The Awakened Ones

PHENOMENOLOGY OF *Visionary* EXPERIENCE

Gananath Obeyesekere

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PREFACE

THE AWAKENED ONES: Phenomenology of Visionary Experience had a very modest beginning. In the first manuscript version of my book *Imagining Karma: Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist, and Greek Rebirth* (2002) I had included a brief account of the Buddha engaged in deep meditation that in effect outlined the "phenomenology" of visions documented in this essay. I subsequently deleted this discussion as irrelevant to the methodological thrust of *Imagining Karma.* However, recognizing its intrinsic importance, I subsequently revised that deleted section and used it as a base for lectures that I delivered at several universities, the most memorable being the William James lecture at the Harvard Divinity School in April 2004 entitled "The Buddhist Meditative Askesis: Probing the Visionary Experience." Over the years I have expanded that early essay beyond all decent bounds, and the result was a hugely overlong work completed in early 2008. During 2009, however, I have reduced it to roughly its present size, still somewhat long, I am afraid.

While *The Awakened Ones* involves a break from my earlier work, some of it continues and develops the theoretical thinking of my two books *Medusa's Hair* and *The Work of Culture,* revising and developing my ideas of deep motivation, the dark-night-of-the-soul experience and the idea of personal symbols that operate simultaneously on the level of both culture and psyche. My thinking on the visionary experience cannot be divorced from dreams that, as I shall demonstrate, entail the absence of the thinking-I or ego. In my discussions of dreams and visions I am deeply indebted to Wendy Doniger's pioneer work, *Dreams, Illusion, and Other Realities.* More immediately relevant is another pioneer work, Jeff Kripal's *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom* that is congruent with mine even though Kripal is primarily interested in contemporary "mystics." This is the place for me to mention two books that were guides to further reading and reflection: the indispensable and encyclopedic *Dream Reader* by Anthony Shafton and Wouter Hanegraaff's *New Age Religion and Western Culture,* the latter introducing me to the

complex world of new age religion. I had to read a huge amount of material on medieval Christian religious ecstasy and here many people have helped me, too many for me to enumerate.

The spirit of William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is present everywhere in the present essay, which I have organized into eight "books," with book 1 in effect a revised version of my William James lecture. That "book" is essential reading because it contains my theoretical thinking on the nature of the visionary experience and the interplay between visionary thought and reason. Thereafter, the reader put off by the length of this work can pick and chose the books or sections that interest her or him. Nevertheless, I think of my book as an *essay* because, like others of the same genre, this work can be read straight through as a long disquisition on ways of knowing that bypass the Cartesian cogito and the associated idea that Reason is the only legitimate access to knowledge.

The reader will notice some stylistic quirks, the gender issue being the most important. I know that it is considered offensive and sexist to use "he" when one should use the phrases "him or her" or "she or he." Some of us get a measure of relief from embarrassment by interspersing "she" and "he" in the body of the text without much rhyme or reason. My solution to this problem is simple. Because I am generally classified as a "male," for no doubt absurd reasons, I will for the most part use "he" as befits my official gender classification. When the context demands I will obviously use "she" and in some instances I will adopt the "she/he" usage when the context is not clear. I think embarrassment will cease if an author uses the personal pronoun appropriate to his or her public gender identity, even though privately he-she might not be sure of it.

In another methodological quirk I convert figures of history into "informants" but not "consultants" as is fashionable in ethnography today. "Consultants" for me has more negative connotations than "informants," having witnessed the work of so many of that species in UN organizations, among NGOs, and in the business community and having on occasion foolishly acted as one myself. My imaginary fieldwork areas are also circumscribed and restricted to the multiple forms of Buddhism and Christianity and those modern-day thinkers influenced by both. To complicate matters, *The Awakened Ones* ranges over long historical time periods and cultural traditions loosely contained in the vast expanses of thought that we label Buddhism or Christianity or for that matter Theosophy or psychoanalysis. Some of these traditions might not be familiar to the Western reader, and some to the Buddhist, but I have tried to render them in as intelligible a form as I can. I have the fantasy that this book will appeal to the intellectually curious, not just those of us in the human sciences. Consequently,

even when I discuss difficult ideas, I try to write clearly, confining to endnotes theoretical details and historical and ethnographic information that might appeal to a more specialized reading public.

Several of my anthropological friends and critics have pointed out that my "informants" are dead and gone and appear only in hagiographical texts whereas in fieldwork one can interview living informants. This is of course true, but the voices of living informants and interpreters have their own limitations and dilemmas that we are now familiar with. I am aware of the difficulties involved in reading autobiographical, hagiographical, and other texts relating to visionaries long dead. I employ them judiciously I hope. I also find that autobiographical statements by female Christian penitents extremely helpful for the examination of "deep motivations" I sometimes engage in here. For example, they could unabashedly speak of their sexual and erotic experiences because their readership would know that such experiences are the work of the devil and not that of the personal motivations of the sufferer. In this sense these texts tell us more about the life of penitents than the life histories many ethnographers gather in the field. I would add that contemporary visionaries such as Patricia Garfield, whose work I discuss in some detail, can open up their sexual experiences for us in their texts for reasons quite different from medieval penitents, namely, the loosening of inhibitions after the sixties in the U.S. followed by the contemporary unabashed openness of eroticism.

Questions of eroticism bring me to a serious lacuna in my essay, and that is my inability to deal with the fascinating instances of the radical transformation of sexuality into the complex soteriological eroticism of Tibetan Buddhism. In earlier drafts of this essay I had a long appendix entitled "Tibetan erotic soteriology" which treated this topic, but I was not satisfied with my effort at dealing with what must surely be one of the most radical forms of sublimation on record. There are detailed scholarly accounts of the Tantric meditation that transforms sexuality into a kind of transcendental eroticism, especially in the movement of the winds and channels in the "subtle body" that is created in the mind of the meditator. And then the equally radical *karma mudra,* or "action seal," in which one has sexual intercourse with a select consort whereby orgasmic bliss is transformed into the bliss that promotes one's salvation quest. My difficulty is a simple one: I couldn't find a single autobiographical account of a monk or any interview with a current salvation seeker using the path of *karma mudra*, except for one study, *Sky Dancer: The Secret Life and Songs of the Lady Yeshe Tsogyel,* but that also, I shall show later, had its limitations. It was extremely difficult for me to extrapolate actual religious eroticism from idealized accounts. Until this lacuna is filled by scholars investigating the lives of current practitioners it is impossible

for me to make any in-depth study of Tibetan soteriological eroticism from the standpoint of deep motivation. I had to drop my long speculative appendix, but the reader will find some suggestions in my discussion of Tibetan Buddhism and in my note 92, book 5, on "the subtle body."

Many of the technical terms in Buddhism might be unfamiliar to nonspecialist Western readers. I have tried to explain them in the body of this work, but the glossary might also provide a kind of guide to the reader, as indeed many of the notes. All unfamiliar technical terms from Indic and Tibetan religions will be italicized with the exception of popular terms like *nirvana* or *karma,* which will appear without diacriticals. Other technical terms might be italicized in the first instance and then converted into roman script. As far as Tibetan Buddhism is concerned, I often use the Sanskrit rather than the Tibetan equivalent, but on occasion I employ both. In relation to Theravāda Buddhism (or Hinayāna, as it is sometimes labeled), I will use both Sanskrit and Pali terms, Pali being the language of its Scriptures. Sometimes the Sanskrit is preferable to the Pali, for example, the term *nirvana* rather than the Pali *nibbāna.*

The reader of this essay will notice an occasional definitional pitfall, terms that might invite confusion, even well-known ones. For example: everyone is familiar with the term *consciousness,* at least as ideas immediately accessible to our minds. However, the equivalent of consciousness is used in Buddhist texts in multiple ways that I mention in the course of this work. Others like William James include such things as *subconscious*, or what Freud would call *unconscious*, within the broad category of consciousness. I do too when I speak of visionary consciousness, overruling the ordinary sense of the term *consciousness* because I find a term like *visionary unconscious* or *visionary unconsciousness* too much of a barbarism. Visions when they first appear to the devotee or penitent in "trance" could emerge from outside consciousness, perhaps the unconscious in the psychoanalytic sense; but they can be recalled into consciousness later on. Another source of confusion might be the words *mystic* and *mysticism* that appear in this text. These words are rarely defined in the literature, with *mysticism* even used in a derogatory sense of "mysticism and nonsense" and a whole range of more positive meanings to designate any form of life that is "intuitive" or outside the realm of Reason and employed to designate such phenomena as séances, spirit possession, trances, states of absorption and that of identity with some spiritual being or cosmic principle and many more usages. This vague language use is peculiarly Western, and as far as I know is not found in Indic languages. There is no way that I can avoid using this term in its vague sense in this essay, especially in relation to Christian penitents, because the scholarly literature endows their experiences with that term. Although I have been somewhat liberal in my use of

mystic and *mystical*, I am more cautious and sparing in my use of the term *mysticism.* The reader should note that all of these terms should appear in invisible quotation marks. However, as this essay progresses I will define *mysticism* in a more rigorous sense, appropriate to the themes I explore here. There are similar usages whose sense the reader will grasp as he proceeds in this book.

My book *Imagining Karma* appeared in 2002. While writing that book I was also working on *Cannibal Talk* (2005) and at the same time fully involved in fieldwork in the somewhat remote southeastern regions of Sri Lanka, a task I am still engaged in. Nevertheless, the subject of this essay continued to haunt me right through, giving me no peace. As with most of us, what stimulated my thinking were the lectures I delivered in various universities in the U.S., Europe, and India. These are too numerous to enumerate here. However, especially memorable were the graduate seminars on this very topic that I conducted in two universities. First, when I was Numata Visiting Professor of Buddhist Studies at the Harvard Divinity School in the fall term of 2005, and, second, as New York City Fellow at the Heyman Center, Columbia University in 2006 during the fall term. I am grateful to the students who participated in these seminars because we all know how much we learn from our students. Additionally, in both universities I gave several lectures on the some of the topics covered in this essay. I am extremely grateful for my friends at Harvard who conspired to have me there and make it so memorable, especially Janet Gyatso, Charlie Hallisey, and Don Swearer and my colleagues in the medical anthropology seminar at Harvard, especially Mary Jo Delviccio Good and Byron Good and the many student participants in that seminar series. At Columbia I thank Akeel Bilgrami and his colleagues at the Heyman Center for inviting me there and Eileen Gilloly for giving me a helping hand when I had to wander into bureaucratic mazes. Sarah H. Jacoby, a fellow fellow at the Heyman Center at that time, generously gave me several chapters of her Ph.D. dissertation on the rare case history of a female Tantric virtuoso, Sera Khandro (1892–1940). Unfortunately, given my interest in "deep motivation," I have not been able to use that wonderful account. During my stint at Columbia I delivered the Franz Boas lecture in the anthropology department on the deep motivation of Christian penitents, which I discuss in more detail in this essay. As always, I am deeply indebted to my friends there who asked provocative questions, in the seminar and outside of it, particularly Val Daniel and Laila Abu-Lughod. Perhaps one of the more memorable events in my long intellectual career was when I was invited to take up the Rajni Kothari Chair at the Center for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi in October 2008, which effectively permitted me to do whatever I wanted in the way of research and writing. The major conspirator who was instrumental in inviting me there is my old friend

T. N. (Loki) Madan. I spent seven months at the center, and my wife Ranjini and I had the pleasure of renewing old friendships and making new ones both in the center and in Delhi itself: Ashis Nandy and Romila Thapar, among the old, and my newer friends Rajeev Bhargava, Shail Mayaram, and many new friends at the University of Delhi and JNU, all *kalyāna mitra*, true friends, a list too long to enumerate. And, of course, Jayasree Jayanthan, Rahul Govind, and the administrative staff at the center. It might well be a feature of the Indian intellectual scene that one could have warm relationships with academic spouses. But then I suspect that this must be due to the presence of my gracious wife who as always helped to push me out of my shell into the social world outside. It was in the inspirational setting of the center that I revised this essay to its near final form.

At Princeton my friends and colleagues in anthropology have been a continuing source of help and encouragement, and, as far as the writing of this essay is concerned, I am grateful to Joao Biehl, John Borneman, Mo Lin Yee, and Carol Zanca. Others who have helped me in my Buddhist and Hindu interests are my friends M. Maithrimurthi at Heidelberg and Heinz Muermel at Leipzig, Richard Gombrich at Oxford, Patrick Olivelle at Texas, Austin, and two scholars of Mahāyāna, Paul Williams and Paul Harrison. As far as my work on Christian penitents is concerned, I have benefited from the advice and help of Cathleen Medwick, Father Kieran Kavanaugh, Allison Weber, Barry Windeatt of Cambridge and Julia Frydman, a Princeton graduate. I must thank Stewart Sutherland for introducing me to Edwin Muir's important autobiography. My nephew Nalin Goonesekere was helpful for my work on the great chemist August Kekulé and for acquainting me with the work of Alan J. Rocke; Alan Rocke himself provided me with much information. The Theosophical Society library in New York was a good resource for me, as was its librarian Michael Gomes. The quotation from *Les Fleurs du mal* is from Roy Campbell, *The Poems of Baudelaire* (New York: Pantheon, 1959), and the long epigraph by Hegel in book 5 is, with minor changes, from Leo Rauch, trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Hackett: Indianapolis, 1988). It is awfully hard nowadays to get an overlong book published, and I want to express my special thanks to Wendy Lochner, editor at Columbia, who not only read the much longer version, but wanted to publish it without too much cutting. I am also grateful to my manuscript editor Susan Pensak for a careful reading of my original text and for having saved me from many egregious blunders. My immediate editor, Christine Mortlock, and Alice Wade, who did considerable detective work in locating the photographs that appear here, deserve my warm thanks. The cost of production was defrayed by two generous grants, from

Princeton University and from the Hershey Family Foundation, and a donation from Ranjini Obeyesekere.

This preface will not complete unless I pay tribute to my dear friend Neelan Tiruchelvam, a Harvard-trained lawyer and human rights activist who, in his own quiet, self-effacing, and yet insistent way, tried to bring about a resolution of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. He was a founder and the spirit behind the International Center for Ethnic Studies, an organization engaged in research on issues of violence, human rights, and national integration. He was killed by one of his own ethnic group, a Tamil suicide bomber, a few days before he was planning to leave for Harvard Law School on a teaching assignment. Neelan represents to me the fate of the dozens of moderate Tamils and Sinhalas who have been systematically mowed down by the LTTE, leaving a nation almost empty of actual or potential leaders and opening up a space for criminal elements to have a say in the politics of governance. In a sense this book is dedicated to both Tamils and Sinhalas who laid their lives for the cause of moderation and the necessity to abdicate violence as a solution to the ills of a nation. Of them I only knew Neelan well. Violence can be an addiction and an infection, and in Sri Lanka it has poisoned the whole nation, such that state terror, human rights violations, and the intolerance of dissident opinions have become a regular feature of our moral landscape. The dread shadow of the long war is everywhere and will continue to smother us, even though, as I write this preface, the signs indicate that the long war will shortly end. Yet I find it troubling to hear some of my friends and relations reiterating the European myth of "just wars." Wars might be necessary, but they are too complicated to be labeled "just," when each side claims that it is their war that is "just." It is the Buddha who has insisted that there are no just wars, even though one can invent reasons for justifying them. Fear of political reprisal is everywhere, and concerned intellectuals sometimes have little choice but to remain silent, particularly if they are afraid for their families. But worse are intellectuals and former left-wing politicians who for gain's sake have abdicated their intellectual integrity and in effect condone violence and human rights abuses. Against this backdrop of omnipresent violence and social and political anomie, Neelan's work, his writing, his example, and his spirit will remain with us. He is one of those rare individuals who in life and in memory would not permit our conscience to go to sleep. May he sleep in peace and may his spirit be with us.

