time, however, Hinduism evolved until it reached its greatest expression in the monistic philosophy of Vedanta, as expressed in its greatest scriptures, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Being all things to all people, Hinduism never found the need to renounce its gods and goddesses. Even today many Hindus continue to worship their deities as they have for thousands of years. Even mystics do not find a dichotomy here, since Hinduism has always been tolerant of all expressions of religious faith. God can be one and many simultaneously.

Buddhism developed in the opposite direction. It began as a movement without deities of any kind, and only later took on all the trappings of religion. Originally, Buddhism was quite simple and straightforward, but the Mahayana—the "Great Vehicle"—school of Buddhism eventually evolved to accommodate, not just monks who were committed to renouncing the world, but also common people who carried on the usual affairs of daily life. With this change came a cosmos of deities over time. Had Buddhism not evolved in this manner, it may well have remained just one more Hindu sect, or perhaps perished altogether.

Today, many Buddhists worship the historical Buddha much as Christians worship Christ: as a world savior (but not as God). In addition, they give devotion to many

other quasi-divine figures as well. Buddhism adopted and adapted as it moved out from India into the wider Asian world. In China, it absorbed philosophical Taoism, and reinvented itself as Zen Buddhism. When Buddhism came to Tibet in the seventh century C.E., it absorbed the indigenous religion of Bon, including its pantheon of deities and demons—which exist, but only in the world of appearance.

Gnosticism was such a diverse and complex religion that it is almost impossible to generalize about its theology. Gnostic Christianity, as a religion in itself, adopted many Gnostic ideas and rejected others, while giving it a unique Christian identity. In this, it was similar to Hinduism and Buddhism in adopting a cosmos full of demons and demi-gods. What set it apart from those religions, however, was the insistence that the various "powers" in the Universe conspired to keep humanity ignorant of its true divine origins.

Early "orthodox" Christians were abhorred by the Gnostic expression of Christian faith, especially its cosmos of evil forces that included the Hebrew creator-god, Yahweh. Yahweh, in this case, was a demi-god unworthy of worship, and one who played the part of a dungeon master by enslaving the divine soul in a prison of flesh.

Still, one has to wonder to what degree Gnostic Christians literalized such powers, and to what degree they understood them as metaphors. Orthodox Christianity has always criticized Gnosticism in all of its forms as extreme "dualism," because it spoke of the true God as an "alien" force that exists far beyond the world of matter, and the human soul as a reality apart from the physical body.

Yet the concept of the soul in Gnosticism is little different from the concept of the immortal soul in Greek philosophy. Furthermore, for Gnostics, the world of matter didn't really exist apart from the All, the Godhead. Its separateness was merely "apparent." Ultimately, all things resolved themselves back into the All, and the Gnostic goal of joining the Self with the Godhead was, practically speaking, little different from the Hindu concept of Atman/Brahman. Ultimately, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Gnostic Christianity all teach that there is only one single Reality in the Universe, and nothing exists apart from It. In the end, the name we give this Reality—God, Brahman, Universal Mind, Tao, or the All—is unimportant.



In the beginning the Word was moving toward God, and God was the Word.

This one existed in God from the beginning. Through Him all things came into being.

Without Him, nothing has come into existence. In Him was life, and the life was the light of humanity. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overtaken it.

*The Gospel According to John*

Before That-Which-Is became visible, All things existed in Him. He holds all things within Himself, but nothing holds Him.

*The Sophia of Jesus Christ*

Once, all was darkness.

The All remained unseen within the darkness—unknown and unknowable, as if in a deep sleep.

Then the All became manifest as the Lord—who alone exists, and who is self-existent.

He is everywhere.

There is no place where He is not. He exists in all things, and all things exist in Him. He manifests Himself from Himself.

*The Ordinances of Manu*

Before He manifested Himself, he existed within Himself. Out of Himself He manifested all things. He is known as the One who alone exists.

*The Taittiriya Upanishad*



Universal Mind is like a vast ocean.

On its surface, waves disturb its tranquility, but beneath, all is serene and unmoved. Having no personality, all things exist in It. But due to the disturbance on its surface, Universal Mind became an actor playing many parts.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

The Lord Buddha cannot be seen in visible form, nor can he be heard in audible sound. Those who lead evil lives cannot perceive the Blessed One.

*The Diamond Sutra*

In the beginning there was only Void.

Within the Void was the One.

The One is without form.

It has no features.