Center for the Study of Developing Societies
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	Boehme, *The Aurora*
AA	Muir, *An Autobiography*
AS	Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self*
BJ	Bair, *Jung*
BGE	Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*
BR	Bentley, *Blake Records*
C	Cranston, *HPB*
CN	Gilman, *Conversations with Nietzsche*
CW	Blake, *Collected Writings*
Dial.	Rhys-Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*
E	Spinoza, *Complete Works*
EM	Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*
Enn.	MacKenna, *The Enneads*
GM	Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*
HA	Bell, *Holy Anorexia*
HTS	Aris, *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives*
HTT	Rinpoche, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*
ID	Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*
L	Teresa, *Book of Her Life*
LT	Julian of Norwich, *Long Text*
M	Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*
MB	Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*
MK	Windeatt, *The Book of Margery Kempe*
MDR	Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*
ODL	Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*
PA	Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*
RB	Jung, *The Red Book*
SE	Freud, *Standard Edition*

SH	Breuer and Freud, *Studies in Hysteria*
SN	Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Saṃyutta Nikāya, The Connected Discourses*
ST	Julian of Norwich, *Short Text*
SV	Samten Karmay, *The Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama*
WAB	Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast*
WIO	Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*
WLD	LaBerge and Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming*

The Awakened Ones

INTRODUCTION

So huge a burden to support
Your courage, Sisyphus, would ask;
Well though my heart attacks its task,
Yet Art is long and Time is short . . .
—Charles Baudelaire, "Ill Luck," *Les Fleurs du mal*

IN THIS INTRODUCTION I want to give the reader a glimpse of what I aim to do in this work and a sense of the epistemological and psychological assumptions that underlie it. My "essay" is enormously long, in the old style, such as that of John Locke's *An Essay on Human Understanding*. And I might say, albeit with a shrug, mine also is a piece of "human understanding," but one that refuses to be tied down to any epistemology of empiricism. The task that I attack here is the "visionary experience," not in its metaphoric sense but literally referring to those who actually see fantastic scenarios appearing before them. The essay's subtitle also puns on G. W. F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), ironically, of course, because unlike Hegel's powerful philosophical and epistemological work, mine is a modest venture where "spirit" is firmly grounded in practice. In that sense my essay contains an oblique critique of Hegel's spirit (*Geist*), his notion of the becoming of spirit with its permeation in varying degrees in man and nature, its movement in world history and its ultimate source in the Absolute or God. Nor is my book concerned with the work of Edmund Husserl, from which much of modern phenomenology from Heidegger to Merleau-Ponty takes its bearings. I find it hard to heed Husserl's advice, "to the things themselves," "things" being phenomena that appear to immediate or direct experience and reflected in, or showing themselves to, consciousness. Given Husserl's primacy of consciousness, his work entails a double reification of the cogito, first in the Cartesian sense of the certainty of the ego and second as a "transcendental ego," ideas that

are simply inapplicable to the subject of visions, dreams, and related phenomena wherein the "ego" in any of these senses simply does not appear. I am much more sympathetic to the later Husserl and his notion of the "life-world" (*Lebenswelt*), which can be related to the much more interesting Wittgensteinian idea of "forms of life." Visions are not the conventional stuff of "phenomenology," but they are the "things" or the phenomena that I am interested in. They also defy the Kantian distinction between phenomenon and noumenon, the former are things that are amenable to description and scientific investigation, and the latter outside of it, but can be reasoned on an a priori basis, as for example the idea of God and the soul or the numinous on the basis of faith and moral necessity. I want to blur such Kantian distinctions. Neither do I want to bracket my own "prejudices"—an impossible task anyway—but rather to employ them creatively. My strategy is to treat such intangibles as visions and dreams as phenomena worthy of investigation and description and unabashedly make general statements ("theorize") about them.

Not unrelated to these prejudices is the larger epistemological investigation that I undertake in this project and that is the critique of Reason and the idea of the certitude of knowledge derived from Reason. These ideas have had a long run in the West, as I demonstrate in this essay. However, I am primarily interested in the specific reification of Reason or rationality that finds its expression in Cartesian thought that had become normative during the early phase of the European Enlightenment, such that the criticisms of Reason in Europe's past seem to have lost their force and their relevance for the generation of knowledge. Criticisms of Reason are also true for the century before Descartes, the prime example being Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), who, as others of his time, was profoundly influenced by the skeptical tradition of the Greek Sextus Empiricus (c. second century CE). That latter work, which doubted the possibility of any kind of true knowledge based on reason, came into prominence in Europe in the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries.[1] It was Descartes (1596–1650) whose work systematically criticized this tradition of skepticism in his famous formula of the cogito: *I think, therefore I am*, namely, that in this sea of methodological doubt true knowledge is possible through the indubitable certitude of the thinking-I, exemplifying Descartes's unshakable faith in the idea that *because I think, I know that I exist*. Yet Descartes has to justify how he can derive the cogito through Reason, that is, how could one deduce the cogito without postulating some other assumption, such as the existence of a first principle or a God who embodies Reason. He resolves this problem by saying that the cogito is apparent through *intuition,* by which he did not mean knowledge arrived at through a process of logical deduction but rather by something that ought to be obvious to everyone, namely, the notion of the

thinking-I.[2] Hence intuitive knowledge of the cogito is not contrary to Reason; it "is the indubitable conception of a clear and attentive mind which proceeds solely from the light of reason."[3] This is what one might call the Cartesian paradox, a paradox that many a rationalist including Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677) had to contend with, namely, that while the philosopher extols the value of Reason, the very basis for Reason lies in intuitive understanding, whether of the cogito in Descartes's sense or of Spinoza's God. Given the centrality of Reason in his work, Descartes had little choice but to link intuitive understanding with Reason, however farfetched such a connection may seem to us.[4] One might even designate the stratagems and ruses whereby intuition is brought within the discourses of a reified Reason as "Reason's cunning," if not the "cunning of Reason."[5]

The certainty of the thinking-I provides a foundation for the reasoning sciences Descartes constructed, which went into the development of Enlightenment science and rationality. But beyond this the Cartesian revolution led to the primacy of consciousness and the certitude of the self, the "I am" of the formula or of an ego distinctively and intrinsically separate from the body. The cogito, as I use it in this essay, is a shorthand way of dealing with two things: first, the critique of Reason as the path to true knowledge and then the critique of the ego/self or thinking itself as a product of a self-conscious I. These two ideas may be separate or conjoined, as in the Cartesian formula, but either way they have had a long run in European thought.

The Enlightenment we know is not a single movement. It had its own ups and downs, but, whether in its early mild or later moderate and radical forms, one thing is clear: the persistence of Reason as the pathway to knowledge, leading to what Peter Gay calls its "rationalistic myopia."[6] I am also not interested in what Descartes *really thought* but rather in the impact of his thought, imagined or not, on later European traditions and the human sciences of our time. Descartes is not the villain of my essay, but someone on whom I invest the mantle of Enlightenment rationality. Jonathan Israel tells us that there was a "collapse" of Cartesian thought owing to the "radical enlightenment," that is, the work of those philosophers following Spinoza who put greater emphasis on scientific and mathematical knowledge and the developing empiricism.[7] I am much more sympathetic to the idea that Spinoza, in spite of his criticism of Descartes, built his thinking on his rival and older contemporary.[8] The philosophers of the Radical Enlightenment might have successfully dismantled Descartes; nevertheless his mantle fell on European thought right down to our own times such that nowadays many of us in the human sciences continue to deal with the split between mind and matter, with scientific rationality, the importance of the cogito, and the reification of the self *as if* Descartes's thought is still with us. We cannot ignore the fact

that Nietzsche, who is a prominent presence in my essay, criticized the cogito at length, as did others who appear here.

In my own self-definition, I consider myself a product of two Enlightenments, the European and the Buddhist. One cannot live *without* Reason and one cannot live *with* it either, at least in its exclusionary Enlightenment or Euro-rational sense. Rationality for me still remains a powerful means of knowing, but I criticize here the closure of our minds to modes of knowledge, especially visionary knowledge, that bypass the cogito. Hence the focus of this essay is on those who brought their visions and intuitive understandings within the frame of rational thinking. Visions *appear* before the dimmed consciousness of the seeker of truth. They are not *thought out* through the operation of Reason and the work of the cogito or the thinking-I. My ideal is the Buddha who discovered the foundations of his epistemology through meditative trance but then reworked these foundational ideas later in more rational and philosophically profound form in his discourses. In others the interplay between what I call the *It* and the *I* may not be all that clear, but, nevertheless, it does occur. For example: I deal with Catherine of Siena and Madame Blavatsky, both of whom claim to have discovered long texts through their dream visions, but vision is soon followed by revision.

The interplay of the two broad forms of knowing is what this book is about. When this interplay does not occur, the consequences could be tragic, as was the case with the Theosophist Damodar Mavalankar, whose sad death I record in some detail. Rarely did the virtuosos described in the following pages live exclusively under the aegis of nonrational knowledge. That would be as dangerous as rational exclusivity, leading the way to a kind of hallucinatory madhouse. Moreover, opening up one's mind to visionary knowledge is an uncommon phenomenon, even among those most receptive to it. But while quantitatively negligible, visionary knowledge is qualitatively significant for visionaries and for those of us who benefit from their insights. Or, for that matter, might even be troubled by them, because we know that absurdities can also emerge from visions, then and now, as much as absurdities can also emerge from rational discourse. Nonsense exists everywhere. And how can we neglect the impact of visionary knowledge on history? In that sense, mine is a restorative undertaking, bringing back forms of knowing that surely existed in elementary form from the time that *homo* became *sapiens*, if not before. One might even say that this work is an insurrection of suppressed knowledge, to use a Foucauldian phrase, in this case visionary knowledge that tends to be suppressed when hyperrationality holds sway over our lives. Unfortunately, Foucault was too much of a child of the European Enlightenment to appreciate the kind of "inner experience" that I document here and that some of his French predecessors like Georges Bataille unabashedly

spoke about, although not quite in the way that I do in this essay. I will also exclude "closet visionaries," found everywhere in the very thick of Enlightenment rationality, who with the right hand consciously believe in reason and with the left consult séances and have visions with new age gurus in the privacy of their homes. They exemplify for me the vulnerability of the Enlightenment project and sadly illustrate my dictum on the dilemma of our modernity with its reification of rationality: one cannot live *without* Reason and one cannot live *with* it either. Closet visionaries have no impact on history and little on the world outside, and they do not engage in the dialectic that I am concerned with here, the interplay between visionary knowledge and rationality, between the "It" and the "I."

The question a critic might raise is this: can the visionary mode of knowledge, so unlike scientific experimentation that we all value, provide us with "truth"? This is not easy to answer, outside the obvious fact that even the history of science is riddled with errors of judgment, half truths, fouled and corrupt experiments, and out-and-out prejudices that have been at sometime or other touted as truth. The history of science contains an often understated history of falsehoods.[9] Philosophical discourse is different because its truths do not depend on verification but rather on intersubjective consensus among intellectual elites whose composition vary with time, place, and history. It is the richness and complexity of philosophical knowledge that attract us as is their relevance for understanding existence or the epistemological bases of science or other issues that stem from within an intellectual tradition. Recently, cross-philosophical knowledge has begun to make its appearance in a world where boundaries are being gradually effaced, but Western philosophical knowledge still dominates the world's intellectual scene. And, when it comes to visionary thought in the West, we are posed with an immediate roadblock owing to the entrenchment of rationality, which discourages it. The European visionaries that I mention here unfortunately constitute at best a minor or neglected philosophical tradition. In Buddhism there is no such problem: profound truths have always been intuitively grasped through visionary and other arational means and then expounded at length through secondary rational reworking. Implicit in this book is a plea to open our minds to forms of intuitive understanding rather than shut the door on them. If that were to happen, Western thought might not only be receptive to the epistemological thinking of Hindu and Buddhist philosophers, but they might also be able to enrich their own philosophical and scientific traditions by opening themselves to the varied forms of visionary and intuitive thinking that appear in this essay.

Let me now briefly state the assumptions that underlie my examination of the forms of life I treat here, such as visions, dream-visions, trances, and what I

have called "aphoristic thinking." Visions arise when consciousness has dimmed, sometimes only for a moment, and in that instant one can experience a visionary "showing" of variable duration, characterized by the absence of the active thinking "I" or the ego of the rational consciousness. Thus dimmed consciousness and the absence of the ego are the minimum assumptions necessary to understand the genesis of showings, hearings, and aphoristic thoughts that are the phenomena or "texts" that I deal with. My strategy is to relate the text to the cultural tradition and the personal life of the experiencer whenever such information is available. While recognizing these minimal requirements, let me nevertheless develop my assumptions further.

In our ordinary lives, in such things as day dreaming, reveries, and daytime imaginings, we simply let our conscious thinking temporarily lapse as we let our minds stray into whatever realms of fantasy and loose thinking animate us. It is these imaginings during conditions of suspended awareness that led to the modern fictional "stream of consciousness" device. That is, even during the daytime we often drop ego-thinking and enter into a mental realm where visual fantasies and straying thoughts ("reveries") are given free range. These reveries rarely have an organizing plot. My own reveries are often association based, one association leading to another and on and on, such that my last set of reveries seem to have no connection with the initial instigating thought. Hence reveries are often enough disorganized, sporadic or vague; at other times they are more or less "coherent." Visualizations that occur when we shut our eyes during reveries can be shaken off anytime we want, or they simply disappear the moment our attention span is over.