But within it all things exist.

*Chuang Tzu*

The Great Tao [Way] pervades all things, and causes all things to come into existence.

*The Tao Te Ching*

The One is invisible, imperishable and un-nameable. It is not a god. Nothing exists above It, and nothing existed before It. It is Unity and cannot be differentiated. It is the Father of All and It exists above the All. It is the Light in which no eye can look. It is beyond perfection. It exists outside of time. It is without qualities and it contains all qualities. It is eternal, and It alone exists.

*The Apocryphon of John*

The Word was made flesh, and  
It dwelled among us.

*The Gospel According to John*

The One has no limits. It is neither form, nor not-form. It is indivisible. Everything that exists, exists in It. It seeks only Itself. It is eternal and the giver of eternity. It is pure Light. It is the Blessed One that never changes.

*The Apocryphon of John*

I Am the soul that exists in everything. I Am the beginning, middle and end of all lives. I Am the Mind dwelling in all things. I Am Light. I Am consciousness. I Am the eternal Word. I Am the One who never changes. I Am the master over the future, and Lord of death. I am in all things, and nothing moves without Me.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

All things manifest are filled with God. All things that are invisible are filled with God. All things flow from God, yet He does not change.

*The Isha Upanishad*

The visible universe came forth from Me. I am invisible, yet the source of all things. At the end of time, all things will return to Me.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

Ultimate Reality is immovable, but is the cause of movement. Only through great insight will one comprehend this such-ness.

*A manual on Zen Buddhism*

All things are in Nirvana, and it has been so since the beginning.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

All living beings—every creature, whether from eggs or wombs, or from water, everything manifest or un-manifest, whether thinking or unthinking, or beyond thought—all these come from Me, so that all beings may reach Nirvana.

*The Diamond Sutra*

Before heaven and earth came into existence, there was only the One which never changes. It exists in sacred silence, and It is unaffected by actions. It holds all things in its loving embrace, but asks nothing for Itself. What do I call this nameless One? I call it Tao.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Since the beginning It has taken on an endless series of names. I do not know its beginning or its nature, but I understand It through Tao.

*The Tao Te Ching*

All things exist in pairs of opposites, being dependent upon each other. This cannot exist without That. What is the power behind all this? I recognize its presence in all things, yet I cannot see its form.

*Chuang Tzu*



The Spirit flowed from It like the water of life and Light. It alone understood Its own Image. This One filled with blinding Light is pure Mind.

*The Apocryphon of John*

From the beginning of time He has appeared. He has taken on many forms. He has been called by many names. In the end, He will return to Himself.

*The Kerygma Petri*

The Father willed that all of creation return to Him.

*Untitled Apocalypse*

Above the One there is nothing. He is nameless. He sees only Himself everywhere. We cannot comprehend Him, for He has no images.

*The Sophia of Jesus Christ*

The Lord dwells in the heart of all things. He is the only reality, so don't be deceived by appearances.

*The Isha Upanishad*

The One who was breathless, breathed through His own nature, apart from which nothing exists. The breath gave life to the seed of the universe which is Spirit.

*The Rig Veda*

Through endless cycles of time, I have resolved all things in Me. Yet I do none of this. I am the Watcher who watches the drama unfold.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

The Lord of the Universe is limitless. He sees only Himself everywhere. His attributes are countless, and His attributes are without beginning or end.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

Universal Mind is perfection without images. It is far beyond the world of thought. Divine Mind is undisturbed and exists eternally.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

One intrinsic Unity enfolds all manifestations.

*The Surangama Sutra*

Universal Mind holds within itself all thoughts and all actions. So it has been since the beginning of time.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

It exists everywhere, but the beginner cannot see Its essential nature.

*The Surangama Sutra*

The origin of heaven and earth is beyond the realm of thought. The Tao that can be expressed in words is not the everlasting Tao. This origin of all things is revealed within ourselves. This is the mystery of all mysteries.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Tao gave birth to the One. The One gave birth to the two, which gave birth to the three. From the three arose all creation.

*The Tao Te Ching*

The nature of Tao is to return to its own origin. Having given birth to all things, nothing gave birth to It.

*The Tao Te Ching*

The Tao is a mystery. You cannot see Its coming or going.

*The Tao Te Ching*

The Blessed One knows only Himself. He never changes, and has no imperfections.

*The Sophia of Jesus Christ*

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him, worship Him in spirit.

*The Gospel According to John*

The All is beyond all limitations. It cannot be comprehended with the human mind. It cannot be measured by any rule. It cannot be seen or talked about. It has no name.

*The Apocryphon of John*

The All encompasses all with love, so that all things that come from Him may become Him.

*The Tripartite Tractate*

The Lord cannot be perceived with the rational mind. He is beyond all thought, even though He resides within every being.

*The Mundaka Upanishad*

The force that pervades all nature, actions, and humanity is God. Those who realize this become immortal.

*The Kena Upanishad*

God pervades all that exists in the universe. Above and below, there is only this One.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

The formless Being which is beyond all things arises in all things, and never perishes.

*The Mundaka Upanishad*

Divine Mind is eternal. It contains within itself all reality and all truth.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

Universal Mind is not subject to birth and death. It is beyond all concepts of duality.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

Universal Mind is beyond all limitations. Its essential nature is pure, free of faults, and unaffected by individuation. It is beyond impermanence, distinctions, desires, and aversions.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

The intrinsic Unity of All things contains all things.

*The Surangama Sutra*

All things conform to their own natures. Tao conforms to Itself.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Tao is beyond all words. It can only be comprehended in silence.

*Chuang Tzu*

Tao is the common ancestor of all. But I do not know whose child It is.

*The Tao Te Ching*

The Tao never answers with words. It does not reach out for things, but all things come to It. The unspoken plan unfolds slowly. It gathers all things as if in a net, so that nothing is lost.

*The Tao Te Ching*



All that you see is what I revealed to you.  
What I am, I alone know. Behold everything  
through Me, so that you may understand  
what I am. For you belong to Me.

*The Acts of John*

All forms, all beings in the Universe exist  
within and in relationship to each other.  
In the end, all things will return  
to their essential nature.

*The Gospel of Mary [Magdalene]*



From Me alone comes knowledge  
and ignorance, enlightenment and  
darkness, happiness and misery, life  
and death, fear and fearlessness.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

Salt exists in water, and we can taste  
each. The One which is without  
end, consisting only of Awareness,  
comes out of such elements, then  
disappears within them once again.

*The Upanishads*

If you think that the Tathagata [the Great  
Buddha] comes or goes, sits or lays down,  
you have not understood what I have been  
teaching you. He is called the Tathagata  
because he is nowhere and no-when.

*The Diamond Sutra*

All things exist in relationship to  
everything else. Whether manifest  
or un-manifest, they come and go in  
relationship to everything else.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

How can the Tao be named? It is no-thing.  
It is without cause and without effect.  
Tao points to itself. No name can define it.

*The Tao Te Ching*

It comes, it goes. Without form, it cannot  
be embraced. Without sound, ears cannot  
hear it. Without form, no one can see it.

*The Tao Te Ching*

## Being One: Mind, Meditation and Yoga



*If the chimney is full of smoke, how can the light be seen?  
If the mind is full of dirt, how can the soul shine?*

—Yogaswami

The goal of all mystical paths is to recognize oneness with God, or whatever one chooses to call Ultimate Reality. We are told by spiritual teachers that we already *are One*, we just don't realize it. In reality, there is nothing to achieve, nothing to become, nothing to do but . . . wake up. And to wake up, all we have to do is change how we perceive reality. This will allow us to become aware of our essential unity with All-That-Is. But this "all we have to do" job can take a lifetime or, much more likely, many lifetimes.

Only a handful of people in any age ever fully realize this ultimate state of awareness. And most of the few who have attained this state of being have done so only after a lifetime of arduous spiritual effort. We might well wonder, then, if we already *are One*, why is it so difficult to realize it?

In a sense, the answer to that question is in the very fact that we asked the question in the first place. We use our "rational" mind to seek an answer to something that can only be recognized by our super-rational mind. Our mind, it turns out, is both the problem and the solution.

While our rational mind can do many amazing things, and is very useful and necessary in the phenomenal world, when it comes to realizing God consciousness, our thinking, questioning, debating, pondering mind gets us nowhere at all. All our mind does is steer us into a spiritual cul-de-sac.

But now that we've identified the problem, the solution seems pretty obvious and simple: just stop thinking—just power down our discursive mind so that "Essential Mind" can take over and, bingo, instant Buddha, instant Christ. If only!