There are other features of our daytime fantasies that are different from visions and dreams. They are rarely translated into something I *see* out there before me, as I would with visions and related phenomena. The processes whereby daytime fantasies are transformed into a *showing* or an *appearance* that emerges before us does occur occasionally, as the case of Emanuel Swedenborg demonstrates. He believed that the visionary might see apparitions "in a state of wakefulness as clearly as in daylight, but with closed eyes."[10]

In my thinking it is a mistake to assume that dreaming can be fully isolated from daytime reveries. The externalization and "pictorialization" of thoughts distinguish night dreams from daytime reveries, but it is likely that reveries continue to intervene at the interstices between dreams and influence the content of dreams. This means that "night residues" might be as significant, or perhaps more so, than day residues in dream formation. In reverie, as with the dream, the thinking "I" or ego does not appear, and it is as if my thoughts and fantasies seem to float in and around my mind without my conscious awareness. However, when

consciousness is fully blocked out as at night, or when one is temporarily "out," pictorialization of thoughts appears with great clarity and with it a mode of experience different from reverie. These questions need further investigation, but one can, I think, affirm that our minds at night are rarely, if ever, a blank slate, even when consciousness has lapsed.

Daytime fantasies have yet another feature: for the most part they are treated by us as nothing but fantasies or imaginings and do not possess any truth value. Whereas the truth of what one sees is the salient characteristic of visions, dream-visions, and also of psychotic hallucinations, at least from the point of view of the sick person. With the suspension of the thinking-I and the dimming of consciousness, there occurs in such states a form of "thinking" that I label *passive cerebration* or *passive cognition* or, following John of the Cross, the work of the *passive intellect.* In this essay I will use these terms interchangeably. These terms imply that the unconscious *thinks,* but in a special way. Over a hundred years ago William James noted the passive nature of the mystical consciousness. "Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, as by fixing the attention, or going through certain bodily performances, or in other ways which manuals of mysticism prescribe; yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness has once set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped by superior powers."[11] James's "mystics" and my vision seekers overlap, but my focus is primarily on those who experience "visions" whether or not these visions lead to a so-called mystical state.

My term *passive cerebration* opens the way for a futuristic neurology that can link the phenomenology of visions with the workings of the brain without reducing the one to the other, something that Emile Durkheim noted ages ago when, arguing against the neurologists of his time, he insisted that individual and cultural representations cannot be reduced to the workings of the brain cells.[12] Given this prejudice of mine, I couldn't disagree with Francis Crick more when he presents us with an astonishingly naive hypothesis in the very first sentence of his book *The Astonishing Hypothesis*: "The Astonishing Hypothesis that 'You,' your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. As Lewis Carroll's Alice might have phrased it: 'You're nothing but a pack of neurons.'"[13]

Unfortunately, at the other end, there are ethnographers and practitioners of the human sciences who adopt an equally obtuse stance when they deny the neurobiological roots of our being and their relevance for the phenomenological understanding of cultural forms or collective representations. For me an

important study that attempts to bridge the gap between neurological science and a phenomenology such as mine is that of Mark Sohms and his colleagues on "neuro-psychoanalysis." Sohms, however, relies too much on Freud's second topography, the simplistic neo-Cartesian id-ego-superego model that I criticize in this essay and elsewhere in my writing.[14] And Antonio Damasio, a highly literate neurologist and stylist, whose work I greatly admire, is critical of the so-called Cartesian split between mind and matter, which to him is also a split between reason and emotion. Emotion is often tied to reasoning, and the interplay of both have to be understood in terms of the work of the brain, such that the classical distinction between mind and brain can be overcome without reducing the mental processes solely to the operation of neurological structures. This is true and can be reconciled with our phenomenological understandings, which show time and again the investment of emotion on Reason and the other way around (sometimes leading to ideological fanaticism and cruelty, exemplified in secular and religious political *isms*).[15] I deal with the larger issue of the Cartesian split between mind and matter, between *res cogitans* and *res extensa,* briefly in relation to thinkers like Boehme, Blake, and Jung. Many contemporary thinkers have tried to close this gap, among them, once again, Davasio in his recent book, *Looking for Spinoza*.[16] From the point of view of this essay, I have recently become interested in quantum physicists who have attempted to bridge the division between mind and matter by postulating another order of reality underlying the physical world as developed in relativity theory and quantum mechanics. They have paved a way to bring older notions of the Absolute back into the world picture. I do not have the expertise to deal with them at length but shall hesitantly bring into this essay the work of David Bohm, a physicist cum metaphysician and a major exponent of an "implicate order" that enfolds the "explicate order" of contemporary physics.

How do I connect the phenomenon of dreams with passive cerebral activity? It is in the process of dreaming, rather than in the dream itself, that one can infer its operation. When consciousness has been suspended in dreaming, the work of the passive intellect takes over, but, unlike daytime fantasizing and reverie, passive thinking in dreams is pictorialized or represented in images with varied levels of organization, from chaos to coherence. One can even say, following Jacob Boehme, that coherence is created out of chaos. I cannot speak of the neurology of pictorialization except to affirm that pictures appear as if they were projected outside the dreaming person. Hence my notion of the process of dreaming: the passive intellect produces the dream; the dream appears in the sleeping mind of the dreamer; it is perceived as true during the period of dreaming; the dreamer awakes and passive celebration ceases, and he might say, "this is just a dream."

On recollecting the dream, there inevitably occurs what Freud calls "secondary revision," a cognitive process that transforms the dream-as-dreamt to the dream-as-recalled, in which case the dreamer might say that the dream is plain nonsense or that it has *meaning.* After some delay, the dreamer or his amanuensis might give a further interpretation of the dream wherein secondary revision might develop into *secondary elaboration,* a much more thought-out process.[17] The emergent cognitive knowledge of the dream might affect our fantasy lives and influence further dreaming; it could influence culture if the dream has symbolic or parabolic or prognosticative value or if the dreamer is a spiritually sensitive and important person like a shaman; in which case the dream becomes a dream vision, an oneiromantic experience believed to be true. If the dream vision gets talked about, then the level of participation in the meaning of the dream expands to include others. This means that dream visions are inevitably affected by the culture and in turn might further affect the culture, perhaps even changing it. A dream *stricto sensu* never repeats itself because, I will show in this essay, dreams are characterized by a radical relativism such that no two dreams are fully alike.

It was a methodological error in early dream theorizing that dreams occur during rapid eye movements (REM) when the subject is asleep. We now know that dreaming occurs both during REM periods and non-REM periods, which render these two distinctions somewhat fuzzy. From my point of view, passive cerebration, which includes reverie, occurs throughout the night but might develop differently and perhaps at a much faster rate or with more pictorial clarity, elaboration, and tapping richer memories during REM periods when the body is "paralyzed" (muscle atonia) as sometimes occurs in the case of visionaries also. When we focus on the passive intellect rather than on one of its specific products, we can bring visions that often occur during the day into our analysis as well.

Thus, while I believe that these special thought processes occur outside the thinking-I or ego, I do not have a verifiable or falsifiable *theory* of such thinking, except for the *phenomenological inferences* I make based on case studies and the intuitive understanding of my own dreams. In European language games the term *passive* has negative connotations, itself a product of the idealization of the active thinking ego or "I." There is little I can do to remedy this prejudice. I will admit that the demonstration of "passive cerebration" must await developments in the neurological sciences. Unfortunately, most neurologists operate with implicit or explicit Cartesian or neo-Kantian models that emphasize the primacy of the ego and rational thought even though they should know that most of us, including scientists, hardly employ rationality in conducting our everyday lives. Life would be incomplete and deadly boring if we were to do so. And because the

major part of our ordinary lives are given to day and night dreaming, reverie, fantasizing, and letting our visualizing minds wander, we can confidently assert that most of our thought processes occur outside the domain of rationality or a reified reason.

This essay is against the trend in much of ethnographic writing where the emphasis is on a detailed and specific study of a single society or culture rather than the comparative sweep that I embrace here, focusing on two traditions I know best, the Buddhist and the European, thereby transcending cultural and historical periods. I make no apologies for this stance. I studied anthropology at a time when comparative studies and large theoretical issues were popular, if not normative. These were the sort of issues that animated the work of the great social thinkers: Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Durkheim, Weber, and Lévi-Strauss. Unhappily they have mostly gone out of fashion, swept away by poststructuralist and postmodern discourse. I am not immune to such thinking, but for me deconstruction without the restoration of meaning is an empty enterprise. I find the effect of postmodern discourse on much of contemporary scholarship baneful when it resorts to convoluted prose, often difficult and sometimes impossible to unscramble. Worse: the pall of such discourse has cast its long shadow over the minds of younger scholars. I will confess that I am rather tired of that sort of writing and I abjure it. And I will shamelessly admit that I can learn more about "spirit" from the visionaries in my essay than from Jacques Derrida's critique of Heidegger in *Of Spirit*.[18] At the same time I don't want to deride Derrida and my Derridean friends because of genuine insights that I, for one, have benefited from. Without closing my mind to poststructuralist insights, I want to return to the issues of life and existence that fired the imaginations of the great social thinkers I have mentioned. If Nietzsche is a kind of avatar of our postmodernity, as many think, he was also someone who dealt with such issues as Dionysian and Apollonian modes of thought, the origins of guilt, the critique of the Cartesian cogito, and many a problem of existential meaning and significance. In my view, he is closer to Weber and Freud than he is to Derrida and Foucault or, for that matter, Heidegger, even though the last three have, in their different ways, appropriated Nietzsche as part of their own varying charter myths.[19]

In spite of the reservations I have about contemporary writing in the human sciences, I remain an ethnographer in the sense that I place considerable emphasis on case studies of individual virtuosos, however imperfect the historical record. Wherever possible, I examine intensively the lives and visions of these special individuals because they illustrate my theoretical thinking. Consequently, there are large gaps in my narrative simply because it is not meant to illustrate historical continuity. These gaps I fill with three "hinge discourses" (in the ordi-

nary sense of "hinge" and not to be confused with "hinge propositions" à la Wittgenstein). Hinge discourses fill some but not all lacunae in this essay, and they are not meant to be exhaustive. For example, I have a hinge discourse entitled "The Movement Toward Mahāyāna and the Rise of Theistic Mysticism." The discussion there might seem shallow to Buddhist scholars of Mahāyāna, but I think it necessary for my readership and for my own self-understanding. So is it with the other hinge discourses.

My choices of visionary thinkers developed as the argument in the book progressed, sometimes serendipitously. For example, I had not planned to include Blake, Jung, or lucid dreamers in this essay. They appeared before me as my reading progressed. Take the case of William Blake. I knew and loved Blake, but mostly from my reading of the *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* and other poems written in conventional stanza form, until one day at dinner at a friend's house in Colombo, while discussing my hypotheses on visions, Michael Ondaatje asked me: What about Blake? And soon Blake the visionary, and his crazy prophetic books and surreal paintings, had me hooked! Blake walked into my book somewhat late in the day, and I am sure I've missed much of what has been written about him recently. In my earlier writing I had been somewhat short on Jung, even though I had read a fair amount of his work. But one day, on a Manhattan sidewalk, I picked up a copy of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, and there I suffered a conversion! I cannot escape the fact that given my ignorance of the vast critical and exegetical writing on figures like Blake, Blavatsky, and Jung, I might have on occasion been reinventing the wheel. I hope, however, that the point of view I adopt is sufficiently original, such that my trespass on the ideas of others is minimal and unintended. And may such trespasses be forgiven.

Moreover, owing to the huge information overload on the topics I deal with here, my reading has been extremely selective. Friends have asked me why I neglected Hindu visionaries, why I ignore Sufis, and so on and on. I have a simple response: constraints of length compel me to restrict my reading and focus on thinkers that interest me—and a not-so-simple sense of urgency, as time and the hour keep running inexorably toward my own short day. As a result of these constraints, my essay might seem a bit lopsided, without a proper balancing of beginning, middle, and end. Yet what holds the work together is a thematic unity. Alongside my central concern with visionary knowledge, I also deal with an important life experience of the "awakened ones," those religious virtuosos who have emerged from some deep spiritual crisis, a dark-night-of-the-soul type of experience, seen as a kind of death followed by a symbolic rebirth or awakening. Often enough the dark night is associated with a "trance illness." And everywhere in this essay I explicitly or implicitly share with the reader my personal existen-

tial preoccupation with problems of death, decay, and human finitude. Hence this essay can be read as a meditation on death, a preoccupation that also concerns the visionaries inhabiting these pages. These concerns pile up as my essay moves toward its end. The epigraphs found scattered in the body of this essay also mirror them, as indeed the quotations from some of my favorite poets, which have been, partially or wholly, stuck in my memory: Yeats, Hopkins, Blake, Marvell, Baudelaire, Eliot, Herbert, Shakespeare, and Donne and many more. Being a poetry fanatic, I take all sorts of liberties with them, echoing them oft-times without citation when they appear in the middle of my thoughts! Their spirit and the spirit of the many Buddhist thinkers appearing here will, I hope, light up these pages and also lighten the burden of an overlong and occasionally difficult text.

Let me now return to the term *spirit*. My readership will note that I use the terms *spirit* and *spiritual* quite unabashedly, a usage that some of my anthropological colleagues might find disconcerting because these terms, in popular discourse at least, are used to designate whole civilizations, as, for example, the cliché that India is a spiritual civilization whereas the West is materialistic. It is true that the term *spirit* and its derivatives come mostly from the Christian tradition, but then many of the terms and concepts we employ in the human sciences come from Western discourse anyway. As for *spirit*, it is not difficult to find its representatives in virtually every religion. Many of us use these terms metaphorically in such statements as "when the spirit moves me." That metaphor contains a truth that I explore in this work, especially in my notion of "secular spirituality." I deliberately ignore the debasement of spirituality in the global market place such that nirvana becomes a hedonistic paradise and known to many as a designation for an Indian restaurant in Manhattan, Bali, London, New Orleans, Geneva, Beverly Hills, and in the cosmopolitan Everywhere.

In general, the term *spirit* and its derivatives are difficult to define except ostensively, that is, to point out the thread that connects *spirit* with related ideas expressing continuity of life after death or an essence underlying existence: soul, spirit entity, mana, Self, "ghost," or the Vedic "breath of life" (*prāna vāyu*) or the Buddhist rebirth-linking-consciousness or the Christian or Hegelian notions of Spirit and their many antecedents, derivatives, and so on and on. I explore the manner in which they come into being. Divinities, one may add, are beings endowed with some animating force or "spirit" that gives them special powers of creativity, destruction, and the propensity to ameliorate human suffering. In Buddhist and Hindu thought, a statue of a deity is "dead" unless ritual techniques infuse it with spirit, generally through the fixing of the "eyes" on the statue. For me, spirit, self, soul, and so forth—even "no-self"—are human inventions designed to deal with problems of life, death, and existence in general.

Once rooted in the imagination of a people or culture, ideas like these take on a life of their own, such that some believe the self or soul actually exists within us and others do not, yet others such as Buddhists believe that they are at best changing phenomena without any stability or ontological reality. Whether these multiple manifestations of spirit prove or disprove the existence of Spirit is simply outside the purview of this essay.