The reality is that our minds are completely out of control. The human mind has often been compared to a hyper-active chattering monkey that refuses to stop moving or shut up. Anyone who has ever tried to meditate knows just how appropriate that metaphor is. Still, it would appear that we have no choice but to train our mind as if it were a new puppy that hasn't been housebroken yet. We need to become the master of our mind, not its slave.





Original man had one original mind. It was unified.

*Dialogue of the Savior*

Learn to see what is right in front of you, then you will be able to see that which is invisible. Nothing is ever truly hidden.

*The Gospel of Thomas; parallels: Matthew, Luke*

I saw the Lord in a vision, and my vision did not falter. The Lord said to me, "It is fortunate that you were able to hold this vision of Me in your mind without losing it; for the mind holds the treasure."

*The Gospel of Mary [Magdalene]*

I said to the Lord, "Is it through our soul or our spirit that we are able to see visions?"

"He said to me, 'Neither. Visions are produced by the mind.'"

*The Gospel of Mary [Magdalene]*

To attain the One, one's mind must be in harmony with itself.

*The Katha Upanishad*

That which is real is always real. That which is unreal is always unreal. The person who knows Truth, knows the difference.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

The Self, which is God, dwells in every being, but only those with wisdom and perception—having the ability to hold the mind steady—will recognize this. When the senses obey the mind, God will be revealed.

*The Katha Upanishad*

When the mind is controlled by concentration and one comes to see the self as the Self, the yogi experiences infinite bliss. To purify the intellect is to transcend the senses, and to transcend the senses is to remain in bliss consciousness permanently.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

The sky has no east or west, nor does not make any distinctions between this and that. Distinctions arise from the human mind alone.

*The Buddha*

The past does not exist. The future does not exist. One should concentrate the mind on the present moment.

*The Buddha*

Our lives are products of our mind. What we are today is a result of what we thought yesterday. What we think today influences what happens to us tomorrow. Our entire lives are products of our mind.

*The Dhammapada*

The discriminating mind is like a magician who sees the world as his stage. The intuitive mind travels with the magician, becoming a mirror which reflects emptiness and impermanence.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

That which fuels the fire consumes itself.

*Chuang Tzu*

Tao can only be understood in the present moment.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Recognize what is simple. Keep what is essential.

*The Tao Te Ching*

He who says he knows, knows not. He who truly knows, says nothing at all. For the good of the world, correct this confusion and unite all things as one whole.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Light comes through the mind and illuminates the whole body. When all things within you are integrated, your light will shine everywhere.

*Dialogue of the Savior*

Unless one is born anew, he can not see the Kingdom of God.

*The Gospel According to John*

Make everything within you harmonious.

*Dialogue of the Savior*

When you pray, enter your hidden chamber and shut the door.

*The Gospel According to Matthew; parallel: Thomas*

When the light within is sheltered from the wind, the yogi who is perfect in concentration realizes the Self. He is then a lamp that does not flicker.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

Even though born in truth, all things will die. But out of death comes Life.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

See Me in all things. Dwell in Me as I dwell in you.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

Shut out the physical world.  
Control the mind.  
Then you will become free.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

If one acts from the purity of the mind, joy will be the result. Joy will follow that person like a shadow.

*The Dhammapada*

In order to eliminate the discriminating mind, there must be a complete "turning around" of one's being at the deepest level of consciousness.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

Eliminate the discriminating mind, so that all that remains is Universal Mind.

*The Lankavatara Sutra*

Meditate deeply.

*The Dhammapada*

Unify spirit and soul and inner harmony will follow.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Achieve the state of a new-born child.  
Clear and purify inner vision.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Bending like a tree in the wind, one becomes whole. When one becomes whole, all things come to a person naturally.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Close the door and shut out the senses.  
Do this and you will never be exhausted.

*The Tao Te Ching*



Become aware of Me within you.  
Focus your attention on Me, that I  
may become manifest in you.

*The [Second] Apocalypse of James*

Find a place of stillness within yourself.

*The Gospel of Thomas*

See Me in yourselves, as you would  
see yourself in water or a mirror.

*Agrapha*

Meditate on Me, for all those who  
seek Me will find Me. Hear Me—  
you who have ears to hear.

*The Thunder: Perfect Mind*

Think on me in the serenity of your heart.  
Control your mind and become fearless.  
Have Me as your supreme goal.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

With a quiet mind, seek  
harmony within yourself.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

See in this body of Mine the existence of the  
whole universe. Be centered in the One.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

Center your heart on Me. Be resolute  
and content. Still the mind, control the  
passions, and you will become dear to Me.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

With earnest meditation, purity of mind, and  
compassionate acts of kindness, you will  
become an island of serenity which even  
the greatest floods cannot sweep away.