Nevertheless, one cannot escape the debate that goes on everywhere in contemporary societies on the death of God, using that phrase broadly to refer to the decline of religious beliefs in a hereafter. The more scientists and philosophers assert the demise of such beliefs, or their irrelevance or delusional nature, the more vehement is the denial of the believer. This then brings atheist philosophers to further vindicate their positions, leading to a futile incremental dialectic with believers that can go on forever unless a bored or exasperated readership or audience puts an end to it. Spirit, in the sense I have defined it, cannot be proved or disproved on the basis of our contemporary scientific knowledge, quite unlike creation myths, traditional cosmological theories, or other culturally specific beliefs like sorcery or witchcraft. Moreover, even the most seemingly convincing evidence for the falsity or falsification of religious beliefs will not make the slightest dent on those who believe. They can only convince those who are already inclined to disbelieve. (See the following endnote for my discussion of the "god delusion.")[20] I would add that much of what anthropologists have labeled "culture," those webs of meaning that human beings construct to make sense of the worlds in which they live, are constituted of false beliefs, at least from the viewpoint of modern scientific knowledge. And where are the truths of yesteryear? The political and economic beliefs once fanatically held by progressive intellectuals are today's falsehoods. And today's truths? Most of what we write is, after all, writ on sand.

Consider a powerful cultural relativist position on the death of God in a literal sense. I would say that every single historical religion subscribing to a doctrine of salvation, now or in the past, will assert the following proposition: that their belief system is universally valid and carries with it the imprimatur of absolute truth. These two features—the universalism of belief and of absolute truth—mean that no two religions can be equally true and, furthermore, implies that among the hundreds of salvation religions of past and present only one could possibly be true. But that is surely a slim probability. This situation is further compounded when we consider the complex institutional frameworks of religions: churches, temples, popes and prelates, fraternities, courts, monks and nuns, priests, shamans and sorcerers, gurus, confessionals, and so on that conspire to make "truth" even more questionable. And then there is the remark-

able issue raised by Baruch Spinoza in 1670: that even within a single religious tradition there are styles, forms of imagination, and variations in intellect and personality from one type of religious practitioner to another that make the certainty of religious knowledge even more problematic.[21] Although "problematic," the human imagination cannot be reined in or circumscribed, as we will demonstrate in this essay. And then there are religious innovators for whom these seeming "falsifications" of belief are themselves illusory, based on a version of the excluded middle. What about the gray areas, the favorite space for many nowadays? It is in this gray area that another kind of logic has to be discovered, and it is here that the "physics metaphysicians" try to carve out a domain of "mind" that refuses to accept the conventional formula of the opposition and separateness of mind and matter. Such thinkers are pioneers, but not the prophets of a new epistemology, and we have to seriously interrogate them, even if we disagree with them.

Most human beings will continue to believe or not to believe without bothering about such arguments, because ultimately the death of belief means that human death poses finality, a point of no return, something many would not want to accept. But the issue of the god delusion or illusion can scarcely be avoided for sensitive people living in today's world. One position is almost inevitable, given our knowledge explosion. And that is the gray area I spoke of earlier. At one time it was in these areas that new religions emerged, such as forms of Buddhism and Christianity or Sufi Islam. One can dip into that area and invent new forms of the religious life, often of a tentative and nonauthoritarian sort. The most powerful among these is the "perennial philosophy" first formulated in 1540 by Agostino Steuco in *De perenni Philosophia* and then by Leibniz, who used the term to designate the truths that underlie all religions.[22] It emerges in some form or other in later invented religions, especially Theosophy. It is given a modernist slant by Aldous Huxley in an anthology of writings from the world's great mystical virtuosos to justify the idea that "the divine Ground of all existence is a spiritual Absolute, ineffable in terms of discursive thought, but (in certain circumstances) susceptible of being directly experienced and realized by the human being."[23] The combination of the idea of an Absolute reachable through mystical apprehension is employed most prominently by new age religions and by intellectuals who might fall shy of embracing any form of religion, old or new age.

I know of colleagues in anthropology who are contemptuous of new age religion, even though they sympathize with invented forms of religious life among "native" populations that are much less interesting than new age inventions. Some of my nonacademic friends, whether Buddhist, Christian, or Hindu, might

subscribe to an individually refined version of perennial philosophy; or a form of mystical religiosity; or a modified version of God as a principle underlying the cosmos or nature; or an ultimate reality posited by such thinkers as Spinoza, Einstein, Ananda Coomaraswamy, and many others, some of whom will appear in this work. One of my best friends, having heard of my project, told me, "I hope that your book will demonstrate the existence of metaphysical truths." Because I am incapable of such an enterprise, I must now make my shamefaced admission: my problem with European philosophers is that even when they affirm the primacy of human experience, as Hegel did, the reality is different, because for most of them human experience is founded on taken-for-granted metaphysical abstractions. To borrow a Plotinian kind of phrase: metaphysics is experience's prior. For my part, I cannot think *metaphysically* without first thinking *physically*, that is, grounding my thinking in the actual lives of human beings whose experiences are conditioned by their cultural traditions and the other way around.[24] Hence my sympathy for the visionaries who appear in this essay, almost all of them who think physically—by which I also mean psychically—prior to thinking metaphysically. Visions are metaphysics' prior.

However, I believe that it is ethically wrong for the scholar to denigrate the religious beliefs of people by denying the existence of god or spiritual beings or some other views of the afterlife such as rebirth and karma on the basis of empirical or scientific evidence. Or: attempt to prove the reality of metaphysical truths through science or pseudo-science. Science itself is so much open to debate, especially the problematic of verification or falsification and what I think is the very basis of "scientific truth," that is, its lack of finality. Scientific and scholarly truths are always in the making, and there lies their attractiveness for many of us. This is, of course, not to condone cruelty, injustice, and intolerance endemic to our own times whether they appear in a religious or in a secular nationalistic or patriotic mask or in any other guise. Sensitive believers and nonbelievers in our own day have condemned such practices.

Writing this final version while hovering between the U.S. and Sri Lanka and India, I am confronted with another dilemma. Buddhist and Hindu schoolchildren have few problems with Darwinism, and I think this is true of most Christians, some of whom will compartmentalize Darwinism and their Christian faith or reconcile them at some rational or fuzzy epistemological level. But in the United States I am confronted in the print media of evangelicals who steadfastly believe in the literal interpretation of Genesis. From my perspective, I am saddened by the thought that evangelical youth will find it hard to enter graduate school in the sciences and, for the most part, will continue to be steeped in

poverty, not just economic but intellectual. Just as one can blame scientists for their attempts to disprove God, one can blame religious fundamentalists of all varieties for their willing discounting of science. But, as Gregory Bateson says, fighting the fundamentalists with the tools of science can lead us "into an empty headedness analogous to theirs."[25] These issues are to me inextricably tied to serious ethical, and even political, dilemmas for which there are no easy answers, least of all by denying the existence or nonexistence of spirit or Spirit in the name of another truth. As one believer in an *almost* traditional Catholic faith put it as he edged his way toward death:

> If there is no God,
> Not everything is permitted to man.
> He is still his brother's keeper
> And he is not permitted to sadden his brother
> By saying there is no God.[26]

The voice of the poet prompts me to deal with my own prejudices or preconceptions. Readers might note that a certain Buddhist "prejudice" animates my thinking. I was born and raised as a Buddhist, and this, in conjunction with my reading and experience of existence, has given my worldview a Buddhist slant. As Hans Georg Gadamer is at pains to say, no thinker can fully escape prejudice, but prejudice could be put to creative use.[27] In addition to being a Buddhist, I was also born and raised in the twilight of British colonialism and I believe my socialization and nurture and historical experience has given me creative insights wherever colonialism occurs. But the good side of prejudice coexists with blind spots, often terrible ones—areas that Gadamer underplayed. In my thinking, the terrible ones occur when a thinker appropriates another culture or worldview uncritically or unknowingly into his own biased world picture. Method then becomes a tool that covers up truth. I can only hope that my creative Buddhist prejudices take precedence over my prejudicial blind spots!

I have no answers in this work to the "existence of metaphysical truths," but I will confess that although I analytically dissect the visions and the voices of the virtuosos who appear in this work I am also sympathetic to what they stand for. I refuse to consider their voices and visionary experiences as pathological, abnormal, or paranormal. Normality to me is no ideal. In addition to recovering modes of thought gone out of vogue with the advent of Enlightenment rationality, I am very much interested in a few atheists and agnostics and those who do not believe in any kind of orthodox religiosity but give expression to some form of "secular spirituality" as Nietzsche and I think Spinoza, Jung, and Einstein did.

Theirs was the "heresy of the free spirit," and we can reinvent and then transfer that term, as Nietzsche did, from medieval heresy to our troubled modernity. In addition to these heretics are many more who can also believe in the spirit, at least in a metaphorical sense wherein we open up our minds to our dreams or dream visions and to aphoristic thinking, as I demonstrate in my discussion of Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Jung, and Freud. But, beyond that, I must confess that I am naive enough to believe in the validity of some of the sensory gifts that visionaries possess. Others I am skeptical about, and some, I think, are spurious; yet of others I simply refrain from making judgment. Examples abound in the body of my essay, but for now let me point to an interesting episode from the life of William Blake that illustrates visionary hypersensitivity.

One day in September 1825 Samuel Palmer persuaded Blake and Mr. Edward Calvert and Mrs. Calvert to his grandfather's house in Shoreham, Kent. And then:

> The following evening William Blake was occupied at the table in the large room, or kitchen. Old Palmer was smoking his long pipe in the recess, and Calvert, as was his custom, sat with his back to the candles reading. Young Samuel Palmer had taken his departure more than an hour before for some engagement in London, this time in the coach. Presently Blake, putting his hand to his forehead, said quietly: "Palmer is coming; he is walking up the road." "Oh, Mr. Blake, he's gone to London; we saw him off in the coach." Then, after a while, "He is coming through the wicket—there!"—pointing to the closed door. And surely, in another minute, Samuel Palmer raised the latch and came in amongst them. It so turned out that the coach had broken down near to the gate of Lullingstone Park.[28]

Friends and colleagues who know of my interest in the visionary experience sometimes ask me whether I have experienced visions myself. Unfortunately, I have not been blessed with the profound visions of the informants that I record at length here. I personally believe in what I call aphoristic thinking, that is, ideas that occur when conscious thinking has been temporarily suspended. But of true visions, where one *sees* things, I have unfortunately not been gifted with. And yet, and yet: many years ago, when I was visiting a relation of mine who was the Sri Lankan ambassador in New Delhi, I was standing in his spacious garden under the shade of a large tree in which vultures were weirdly hanging. Suddenly I was transported to what I felt was Old Delhi, a place I had not visited previously, and yet everything I saw seemed very familiar: the Indian houses, lines of small shops, children, and cows. Because my vision or waking dream seemed "weird," I dismissed it simply as a case of déjà vu or neurons playing neurotic games. But now, as I write this introduction, it seems to me I was out only a few seconds and

that I was in Old Delhi or the illusory place that, at the moment of the vision, seemed Old Delhi. After that brief moment, perhaps even a split second, I was back in the garden with the vultures weirdly hanging or flying overhead. What most affected me, however, was not so much the vision of Old Delhi but the vivid reality of the vultures that preceded or somehow provoked the "vision" and immediately reminded me of those black crows, harbingers of death, flying over the wheatfield in the convoluted strokes of Van Gogh's brush, one of his last paintings before he shot himself. The Delhi vultures reappeared in spectral form in a dream much later, and I use that dream to end my essay in the section entitled, "Envoi—Intimations of Mortality: The Ethnographer's Dream and the Return of the Vultures"

0.1 Vincent van Gogh, *Wheatfield with Crows* (1890). *Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam*

Book 1

THE VISIONARY EXPERIENCE

Theoretical Understandings

THE AWAKENED BUDDHA AND THE BUDDHIST AWAKENING

> O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall,
> Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
> May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
> Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
> Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
> Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.
> —Gerard Manley Hopkins, "No Worst There Is None"

I HOPE MY READER will not be too surprised if I begin my discussion of the Buddha's spiritual awakening with an epigraph from a late-nineteenth-century Jesuit poet and priest. Here as elsewhere in this essay I blur the distinction between religions insofar as the visionary experience is concerned. Gerard Manley Hopkins, in his "terrible sonnets," powerfully evoked the dark night of the soul and the unfathomed depths of the mind that, even as he was writing, were being formulated by his scientific contemporaries, especially in Paris, as the "subconscious," in the more prosaic language of the psychological sciences of their time. Although products of different discourses, the rich metaphoric language of the poet and the scientific discourse of French psychologists like Jean Charcot and Pierre Janet dealt with those depths that lie outside our normal waking consciousness. A few years after Hopkins's death, William James gave expression to similar notions in his classic work *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in the chapter on "Mysticism." "One conclusion was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted

from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. . . . No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded."[1] James was far too much of a rationalist to be able to get into a mystical trance state himself, but he did try to approximate that condition by experimenting with drugs, in his case with nitrous oxide (a noxious substance, though perhaps not as bad as ether, which he also recommended for this purpose). James believed, in this pre-LSD and pre-peyote era, that sometimes chloroform or even a large dose of alcohol would also suffice. Although an artificially induced state, his experiences did, he says, "converge towards a kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some metaphysical significance" and even a "genuine revelation." In that induced mystical experience the opposites of the world are reconciled. He admits this is a "dark saying," but adds, "I cannot wholly escape from its authority."[2] James was certainly aware that, whatever the religious tradition concerned, "mystical" experiences are often carefully cultivated and controlled and must therefore of necessity be qualitatively different from drug-induced hypnomantic states.[3]

Although in this essay I follow the footsteps of the master, I must confess that I have not experimented with hallucinogens; even a rare overdose of alcohol has not given me the kind of mystical insight that James was blessed with. Moreover, James was only peripherally acquainted with Buddhism, whereas I come from a Buddhist background and, alongside my sympathy for both James and Buddhist thought, I also possess an intellectual affinity with thinkers like Nietzsche and Freud who broke the barriers that separate our normal consciousness from other forms of consciousness (the subconscious for James and the unconscious for Freud). In this essay I will tentatively open up to critical reflection a specific variety of the so-called mystical experience that James dealt with more systematically.

Anthropology, the discipline I represent, has dealt extensively with alien "modes of thought" and made detailed sociological analyses of spirit possession, shamanic trances, and related states, but rarely as vehicles for ideas to germinate and emerge as modes of thinking. James believed that the pathologies from which mystics suffer did not disqualify their religious experience. Yet some modern studies have implicitly and or explicitly tended to pathologize trance and visionary states, and this is also true of such labels as "altered states of consciousness" or "out-of-body experiences" or the "paranormal." The moment you speak of altered states of consciousness you treat consciousness as the primary and indubitable desideratum and such things as trance, meditation, rapture, visionary experiences, and so forth are deviations of some sort from a norm of consciousness. So is it with the term *paranormal.* I would ask, are dreams *paranormal?*

Similarly with the body, which, in the West, is again a fixed point, an indubitable reality, and out-of-body experiences have implicit pathological connotations. That "indubitable reality" is something that virtually every dreamer and visionary in this book has explicitly or implicitly questioned. While there are multiple forms of trance in the cross-cultural record, every society outside the European Enlightenment held that, except for spirit attack, forms of trance were desirable experiences, even though difficult to achieve. It was almost everywhere believed that, while spurious trances did occur, genuine trances provided access to knowledge outside our rational cognitive faculties that operate during our waking consciousness. I want to begin this essay with a sympathetic phenomenological understanding of Buddhist meditative trance, a form of life that has lost its popularity in the West but nevertheless continues to exist in many contemporary societies, as it did in Europe's past, and its hidden present, and in the rest of the world as one of the most powerful ways of generating knowledge or "truth," which William James also clearly recognized.[4]

It was therefore not through William James that I initially came to understand trance but from my study of the Buddha's own "enlightenment," the process whereby he realized the soteriological goal of nirvana while yet living in the world. The term *Buddha* nowadays means one who is enlightened. And in both popular and Indological discourse the derivative term *Enlightenment* refers to the Buddha's spiritual experience as he lay seated under the "bodhi tree," the tree of enlightenment, in deep meditation. Though the term *Enlightenment* has come to mean the Buddha's own transformative spiritual ascesis, there are those who prefer the terms *awakened* and *awakening*—which to me is the better translation of the Pali word *bodhi* from which the word *Buddha* is derived. My guess is that late-nineteenth-century translators imagined Theravāda Buddhism not only as the original pristine Buddhism but also one that was consonant with the spirit of modernity and science, namely, rationality or Reason. I leave scholars better qualified than I am to explore the manner in which the European Enlightenment became fused with the Buddhist, but in this essay I will use the term *awakening* rather than the more popular term *enlightenment.*[5]

If, as I said, *bodhi* means awakening, one might ask: from what state did the Buddha awaken? To anticipate my later argument, the Buddha awoke from a physical and spiritual death into a new life very much in the way of an initiation ritual, imitating, in his own inimitable way, the lives of other heroes of myth. In order to understand this view of the Buddha's spiritual experience, one must take the Buddhist mythos seriously rather than relegate it to secondary importance, the strategy of many Indologists as well as that of contemporary intellectuals in Buddhist nations.

European scholarship, influenced by its own Enlightenment, has tried to read a history behind the myth of the Buddha, his birth, life, dispensation, and death. While this is an admirable exercise, the Buddha is nothing if not a figure of the imagination for Buddhists through the many centuries. The imagined Buddha is not all that different from other mythic beings who, in popular thought, lived and walked the world. Thus the Buddha was conceived in a miraculous manner when his mother Māyā was observing the precept on sexual abstinence. She could see him as a crystal in her womb. He emerged unsullied by blood, mucus, and other birth impurities. When he was born he took seven steps and then rose in the air and surveyed the eight quarters of the world, the locus of his universal and transcendental teaching. His mother Māyā (significantly meaning "illusion") died when he was seven days old because, as some texts put it, it was inconceivable for the pure womb of the Buddha's mother to be sullied by sexual and childbirth impurity. The Buddha's mother's sister and his father's cowife brought him up: she is Mahāprajāpati Gotamī, named after the Creator of Hindu mythology, perhaps because she was the creator of Gotama (Sanskrit, Gautama), the Buddha. The name of the father also takes on mythic significance: he is Suddhodana, *odana* meaning "pure boiled (milk) rice," which in the Indic context has considerable fertility significance, either as a ritual food (milk-rice) or, according to some Vedic texts, "as a substitute for the male seed."[6] If the latter interpretation holds, then Suddhodana is endowed with a pure and rich substance or perhaps even a pure seed.[7]

When the Buddha was born, sages predicted that he would either be a world-conquering monarch or a world-renouncing Buddha. Both are models of heroes or great men (*mahāpuruṣa*), but they were of radically different orientations: one totally involved in the world of wealth and power and the other totally removed from it. They possess thirty-two bodily signs, the details of which are spelled out in Buddhist texts.[8] Modern scholars who tell us that the father of the Bodhisattva (the Buddha to be) was a minor chief or *rāja* are not only missing the point but are guilty of extrapolating an empirical reality from a mythic or symbolic set of events. For all you know, the empirical Buddha might not have had a father at all or, more likely, he had plain ordinary parents like yours or mine. This is not to say that the Buddha was not a historical figure as, indeed, Jesus was. His speaking voice vividly appears in many of the doctrinal discourses of Theravāda Buddhism, if not of Mahāyāna, where he often appears as a surreal figure. Yet it is the case that the Buddha of the Buddhist imagination was born apposite to a world conqueror. The texts make this clear by the mythicization of his father, who is presented as a great king living in wealth, splendor, and power. The father wanted the Bodhisattva to be a world conqueror, as befits his heritage, and kept

him confined to the walls of the palace, tempting him with the seductions of hedonism. The mansion of the prince has everything to satisfy the senses: women, music and dancing, luxury. Given this context, the birth of the Buddha makes sense: he is cast in the heroic mold of the world conqueror, the conqueror over the very things that embodied his other and more profound birthright—that of Buddhahood.

The confrontation of the two ideal models—royalty and renunciation—occurs in the famous myth of the four signs, which texts say were created by the gods.[9] As I read this myth, the prince was a prisoner of hedonism, literally prevented from knowing the outside world by his well-intentioned father. Yet, one day, the prince goes for a drive into the city with Channa, his charioteer. There he meets with the spectacle of a feeble old man, a sight from which he had been insulated. In other visits to the city he sees the spectacle of sickness, then death, and finally the transcendence of all of these in the serene calm of the yellow-robed renouncer. The hero is confronted with the skull beneath the skin, the true nature of the world from which he had been insulated—the world of transience and decay. And he is also presented a model for overcoming them all in the sign of the renouncer. Note the setting: the hero travels in his splendid chariot to the city; what confronts him there is the very opposite of that which exists within the prison walls of his palace. When he comes back from his final trip to the city, after witnessing the sign of the homeless renouncer, he is told that a son is born to him, reminding him that he is trapped in a life of domesticity, that of the home, which, in the Buddhist renouncer tradition is another kind of prison. The child is named Rāhula, the "fetter," the chain that binds the Bodhisattva to the world and imprisons him there. But he decides to break this fetter and, silently bidding his wife and son farewell, he prepares to leave the palace.[10]

Prior to his departure, the Bodhisattva confronts the seamy spectral side of his harem, the once-beautiful women in their resplendent attire. "He saw those women who had lain aside their musical instruments and were sleeping, some with saliva pouring out of their mouths, some with the bodies wet with saliva, some grinding their teeth, some talking in their sleep, some groaning, some with gaping mouths and some others with their clothes in disorder revealing plainly those parts of the body which should be kept concealed for fear of shame. . . . The large terrace of his mansion, magnificently decorated and resembling the abode of Sakka [Indra, the king of the gods] appeared to him as a charnel ground full of corpses scattered here and there."[11] The skull beneath the skin once again and the images of disgust resurrected time and again in Buddhist meditative practices on "revulsion." This powerful myth is also known to practically everyone attuned to the living Buddhist traditions. It is also a "myth model" for other sto-

ries and other lives in Buddhist literature. It is of someone who is a prisoner of hedonism and/or of domesticity, then, seeing their unsatisfactory nature, deciding to renounce the world that contains them and idealizes them, the worlds of the king and the Brahmin, the one representing power and the life of the senses, the other the life of domestic harmony.[12]

Satiated with hedonism and indifferent to political power, the Bodhisattva leaves his palace accompanied by his charioteer Channa and his horse, Kaṇṭhaka, the latter portrayed in heroic dimensions in the Buddhist imagination. The horse reached the river Anomā, which it cleared in one bound, landing on the other shore. There the Bodhisattva cut his hair and beard, shed his royal clothes, and then donned mendicant garb, a change of attire that is ritually enacted to this very day when novices are initiated as fully ordained monks. Crossing the river in this and in similar cases is also a symbolic act: a movement from one form of life to another, from the world of the world conqueror to that of the world renouncer. The cutting off of worldly ties is complete, but he has still not achieved his goal of Buddhahood. The Bodhisattva is still not a Buddha; he remains a liminal persona.[13] He has given up his royal status, but he has not yet "accomplished his aim," the meaning of his first name, Siddhārtha. Like neophytes in initiation rites and other heroes of myth, the Bodhisattva has many obstacles to overcome before he reaches his goal. These are not physical obstacles, however, but obstacles that have moral and spiritual meaning.

After he renounces the world, the Bodhisattva seeks the help of gurus, as is customary in the Indic traditions. Following such advice, he courts forms of extreme physical penance and deprivation—also common at the time—for six years. The pain, endurance, and suffering of the Bodhisattva are described in the first person in several texts, and his physical emaciation is vividly represented in memorable Buddhist sculptures and paintings. The Buddha himself says that at this time he lived on virtually nothing, "unclothed, flouting life's decencies, licking my hands (after meals)."[14] He describes the types of taboos pertaining to the acceptance of alms that perhaps was common practice among ascetic sects of the time and totally against the highly decorous practices formulated by the Buddha after the monk order was established. So with the kinds of cloths he wore: "I wore rags taken from the dust heap, and I wore tree-bark fiber . . . I wore a blanket of human hair, and I wore a blanket of animal hair, and I wore owl's feathers. I was one who plucked out the hair of his head and beard . . . I made my bed on covered thorns . . . Thus in many a way did I live intent on the practice of mortifying and tormenting my body."[15] And the effect of these practices? "Because I ate so little, all my limbs became like the knotted joints of withered creepers; because I ate so little, my buttocks became like a bullock's hoof; because I ate so little my

1.1 Tissa Ranasinghe,
Mortification: The Starving Buddha.
Collection of the artist

protruding backbone became like a string of balls; because I ate so little my gaunt ribs became like the crazy rafters of a tumble-down shed; because I ate so little, the pupils of my eyes appeared lying low and deep in their sockets as sparkles of water in a deep well appear lying low and deep; because I ate so little, my scalp became shriveled and shrunk as a bitter white gourd cut before it is ripe becomes shriveled and shrunk by a hot wind. If I, Sāriputta [addressing a chief disciple], thought: 'I will touch the skin of my belly,' it was my backbone that I took hold of. For because I ate so little, the skin on my belly, Sāriputta, came to be cleaving to my backbone. If I, Sāriputta, thought: 'I will obey the calls of nature' I fell down on my face then and there, because I ate so little."[16]

What then is happening here? On one level this is an experience with death, and some texts present it as a death. Thus the *Mahāsaccaka Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*: "Now when deities saw me, some said, 'the ascetic Gotama is dead.' Other deities said: 'The recluse Gotama is not dead, he is dying.' And other deities said: 'The recluse Gotama is not dead nor dying; he is an arahant, for such is the way arahants abide.'"[17] The popular *Jātaka Nidāna* puts it more bluntly: when the Buddha was practicing these austerities, the thirty-two bodily markers of the great man disappeared, and some deities thought he had died and announced to his father King Suddhodana that "your son is dead."[18]

Suddhodana knows, however, that his son cannot die without fulfilling his mission. And so does the anthropologist, because neophytes in initiation rites do not die in a physical sense either. On another level one can say that the Bodhisattva is now the prisoner of asceticism! In practicing asceticism, the Bodhisattva has moved from the indulgence of sensual pleasures to its very opposite—the mortification of the body. And yet there is a further level of personal, even unconscious meaning: by punishing his body, the Bodhisattva is trying to expiate the guilt he feels for violating powerful family values and ideals of filial and domestic piety by forsaking his wife, son, and parents. He must overcome this obstacle as well to achieve the "middle path."

The night he gave up asceticism the Bodhisattva dreamt five dreams prognosticating that he would be a Buddha. There are many versions of what happened when he decided to give up extreme asceticism, but let me give the version in the *Jātaka Nidāna*. His companions in asceticism left him when he went around in villages begging for alms and eating food once again. And soon enough the thirty-two signs of the great man reappeared in his body, indicating that the time was ripe to achieve his goal of Buddhahood. The first meal on this occasion is appropriately one consumed on auspicious occasions, namely milk-rice. It is given to him by a woman from the merchant class (*varṇa*) who had vowed to offer food to the deity of the banyan tree under which the Buddha was seated. She was the

first human witness to the new birth or awakening, and this event determines her name, Sujātā, "happy birth."[19] After the Buddha consumes his meal, he wants to know whether he is going to achieve true knowledge or not. He makes a vow: if his begging bowl goes upstream when placed in the river Nerañjarā it would be a sign that he had achieved true knowledge. This happens, and the bowl is carried by the river's vortex into the realm of the *nāga*s (snake beings), generally devotees of the Buddha, and there it meets the bowls of three previous Buddhas. The symbolism here I think is clear: the Buddha, in practicing austerities, has experienced a kind of death. But this physical rebirth is not the crucial one; it is followed by a psychological and spiritual awakening to come later. The bowl that goes "against the current" symbolizes a teaching that goes counter to normal human drives.

The Buddha now moves from the banyan tree to the bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*) nearby, the tree under which he would achieve his spiritual awakening. Facing the East, again symbolizing a rising, he decided not to move till he had found out the truth of existence. The next mythic episode occurs when, meditating under the bodhi tree, he is assailed by Māra, or Death himself (who is also Eros of the Buddhist imagination), waging war against the Buddha. This final episode is described in graphic detail in the popular traditions, and I shall not deal with them here except to say that Māra attacked the Buddha with multiple weapons, but the sage remained untouched, such being the power of the perfections (*pāramitā*), the moral heroisms practiced in past births.