*The Dhammapada*

When the subject becomes still,  
objects will cease to be.

*A manual on Zen Buddhism*

All beings long to return to the source of  
their origin, where perfect unity abides.  
There are many ways to accomplish this.

*The Surangama Sutra*

To reach the farthest shore, let go of  
all things. When your mind is free, you  
will travel beyond life and death.

*The Dhammapada*

Wise are they who center their  
hearts on the inner essence of things,  
not on outer appearances.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Recognize the ultimate emptiness  
of things. Steady yourself in stillness  
and achieve inner peace.

*The Tao Te Ching*

See the Essence behind the essence, and  
you will become free of fear and evil.  
Then you will be at peace with yourself.

*The Tao Te Ching*

As I travel on this path of Tao, I  
know of nothing else. This Way  
is straight and smooth, but most  
people choose lesser paths.

*The Tao Te Ching*

He who receives nourishment from Me, will become as I Am. That which is hidden will be revealed.

*The Gospel of Thomas*

You who have waited for Me, receive Me. Do not be ignorant of Me, but take Me into your heart.

*The Thunder: Perfect Mind*

The chosen ones are those who are one within themselves. They will enter the Kingdom.

*The Gospel of Thomas*

Recognize yourself in Me. Recognize Me by my actions. Keep these mysteries in silence.

*The Hymn of Jesus from The Acts of John*

Remember Me at all times, and you will come to Me.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

See Me in all things. Do not become separated from Me. I dwell in all beings.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

Resting serenely in the Self, and with a controlled mind, all desires pass away.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

Focus on Me, take refuge in Me, practice yoga, and you will know Me fully.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

In deep meditation, taste the nectar of the dharma. Become free of sin and fear.

*The Dhammapada*

Some supposed they saw me as form. Others followed my voice. These are useless efforts. No one saw me at all.

*The Diamond Sutra*

Be alone and still within yourselves, Have no selfish desires, and the ego disappears. This is true joy.

*The Dhammapada*

Meditate to control the senses. Do what must be done, and suffering ceases.

*The Dhammapada*

With minds free of thought, serenity is discovered.

*The Tao Te Ching*

The origin of the world is called the Mother. To know the Mother, hold onto the child. Know the child and you will know the Mother. With such understanding you will never die.

*The Tao Te Ching*

While the world is full of wondrous sights, inner peace comes from staying at home.

*The Tao Te Ching*

It is the way of Tao to return to Itself. Its apparent weakness results from its usefulness. All things come from Tao, but Tao comes from nothing.

*The Tao Te Ching*



When you unify both halves of yourself, you will become as you were originally created. Then if you say to the mountain, "move," it will move.

*The Gospel of Thomas; parallels: Matthew and Luke*

Take my yoke upon yourselves, for I am a gentle master. Come to Me and you will find peace.

*The Gospel of Thomas; parallel: Matthew*

I will reveal all things that are hidden from you so that through perfect knowledge you will become one with Me. Reach out and grasp Me.

*The [Second] Apocalypse of James*

He can be found as spokes of a wheel. As the wheel turns, He will reveal himself to you. Therefore, meditate on Him and you will reach the farthest shore which is beyond all darkness.

*The Upanishads*

The yogi who is absorbed in Me will become tranquil of mind. Subdue the senses and become quiet. Let go of thinking.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

Let go of the intellectual mind, and concentrate your mind on Me. Step by step you will attain quietness. Give up thinking.

*The Bhagavad Gita*

If you wish to reach the farthest shore, follow the path of dharma. Crossing over, you will be beyond the reach of death.

*The Dhammapada*

Follow the dharma and receive ultimate bliss. Take refuge in the spiritual life.

*The Anguttara Nikaya Sutra*

Be eager to attain the attainable. Master that which can be mastered. Realize that which can be realized. Then your spiritual work will bear fruit.

*The Samyutta Nikaya Sutra*

To be one with Tao is to reach eternity. To reach eternity is to reach safe haven. To be in a safe haven is to become whole. Then even death ceases to hold power over you.

*The Tao Te Ching*

Fish lose themselves in water. People can lose themselves in Tao.

*Chuang Tzu*

How do I know the world? Its knowledge comes from within.

*The Tao Te Ching*