According to the *Bhayabherava Sutta* (The Discourse on Fear and Dread), the Buddha, during the first watch of the night, entered into the four states of meditative trance (Pali, *jhāna*; Sanskrit, *dhyāna*) leading to complete equanimity, which permitted him to recollect in all details his former existences. Thus: "I recollected all my manifold past lives, that is, one birth, two births, three births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many eons of world-contraction and expansion: 'There I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing from there, I reappeared elsewhere; and there too I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term; and passing away from there, I reappeared here.'"[20] Following this fantastic event, the text has the Buddha mention his own assessment of truth-realization through vision: "This was the first true knowledge attained by me in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute."[21] In the last part of this sentence, the Buddha is emphasizing another truth, as he does in other texts as well, that is, his experi-

ence of trance and knowledge arising from it is also available to other Buddhist virtuosos.[22]

During the second watch, the Buddha with his "divine eye" redirected his mind to the long panorama of the passing and rising of human beings such that he could see them "passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate" in this world and in heavens and hells and in subhuman existences through the operation of the universal action of karma and rebirth.[23] According to several sources, it was during the second watch that his divine eye was further purified:

> And then with that sight,
> spotless and divine,
> he saw the entire world,
> as if in a stainless looking glass.[24]

And in the last watch, which must surely be close to dawn and to a literal awakening, he discovered the nature of error and the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism and, according to some accounts, the critical theory of causal interconnectedness of things known as *paticcasamuppāda* (Sanskrit, *pratitya samutpāda*), translated as "dependent origination" or "conditioned genesis," that things have no reality on their own but are relative and dependent on one another and consequently lack inherent existence.[25] No form of essence underlies the changing world of existence.[26]

After this first awakening, according to popular accounts, the Buddha spent another seven weeks (some say seven days) in meditation where he met with further spiritual adventures in an entirely vivid imagistic medium. The most famous of these is where Māra's three daughters named Taṇhā (Desire or Greed), Aratī (Delusion), and Ragā (Sexual Passion) entice him with lustful pleasures. They tell their father Māra that some men desire virgins, others women in the prime of life, while yet others prefer middle-aged or old women, and that they would take all these guises to seduce the Bodhisattva. But the Buddha, still meditating on the moral perfections or heroisms (*pāramitā*), remained unmoved.[27] One can say that the daughters of Māra constitute the return of the women of the harem, but without their masks and marks of disgust. It is also the return of the repressed threatening to break through the controls imposed by asceticism. Yet eroticism cannot tempt the sage because his deep meditational trances (*jhānas*) have taken him beyond desire and he cannot succumb to temptation. To use Freudian language: with the extinction of sexual desire, the neurotic operation of the repetition compulsion ceases and the repressed cannot return to haunt the sage.[28]

After the seven weeks (or days) are over, the hero is reborn again, or, in Buddhist terminology, he is the Fully Awakened One (*sammā sambuddha*), a term that European scholars, influenced, I think, by their own Enlightenment, have generously sanctified as "the Enlightenment." The double entendre of *awakened* is very significant: first, the Buddha has passed the liminal stage and emerged into a new life form and the founding of a new order; second, his is a spiritual awakening, a discovery of a way of salvific knowledge.

While I have focused on the Buddha's spiritual awakening, I do not want to deny that other ascetics of the time did not have similar experiences. The initiatory model I have adopted helps us consider renouncers like the Jaina leader Mahāvīra who might have had similar experiences based on the following sequence: breaking away from the home to a life of homelessness; a liminal period of painful spiritual experiences (a form of the dark night of the soul), followed by the discovery of new knowledge; the symbolism of death and awakening and the initiate's reemergence into a new life form, that of a renouncer (and, for some, the formation of a new religious or monastic or ascetic order). *Awakened* then can be employed as a general term for those virtuosos who have achieved this state through the initiatory spiritual model based on a symbolic death and rebirth. So is it with Christ. Christianity's resurrection myth also begins with that of the founder, Jesus; his suffering on the cross; the abandonment by his father and his male disciples during his darkest hour; his ignominious death and empty tomb; and his glorious awakening. The Christ and Buddha mythos have radically different substantive and salvific meanings, but, on the structural level, they both conform to the model that I sketch here. The empirical or actual lives of the two founders have been retranslated into the symbolism of suffering, a death that is illusory or "empty," followed by an awakening that in their differing ways and historical trajectory led to the founding of a new religious order. I'd stretch the dictum of Tertullian of Carthage and say that, for believers, the Christ or the Buddha mythos and similar hero myths have to be "true" because they are "absurd."

The genealogy whereby the Buddha's spiritual awakening was fused with that of the European Enlightenment is outside the purview of this essay. The idea of Theravāda Buddhism as a "rational religion" was a popular nineteenth-century Eurocentric prejudice that soon filtered into the thinking of Buddhist intellectuals through such popular sources as Theosophy. It was the Theosophist cum rationalist Colonel H. S. Olcott who asserted that "Buddhism was, in a word, a philosophy, and not a creed."[29] This has become the standard view of later native intellectuals, some of whom even imagine the Buddha as an empiricist of the British sort. Yet, contrary to modern intellectuals, the Buddhist ratio is radically different from both the Greek and the European Enlightenments.[30] If the Euro-

pean Enlightenment with its reification of rationality ignored or condemned visionary experiences, not so with the Greek, it seems to me. Plato employed Reason to discover true knowledge, but neither he nor his Socrates condemned or ignored such things as the work of visionaries and prophets and he personally believed in the oracle at Delphi. By contrast, the Buddha denounced all sorts of popular "superstitions" as base or beastly arts in a famed discourse known as the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (the net of Brahma), but never visions and knowledge emerging through meditative trance (*jhāna*).[31] Other Buddhas had discovered the same truths before and, when the knowledge of the doctrine would have faded, yet other Buddhas would arise to rediscover it. The Platonic type of Reason or the rationality of the Enlightenment has second place in Buddhism, which involves the elaboration and discursive exposition of the intuitively discovered truths. Yet, like its European and Greek parallels, Buddhism's ratio is full of abstract terms ("conceptualism") to describe the nature of the world and the release from it, even though, at least in the Buddhist dialogues or *sutta*s, they are embodied in a specific type of narrative framework (which is also true of their Platonic counterparts). Finally, relegation of the Buddhist ratio to secondary importance is once again apparent in Buddhism's soteriological stance. As in the case of the Buddha's own awakening, forms of discursive and rational thinking must be abandoned at a certain stage in the quest for salvation. I think one can even say that the Buddha's experience under the bodhi tree is the *mysterium tremendum* of Buddhism.

TIME AND SPACE IN VISIONARY EXPERIENCE

> Let the human organs be kept in their perfect Integrity,
> At will Contracting into Worms or Expanding into Gods,
> And then, behold! What are these Ulro Visions of Chastity?
> Then as the moss upon the tree, or dust upon the plow,
> Or as the sweat upon the labouring shoulder, or as the chaff
> Of the wheat-floor or as the dregs of the sweet wine-press,
> Such as these Ulro-Visions: for tho' we sit down within
> The plowed furrow, listening to the weeping clods till we
> Contract or Expand Space at will; or if we raise ourselves
> Upon the chariots of the morning, Contracting or Expanding Time,
> Everyone knows we are One Family, One Man blessed for ever.
> —William Blake, *Jerusalem* [32]

Let me get back to the Buddha's meditative trance during the second watch where, with his "divine eye," he sees human beings passing through *saṃsāra*, the realm of continuing existences, from their human lives to their fate in heavens and hells, all of which are dependent on their karma. The visuality of this experience mediated by his special sight or divine eye is what I want to consider.[33] During the first watch the text says that he recollected or remembered his past existences, including eons of world expansion and contraction, but whether this is "remembering" in our conventional usage is open to doubt. Here also I think his past life appears before him in visual form, as was his vision of the fate of others during the second watch. All of this occurs during the first two watches of the night, each watch being a period of four hours. In this kind of experience, empirical time, or time as we normally understand it in our waking lives, gets stretched in incredible ways. There is a disparity between normal time and dream time, or between time and visionary experience, such that we can dream of long episodes in a few short time-bound moments. In the first two watches of the night the Buddha's experiences of time embrace eons of world renewal and destruction. Yet these "timeless" experiences or experiences out of time are framed within four-hour time-bound periods ("watches"), culturally structured notions of time. I must emphasize, however, that the analytical distinction I have made between empirical and mythic time makes no sense to the visionary. The visionary has transcended empirical time and is attuned to another level of temporal reality, which is what is meaningful to him. Visionary time cannot be measured.

I like to make the case that in many ways the Buddha's experience with time has its parallel in the dream experience so brilliantly examined by Freud, who noted the compression-expansion of time as a feature of dreams, although outside the dream-work. He mentions the case of a "dramatic author" named Casimir Bonjour who wanted to sit with the audience during the first performance of one of his pieces. "But he was so fatigued that as he was sitting behind the scenes he dozed off just at the moment the curtain went up. During his sleep he went through the whole five acts of the play, and observed the various signs of emotion shown by the audience during the different scenes. At the end of the performance he was delighted to hear his name being shouted with the liveliest demonstrations of applause. Suddenly he woke up. He could not believe either his eyes or his ears for the performance had not gone beyond the first few lines of the first scene; he could not have been asleep for more than two minutes."[34] Although Freud did not think of the contrast between empirical and mythic or cosmic time as a function of the dream-work, every dreamer has surely experienced it.[35] And it needed a Hindu god to turn this notion of time on its head, such that empirical time is infinitesimally minute in comparison with the cosmic sense of

time. Viṣṇu blinks his eyes and a billion years have passed, billion being a metaphor for the immeasurability of visionary time. As Śāntideva, the great Buddhist poet says: "In a dream one person enjoys one hundred years of happiness and then awakes, while another awakes after being happy for just a moment."[36]

The brilliant madman Daniel Paul Schreber, who will appear and reappear in the pages of my essay, also mentions a similar compression of time in his memoirs. "From the sum total of my recollections, the impression gained hold of me that the period in question, which, according to human calculation, stretched over only three to four months, had covered an immensely long period, it was as if single nights had the duration of centuries, so that within that time the most profound alterations in the whole of mankind, in the earth itself and the whole solar system could very well have taken place."[37] He recalls another experience when he was "sitting in a railway carriage or a lift driving into the depths of the earth and I recapitulated, as it were, the whole history of mankind on the earth in reverse order; in the upper regions there were still forests of leafy trees; in the nether regions it became progressively darker and blacker." Schreber left the vehicle temporarily and saw a cemetery with his wife's gravestone (in reality his wife was alive at that time). This is to be expected, because he is seeing mankind's "devolution" beginning in reverse from time future into time past, rather than the other way around (M, 78–79). This is an un-Darwinian dream, but it needed Darwin before one could dream it.

Schreber's vision of time expansion possessed a similar reality to the Buddha's vision of the arising and rebirth of countless existences. The difference is that the Buddha's is a vision of the past, not the reversed time of Schreber. Yet Schreber believes his expanded time was real time and that real devolutionary changes had taken place on earth.[38] One might add that in diving down into the depths of the earth Schreber was also delving (without being aware of it) into the depths of his psyche. To sum up: the compression-expansion of time then is found not only in the visionary experience but also in dreams and in the psychoses, although the one cannot be reduced to the other.

Later on in the dream book, Freud, in accordance with his view that there is no real creativity in dreams, asserted that dreams such as Casimir Bonjour's did not produce any fresh thoughts during sleep but rather "may have reproduced a piece of phantasy-activity . . . which has already been completed" (ID, 498–99). By "phantasy activity" he means a prepackaged fantasy, even a daytime fantasy or daydream that reappears at night and consequently there is no "distortion," that phenomenon crucial to the dream-work. "The dream-work is glad to make use of the ready-made phantasy instead of putting one together out of the mate-

rial of the dream thoughts" (ID, 495). Here then is an interesting type of dream existing outside the dream thoughts even though dominated by unconscious fantasy and wish fulfillment. However, whether the Buddha's visionary knowledge is a fantasy activity in Freud's sense or one productive of original ideation is something I will deal with later.

What about space and how are visions related to space? This is a complicated question because in Buddhist visions space is virtually illimitable, and visionaries have space adventures of a fantastic nature surpassing that of shamanic visionaries in their cosmic travels. For now, following the preceding argument, I will present a few examples of the visionary expansion of empirical space into mythic space, once again, I believe, having its parallel in the dream life.

1. The first is a well-known story from the *Bhagavata Purāna*, the great text of devotional Hinduism. "One day, when Krishna was still a little baby, some boys saw him eating mud. When his foster mother, Yasoda, learned of it, she asked the baby to open his mouth. Krishna opened his tiny mouth, and, wonder of wonders! Yasoda saw the whole universe—the earth, the stars, the planets, the sun, and the moon and innumerable beings—within the mouth of Baby Krishna. For a moment Yasoda was bewildered thinking, 'Is this a dream or a hallucination? Or is it a real vision, the vision of my little baby as God himself?'"[39]

2. Consider now the extraordinary experience of an Indian sage who has a vision and a dream within the vision and a dream within the dream. "In the old days I lived alone in a hermitage. I studied magic. I entered someone else's body and saw all his organs; I entered his head and then I saw a universe, with a sun and an ocean and mountains, and gods and demons and human beings. This universe was his dream and I saw his dream. Inside his head, I saw his city and his wife and his servants and his son."[40]

3. Here is Julian of Norwich (c. 1342–1416): "And I was still awake, and then our Lord opened my spiritual eyes and showed me my soul in the middle of my heart. I saw my soul as large as it were a kingdom; and from the properties that I saw in it, it seemed to me to be a glorious city. In the centre of that city sits our Lord Jesu, true God and true man, glorious, highest Lord: and I saw him dressed imposingly in glory."[41] In Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love*, the vision of expanded space could be simultaneously literal and symbolic, at the very least a visualization of the idea that the kingdom of god is within oneself. As Julian says: "He sits in the soul, in the very centre, in peace and rest, and he rules and protects heaven and earth and all that is."[42]

The reverse process wherein a large space is telescoped into a small one also occurs but not as commonly. Here is the Tibetan space traveler and "treasure seeker" Pemalingpa (1450–1519) writing of this kind of experience: "I had a bamboo hut erected on the hill called Sershong above the monastery and while we, the lord and his disciples, were staying there I made the disciples attend to their training. While I was staying in retreat there for three months I had sight of the whole world like a myrobalan flower placed in the palm of one's hand, entirely clear and pure."[43] Reverse telescoping of space is also beautifully expressed in the Tibetan theory of meditation in the Kālacakra tradition wherein at a certain point during *sādhana* (Tantric practice) the meditator "can visualize the entire *maṇḍala* [the circle of deities] in a drop the size of a mustard seed at the tip of one's nose, with such clarity that one can see the whites of the eyes of all 722 deities—and can maintain this visualization with uninterrupted one-pointed concentration for four hours."[44]

Unsurprisingly, the expansion-contraction of space experienced by the visionary also appears in exaggerated form in the myths of Mahāyāna. I will quote a few accomplishments of awakened Bodhisattvas from the second- or third-century *Avatamsaka Sutra* (Flower Ornament Scripture), a Mahāyāna text later appropriated by the Chinese Hua Yan schools and Zen that also influenced Tibetan Buddhism. Bear in mind that these are authorial statements highlighting the powers of the idealized Bodhisattvas and not their actual voices. Nevertheless, I cannot imagine that these accomplishments could have been invented if they were experience-alien. "These enlightening beings [Bodhisattvas] have ten kinds of knowledge of skills in entry into great concentration: they make a billion-world universe a single lotus blossom and appear sitting cross-legged on this lotus blossom, covering it entirely, and in the body manifest another billion-world universe, wherein there are ten billion quadruplex earths, in each of which they manifest ten billion bodies, each body entering into one hundred sextillion billion-world universes."[45]

Soon the author of this text as a theoretician discusses, as I did, the distinction between visionary and empirical time and space. He attributes to the Bodhisattva the capacity to control his meditative trance to such a degree that visionary time and space can be coordinated with everyday temporal and spatial conceptions. It is not as if the Bodhisattva himself notes or cares about this issue. Rather the author qua theoretician informs us, his readership, about the Bodhisattva's power to frame the visionary experience in ordinary terms. Thus: "[In] the space of a moment he may manifest a day or a night, or he may make it appear to be seven days and nights, or a fortnight, a month, a year, a century, according to desire, he can manifest the appearance of cities, towns, villages, springs, streams,

rivers, seas, sun, moon, clouds, rain, palaces, mansions, houses, all of this complete. Yet he does not destroy the original one day or one hour by making it appear that years have passed, and the brevity of the actual time does not destroy the appearance of the passage of days, months, or years."[46] The Bodhisattva, this text tells us, appears like a magician performing tricks at the crossroads. "So is it with the bodies of the buddhas: when they are seen as large, still there is no increase, and when they are seen as small, there is no decrease. Just as the moon is seen as small by people on earth, yet is not diminished, and is seen as large by beings on the moon, yet does not expand, so also do enlightening beings [Bodhisattvas] in this concentration see various transfigurations of the buddhas' bodies, according to their inclinations . . . there being all the while no increase or decrease in the body of the Enlightened [Awakened]."[47]

CRITIQUE OF THE COGITO: THE BUDDHA, NIETZSCHE, AND FREUD

> Where got I that truth?
> Out of a medium's mouth,
> Out of nothing it came,
> Out of the forest loam,
> Out of dark night where lay
> The crowns of Nineveh.
> —W. B. Yeats, "Fragments"

I shall now present perhaps the more controversial part of my argument, namely, what I think is meant by the Buddha giving primacy to knowledge acquired through concentration, which requires the abandonment and the emptying of the mind of discursive knowledge and its readoption after the experience is over. In my view a special kind of thought operates in his meditative ascesis: the agency involved is not the "I" of the discursively reasoning and active consciousness; rather it is the "It," to use the Nietzschean term. Nietzsche says: "A thought comes when 'it' wishes and not when 'I' wish, so that it is a falsification of the facts of the case to say that the subject 'I' is the condition of the predicate 'think.' It thinks: but that this "it" is precisely the famous old "ego" is, to put it mildly, only a supposition, an assertion, and assuredly not an immediate certainty."[48] For Nietzsche, even "It-thinking" is tainted with agency, compelling one to think "according to grammatical habit."[49] It seems that Nietzsche is high-

lighting a form of thinking, seemingly without agency, and for purposes of convenience I will borrow his trope and call it "It-thinking."

Freud was indirectly influenced by Nietzsche when he borrowed the term "It" (*Es*) from the German physician Georg Groddeck. In *The Ego and the Id* (better translated as *The I and the It*), the seminal paper that gave conceptual rigor to the second topography, Freud wrote: "I am speaking of George Groddeck, who is never tired of insisting that what we call our ego behaves essentially passively in life, and that, as he expresses it, we are 'lived' by unknown and uncontrollable forces."[50] It was only in the later *New Introductory Lectures* that Freud recognized that his Id or It was a "verbal usage of Nietzsche" employed by Groddeck and reemployed by Freud as part of the tripartite division of the mind.[51] While Freud gave agentic significance to the It, he brought the term within the frame of his later neo-Cartesian framework of Ego-Id-Superego and thereby lost the prime place that Nietzsche gave to the passive It. I do not, however, believe "It-thinking" is the only way of knowing or that it is preferable to "I-thinking." Except that it is a way of thinking that has virtually gone out of vogue in mainline European intellectual life in the aftermath of the Cartesian "I think, I am" and its sense of "immediately certainty" that Nietzsche was critical of.

In similar Nietzschean fashion, William Butler Yeats speaks of the "frenzy" that possessed Timon or Lear or William Blake, those unusual people all of whom forced truth to obey the call of the seer, rather than the seer invoking the truth through the thinking-I.[52] So with the Buddha: it is certainly the case that meditation requires the Buddha to deliberately concentrate or focus his vision through an act of the will on key meditative devices that in later Buddhist thought were known as *kasina*s. But, once in full meditation, conscious discursive intellection or I-thinking or the will switches itself off as the meditator enters into states of trance or *jhāna* (*dhyāna*). It is then that knowledge appears before the Buddha, giving him the capacity for "divine vision." Not only can he see the coming into being and disappearance of people and worlds but also "thought comes" to him during the third watch of the night. While ordinary cognition and I-thinking makes sense in everyday life, not so in the meditative context, which is designed to explode the idea of a self as an enduring entity. Further, the meditator cultivates "awareness" or *sati,* but this Buddhist awareness is not a self-awareness or self-reflection as we conventionally understand those terms. For example, even in the simplest meditation on calming (*śamatha*), one is focused on breathing until everything else is cut off from consciousness and one becomes aware only of the movement of the breaths. In deeper meditative practices there is a passive opening of consciousness (using that term broadly) for thoughts to emerge or visions to appear. In fact the visions of the Buddha or those of the Buddhist seers

I discuss later have little to do with ordinary memory or the recollections of past events unless it is a recollection of past births or of a historical event. The latter are about memory inaccessible to normal or rational cognition but available to the visionary.

The Buddha's spiritual experience entails the furthermost development of the kind of "thinking" that Freud formulated in the dream-work. One must therefore go back once again to the dream book to reconsider Freud's insights about what I have labeled "It-thinking." Strictly speaking, one cannot say, as in accordance with European language use, "I had a dream." Most people would say, as Sri Lankans do, "I saw a dream." The significance of visuality in the dream thoughts was emphasized by Freud in several memorable phrases: "A thing that is pictorial is, from the point of view of a dream, a thing that is *capable of being represented*; it can be introduced into a situation in which abstract expressions offer the same kind of difficulties to representation in dreams as a political article in a newspaper would offer an illustrator" (ID, 340). Or: "A dream thought is unusable so long as it is expressed in an abstract form" but has to be "transformed into pictorial language." One might even say that dreams "dramatize an idea" (ID, 50). Again: "Dreams, then, think predominantly in visual images—but not exclusively. They make use of auditory images as well, and, to a lesser extent, of impressions belonging to other senses" (ID, 49). In dreams the causal, abstract, and logical thought processes that are associated with the waking consciousness cannot appear without being reformulated as indirect representations. When Blake says that "thought chang'd the infinite to a serpent," we find ourselves in the dream life where something abstract like the notion of the infinite could be changed into a concrete visual representation, a serpent.[53] Freud even asserts that "no" cannot be represented in dreams; and sequential logic is replaced by sequentially flowing images (ID, 312–19).

Aside from its visuality, the dream simply appears before one's dimmed and diminished consciousness. Even the dark "dream thoughts" that precipitated the manifest dream merely rise to the surface with the near suspension of the active consciousness during sleep. In dreams "we appear not to think but to experience; that is to say, we attach complete belief to the hallucinations" (ID, 50). When we are in the realm of the dream we believe what we see is real. It is governed by noesis (in James's sense of taken-for-granted truths), but of an ephemeral sort, unless the dream is also a vision and the dream-vision, like the visions we discuss in this essay, might persuade us about its truth value even after the visionary experience is over.[54] Freud adds that the hallucinatory features of dreams appear when "some kind of 'authoritative' activity of the self has ceased" (ID, 51). In other words, he is asserting that though dreams are "completely egotistical" the

"I" appears as a picture or is externalized into images that float before us in our state of sleep (ID, 358). Thus the German of "I had a dream" can be rephrased as "the dream came to me" (ID, 48). It is not surprising therefore that for Freud the dreaming mind functions like a "compound microscope or a photographic apparatus" (ID, 536). Hence in dreams the "everyday, sober method of expression is replaced by a pictorial one" (ID, 341). The "I" does not think out the dream during sleep; thinking in dreams is a passive occurrence. Even Freud's undefined "dream-ego" or "dreaming self" is not the ego of the waking consciousness (ID, 85). Freud, and later Jung, borrowed the idea of the dream-ego from K. A. Scherner, who actually used the term "fantasy-I."[55] I shall develop later my own notion of the dream-ego that takes the place of the waking "I" but, for the moment, affirm that dreams share the feature of visions as "appearances." They are "showings," as Julian of Norwich characterized her visions, perhaps recollecting the morality plays of her time. And a modern visionary mentions the folly of saying "'I imagined this'" when one should say "'the curtain was a little lifted that I might see'".[56]

We all know that for Freud the ego is not the master in his own house owing to the power of unconscious thought, thus, implicitly at least, dethroning the primacy of the Cartesian cogito. Nevertheless, though not explicitly stated, the dream book implies an even more radical position. The "I," or ego, does not appear in the formation of the dream in the first place. The physical person of course appears in the dream but pictorially, in a screen as it were, outside of the thinking "I." What is striking about the dream-work—the processes that transform thoughts into images—is that condensation and displacement can occur without the "I" being involved, though this is not how Freud himself formulated the issue. Even the "censor"—the dormant conscience of the dreamer that in vetting the dream distorts it—is a kind of mechanism that operates without the silently thinking "I" or the superego of Freud's later thought. It seems that the dream book introduces a radical model of the mind that eliminates the ego or self or reified "I" and yet, paradoxically, introduces a form of "agency" (if one may call it that) that is totally impersonal. Of course Freud uses the term *consciousness* and *preconscious* in his dream book to contrast with the unconscious, but there is no ego associated with consciousness in this early formulation. Thus the Freudian model (sometimes labeled as the "first topography") that I have extrapolated from the dream book is not the structuralist one that eliminates agency but rather one entailing a special form of agency.

The Interpretation of Dreams appeared for the first time in 1900, a reaction to Freud's earlier laboratory experiments in neurophysiology followed by his 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, later abandoned by him and published only post-

humously. In that same year there also appeared the crucial work *Studies in Hysteria,* which he coauthored with Josef Breuer, whose detailed and sympathetic account of "Anna O." (Bertha Pappenheim) was creatively appropriated by Freud. In *Studies in Hysteria* Freud used what he called "cathartic techniques" or the "talking cure" (the latter term invented by Anna O.) along with hypnosis, though he was also beginning to realize the limitations of the latter in effecting a cure. Here, for the first time, appeared some important words in the Freudian lexicon in its purely psychological sense: *defense, repression, abreaction,* and, above all, the significance of unconscious motivation. And, though the term *ego* is rarely used in the dream book, it appears all the time in *Studies in Hysteria*, especially in Freud's own chapter, "The Psychotherapy of Hysteria." It also appears prominently in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. It reappears in virtually everything Freud wrote after the dream book. In other words, the dream book is sandwiched between texts that are full of references to the ego or the self. This means that it is the "first topography" expressed in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, rather than his later "second topography" of the tripartite Id-Ego-Superego that produced a model of the mind that fully rejects the Cartesian centrality of the ego. It is here one senses Freud's belatedly acknowledged debt to Nietzsche.

In his work on hysteria, Freud drew attention to a powerful visual mode of thought similar to that prevailing in dreams. He presents the case of a "very intelligent and apparently happy young married woman [who] had consulted me about an obstinate pain in her abdomen which was resistant to treatment" (SH, 276).[57] This originally muscular pain reemerged as a hysterical symptom later, and the lady herself recognized its "nervous" origin. At this time Freud had developed a somewhat bizarre therapeutic technique of putting pressure with his hand on the patient's forehead and, in somewhat of an authoritarian mode, insisting that she recollect her unconscious thoughts in the form of a picture or of an idea occurring to her. He then "pledges" the patient to communicate this picture or idea to him (SH, 270). Now, employing this technique, Freud asked his patient if she saw anything. Initially she reported visual pictures that Freud thought were "phosphenes" purely physiological in origin. But later the patient produced much more interesting images.

> She saw a large black cross, leaning over, which had round its edges the same shimmer of light with which all her other pictures had shone, and on whose cross-beam a small flame flickered. Clearly there could no longer be any question of a phosphene here. I now listened carefully. Quantities of pictures appeared bathed in the same light, curious signs looking rather like Sanskrit; figures like triangles, among them a large triangle; the cross once more. . . . This time I suspected an

> allegorical meaning and asked what the cross could be. "It probably means pain," she replied. I objected that by "cross" one usually meant a moral burden. What lay concealed behind the pain? She could not say, and went on with her visions: a sun with golden rays. And this she was also able to interpret. "It's God, the primeval force." Then came a gigantic lizard which regarded her enquiringly but not alarmingly. Then a heap of snakes. Then once more a sun but with mild, silver rays; and in front of her, between her and this source of light, a grating which hid the centre of the sun from her. I had known for some time what I had to deal with were allegories and at once asked the meaning of this last picture. She answered without hesitation: "The sun is perfection, the ideal, and the grating represents my weaknesses and faults which stand between me and the ideal." "Are you reproaching yourself, then?"
>
> (SH, 277–78)

She admitted this and said she was a member of the Theosophical Society and has been reading their literature, including some translations of Sanskrit texts. Freud concluded that the pictures were "symbols of trains of thought influenced by the occult and were perhaps actually emblems from the title-pages of books," that is, they represented what he would later label "phantasy activity" (SH, 278). He added that "hysterical patients, who are as a rule of a 'visual' type, do not make such difficulties for the analyst as those with obsessions." The pictures "emerge from the patient's memory," but as she proceeds to describe them the visual sequences become more and more fragmented. "The patient is, as it were, getting rid of it [the image] *by turning it into words*" (SH, 280; my emphasis). Freud seems to say that if discursive thought supervenes then hysterical imagery, just like the imagery of dreams, simply disappears "like a ghost that has been laid" (SH, 281).

Freud's discussion shows, among other things, how a particular culture, perhaps the Victorian middle class in general, suppresses a certain mode of "thought" that, in the terminology I have adopted, implies "It-thinking." Had Freud's talented female patients lived in Sri Lanka or ancient Greece, or almost anywhere else in the pre-Enlightenment world, they would have had at least the option of becoming prophetesses or priestesses or some type of respected religious specialist. Yet, in spite of his cultural belief regarding the "pathology" of such thought processes, Freud at least gave his patient the opportunity to formulate, even briefly, the allegorical significance of her visions. Further, as in dreams, visualization can be based on prior ratiocinative processes; that is, the patient had read theosophical articles on the occult, which perhaps also accentuated the significance of thinking in images. To put it differently: "I-thinking" can

be converted into "It-thinking" during special conditions where "intention" has been suspended and, to switch to Breuer's late-nineteenth-century conceptual language, when the patient is in a kind of "somnolent" or "hypnoid" state.[58]

One must not assume that cerebral activity is suspended during this state. Hence my idea of passive cerebration as against the active I-dependent cerebral activity involved in our rational discursive thinking processes. Or, going back to Christianity's past, John of the Cross tells us that one hears God with the hearing of the soul and one sees God "with the eye of the passive intellect," that is, a kind of passive thinking that arises from the soul and not to be identified with ratio or Reason.[59] And, speaking of locutions, John perceptively adds that the "soul receives God's communication passively" and that the "reception of the light infused supernaturally into the soul is passive knowing."[60] And let us not forget Meister Eckhart, who posits the idea of man's active intellect, "but when the action at hand is undertaken by God, the mind must remain passive."[61] "If you forsake your own knowledge and will, then surely and gladly God will enter with his knowledge shining clearly;" and when "man's own efforts are suspended and all the soul's agents are at God's disposal" they "come flooding out of man from God."[62]

Breuer's famous patient Anna O., in a self-induced hypnoid state, had "frightening hallucinations of black snakes, which was how she saw her hair, ribbons and similar things" (SH, 24)—thereby showing the inner affinity between a Victorian fantasy and the cultural cum personal symbolic forms that I have recorded in *Medusa's Hair* for Sri Lankan priestesses who also saw their matted locks as snakes.[63] I am suggesting that a similar form of thinking characterizes the visions of shamans and spirit mediums. The vivid, hallucinatory knowledge appears before the individual in trance. The dream-work, as a seemingly impersonal and mechanistic, process led Freud to conclude that inventiveness and creativity do not appear in it, because he simply could not accept the idea of passive cerebral activity of the It, even though he was a pioneer formulating the irrational deep motivations or primary process or unconscious "thinking." The idea of the dream-work does not make sense if there is no "thinking" involved, as Freud recognized. Yet, it is hard to believe the absence of creativity when, through the dream-work, composite formations of rich visual panoramas, places, persons and events appear in the dream.[64] My own dreams are not unique when I often see places and people who are not known to me but must surely be constructed through the dream-work. Landscapes appeared in rich color and variety in my youthful dreams, but they were only peripherally connected with those familiar to me. They are invented or composed or put together in coherent form through the passive cerebral activity that occurs during the dream-work. Yet I believe

that some such idea of creative inventiveness is implicit in Freud's notion of the products of the unconscious as "indirect representations."

So is it with surreal dreams of his patients in their manifest content. Freud could not think of his hysterics as creative people or that pathology might have a creative side to it. And, precisely because of their pathological nature, the patient's creative visual thinking cannot be permitted to remain in her mind. For Freud the patient's attempt to give allegorical meaning and significance to her visual images could not possibly have a therapeutic function. He and other Freudians think that creativity and innovation must entail the actively thinking "I," and this simply could not occur when consciousness is suspended.

Freud of course used the term *It* or *Id* in another sense in his second topography, to designate an area of the mind rather than a process of thought. I would like to retain the insights I have extrapolated from the dream book as a non-Cartesian model that deals with passive cerebral activity in the dream-work and the concomitant absence of the ego or the thinking-I.[65] In my view, the ideal goal of free association is to bring about a similar recollection of the past without the mediation of the "I," even though this ideal is rarely realized. Remember that the beginnings of this technique lay with Breuer's Anna O., whose "talking cure" (or "chimney sweeping" as she facetiously called it) occurred in a kind of hypnoid condition induced by the patient herself (SH, 30). In mature psychoanalysis, the analysand lies on the couch, a place of rest, and the analyst is the silent supportive being analogous to the *kalyāna mitra* (the "true friend") of Buddhist meditation who assists the truth seeker to overcome the terrors of the fantastic in the early stages of the meditative process. The *kalyāna mitra* acts as a stand-in for the rational consciousness of the meditator that has been temporarily suspended and whose terrifying visions threaten to overwhelm him. In this situation, the stand-in guide can further help the meditator to bring about a coexistence of the "I" and the "It" after awakening from his dark night of terror.[66]

Although not as radical as the Buddhist, in psychoanalysis also the analytic situation facilitates the suspension of discursive thought and sets the stage for free association (though Freud himself sometimes cavalierly disregarded his own rules). A space has been created for non-discursive thoughts to emerge, in spite of the fact that the couch itself is enveloped in the whole frame of Enlightenment rationality. Hilda Doolittle says of her experience of recall during her psychoanalysis by the master himself: "I wish to recall the impressions, or rather I wish the impressions to recall me." Again: "Let the impressions come in their own way, make their own sequence."[67] But these impressions that flow out of the analysand are quite different from dreams and hysteria because there is no transformation of thoughts into images. Hilda Doolittle's example suggests that other

kinds of thoughts also can appear in the mind when discursive "I-thinking" has been partially suspended, as in free association and related conditions such as reveries and daydreams. The Buddhist meditative trances or *jhāna* by contrast are extreme developments of "It-thinking" and no wonder one must suspend discursive thought ("I-thinking") as a prerequisite and this in turn entails overcoming the false notion of "I," according to Buddhism. The crux of meditation is to develop "It-thinking" both in its visual and imagistic forms and what I might tentatively call its free-associational forms such that even philosophical ideas ("truths") appear into the field of the thinker's vision without the mediation of egoistic discursive thinking. James makes a similar point in relation to the "noetic quality" of mystical knowledge: "Mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time."[68]

It seems appropriate to further consider Freud's notion of "phantasy activity" and ask ourselves whether knowledge emerging from meditative trance is itself based on prior "phantasy activity." Perhaps; but, even if the vision is influenced by phantasy activity or prior thoughts, it is not a reflex of such activity but transformed through the working of the "passive intellect." What we do know is that, once the truths have been discovered intuitively through the special passive agency of the "It," there is a later process, truly a process of "secondary elaboration," whereby the thinking "I" reappears and gives discursive meaning and significance to these intuitively discovered truths, including their formulation as abstract concepts. In other words, images are transformed back into thought when the Buddha expounds his visionary knowledge in his sermons or discourses to a congregation or a group of disciples, indicating that the discursive or rational reformulation of visionary thought occurs in a specific social and dialogical context. And it is no accident that it is in the last watch of the night, prior to the arrival of dawn's bleak reality, that the sage intuited such abstract notions like the Four Noble Truths and "conditioned genesis" or "dependent origination." It is in this sense—that of the later rational and abstract formulation of intuitively discovered truths—that one can speak of a "Buddhist Enlightenment" comparable with the European and the Greek. Nevertheless, the reemergence of the thinking "I" does not imply the certitude of the ego or the notion of a stable "self," a notion rejected in Buddhist doctrinal orthodoxy. Buddhism might posit the "I-think," but it is impossible for Buddhism to posit the conjoint "I-am."

Yet, the question remains whether the Buddha has become an enlightened thinker in the European mode after his awakening. The Buddha's spiritual awak-

ening is never left behind; it constitutes the basis for forms of asceses that negate the view of the Buddha as a rationalist in the Enlightenment sense. Thus, alongside texts that seem to give a premium to conceptual rationality, there are others that seem to put the Buddha into a class with diviners, shamans, and spirit mediums, with an importance difference though: the Buddhist meditative ascesis entails a rigorous discipline and technology.

In the *Mahāpadāna Sutta,* monks are engaged in discussions about peoples' previous lives, and the Buddha, overhearing this conversation, mentions that he can, through meditative concentration, remember the lives of past Buddhas; furthermore, "gods also revealed these matters to him, enabling him to remember [all those things]."[69] This he actually does in the *Janavasabha Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (The Long Discourses). Here the Buddha tells lay supporters what happened to their near and dear relatives after their deaths; consequently these people were "filled with joy and happiness at these solutions by the Exalted One of the problems that were put to him."[70] In this same text, his dead friend and patron King Bimbisāra, reborn in one of the heavens as Janavasabha, now appears before him and gives him a description of the heavenly hierarchy of gods and this information is then relayed to ordinary folk. On other occasions the Buddha talks of his capacity to get into meditative trances and perform actions reminiscent of shamanic virtuosity.

> From being one he becomes multiform, from being multiform he becomes one: from being visible he becomes invisible: he passes without hindrance to the further side of a wall or a battlement or a mountain, as if through air: he penetrates up and down through solid ground, as if through water: he walks on water without dividing it, as if on solid ground: he travels cross-legged through the sky, like the birds on wing: he touches and feels with the hand even the Moon and the Sun, beings of mystic power and potency though they be: he reaches, even in the body, up to the heaven of Brahma.[71]

When this experience is over, the Buddha, or his trained disciples, *arahants*, can switch back to normal life and to discursive I-thinking. And so back and forth from It-thinking to I-thinking without ever imagining that the existence of I-thinking implies the certitude of the ego and the primacy of Reason.Yet, once the mysterium tremendum of the Buddha's experience under the bodhi tree has become normalized, It-thinking begins to exist in a positive dialectical relationship with the thinking-I. But surely the one must influence the other in a kind of unwitting feedback process (but not a closed circuit), and this further implies

that the original vision itself might be influenced by prior thoughts, if not fantasy activity in Freud's sense. If so, the visions concretize and give validation and profundity to prior knowledge, even knowledge taken for granted such as the common belief in rebirth. For example, before the Buddha's deep trance and his awakening, he studied under several gurus and he must already have had knowledge of rebirth, if not karma, and therefore, as Jung would say, these ideas would have been "incubating" in his mind for some time before the experience.[72] We can therefore say that ideally the dialectical interplay between the It and the I can be formulated thus: prior thoughts or fantasy activity with or without the mediation of the I > visions, dreams, and ideas mediated by the It > reformulation of the visionary knowledge through I-thinking > the process in reverse. This formula represents an ideal typical relationship and need not be empirically present because one can have a visionary experience and just leave it at that. And though I find it hard to believe that visions can be created de novo, out of a blank slate as it were, many visions probably gave clarity and noetic power to what existed in the mind as hazy thoughts or fantasy activity.[73] One must also remember that the Buddhist discourses, like its Greek counterparts, could exist as an independent discursive activity *without* a prior visionary experience. Thus Buddhism has many dialogues, such as those dealing with caste and human species equality that has nothing whatsoever to do with a prior visionary experience. So with the other side of the coin: many virtuosos perhaps were simply satisfied with the noetic knowledge imparted by the vision without bothering to reformulate it rationally.

DAYBREAK: THE SPACE OF SILENCE AND THE EMERGENCE OF APHORISTIC THINKING

> Meanwhile the Mind, from pleasure less,
> Withdraws into its happiness:
> The Mind, that Ocean where each kind
> Does streight its own resemblance find;
> Yet it creates, transcending these,
> Far other Worlds and other Seas;
> Annihilating all that's made
> To a green Thought in a Green shade.
> —Andrew Marvell, "The Garden"

The first watch of the Buddha's night helps us understand problems of time and space that brings to the fore the idea of It-thinking. During the second watch, the Buddha's personal life histories are extended to include those of human beings in general, their births and rebirths in various realms of existence. Through the "pictorial representation" of births and rebirths, the Buddha can grasp the doctrine of karma, can *see* it operating. But what about the third or dawn watch: what is its paradigmatic significance? There the Buddha discovers the central doctrines of Buddhism, known as the Four Noble Truths. These are *dukkha*, suffering, the unsatisfactory nature of existence owing to the fact of impermanency; *samudaya*, how *dukkha* arises owing to *taṇhā*, thirst, attachment, greed, desire, or craving; *nirodha*, cessation of craving that will ultimately lead to nirvana; and *magga* or the path that might help us realize nirvana and also known as the "noble eightfold path:" right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. Right concentration is *samādhi*, the meditative disciplines leading to complexly graded states of trance (*jhāna*, *dhyāna*) that permitted the Buddha to intuit these very truths.[74] We do not know how the Four Noble Truths appeared to the sage in the dawn watch. But we do know that after he received this knowledge he delivered his first discourse in the Deer Park at Varanasi, titled, "Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma," in which the intuitively discovered truth is given rational reworking, although not in a very deep fashion in this early text.[75] More profound texts tell us that when an awakened being has arisen in the world there is a great light and radiance and then "there is the explaining, teaching, proclaiming, establishing, disclosing, analyzing, and elucidating the Four Noble Truths."[76]

We noted that some texts say that during the third watch the Buddha discovered the idea of conditioned genesis that highlights the interdependence of all actions, giving philosophical justification for the world of becoming, change, and instability. In the third watch, unlike the previous ones, thoughts are no longer represented in picture form. They appear as *ideas* entering the passive consciousness of the thinker when deep trance is thinning out into daybreak, a time of creativity that is not unfamiliar to some of us. *Daybreak* is the title of one of Nietzsche's aphoristic texts and I will try to understand the genesis of aphorisms by getting back to Nietzsche, his deconstruction of the ego, and his predilection for aphorisms.

I begin my inquiry by asking why Nietzsche made such a strong case for It-thinking when he surely should have known the obvious fact that there is no way one can escape from the thinking "I" in human discourse and writing, including his own. To resolve this issue let me consider in more detail Nietzsche's notion of It-thinking formulated in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886).[77] There he lampoons those

"harmless self-observers who believe there are 'immediate certainties,' for example, 'I think,' or as the superstition of Schopenhauer put it, 'I will'; as though knowledge here got hold of its object purely and nakedly as 'the thing in itself,' without any falsification on the part of either the subject or the object" (BGE, 21). This is Nietzsche's critique not only of Descartes derivation of the Ego on the basis of immediate certainty but also of much of Western metaphysics that held similar notions including an absolute a priori, unfalsifiable certainty (the Kantian "the thing in itself").

These ideas are hammered out in his late work *Twilight of the Idols* (1888) before his own reason was finally blotted out. During that twilight zone he makes the point that behind the reification of the ego is the idea of Reason (rationality), and this, in his horrendous sexist language of contempt, is what brings about "the horrendum pudendum of the metaphysicians."[78] Nietzsche's terrible wrath is focused on Descartes and Kant (Nietzsche's bête noires) who represents the folly of Western metaphysics. "It is this [reason] which sees everywhere deed and doer; this which believes in will as cause in general; this which believes in the 'ego,' in the ego as being, in the ego as substance [*res extensa*], and which projects its belief in the ego-substance on to all things. . . . Being is everywhere thought in, foisted on, as cause; it is only from the conception 'ego' that there follows, derivatively, the concept of 'being.'"[79] One cannot infer from our use of the "I" an entity known as the ego or self and beyond that to an entity known as the soul (and, of course, God), which was how Descartes reasoned in his third and fourth discourse on method.[80] For Nietzsche, the idea of the soul as an indestructible, eternal, and indivisible entity or "atomon" should be "expelled from science," though it could be retained as a trope, fruitfully redefined in such notions as "mortal soul," "soul as subjective multiplicity," or "soul as social structure of drives and affects" (BGE, 20).

When one analyses the phrase "I think," says Nietzsche, there are assumptions that are difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove: for example, that it is "I" who thinks; that there must be something that thinks; or "that thinking is an activity and operation of the part of a being who is thought of as a cause, that there is an 'ego,' and, finally, that it is already determined what is to be designated by thinking—that I know what thinking is" (BGE, 23). Reminiscent of the later Wittgenstein, Nietzsche calls these the "superstitions of logicians," and he would have none of it, even though, unhappily, Nietzsche himself could not escape from a notion of immediate certainty in his doctrine of the "will to power!"[81] To sum up: there are two sides to Nietzsche's deconstruction of the ego. First, a critique of the Cartesian cogito and the assumption in Western metaphysics of "substance," and the concomitant uncertainty regarding the nature of thinking itself,

especially the notion that there is a reasoning "I" that thinks. (For substance, see my note 48, book 3, on "Spinoza's god.") Second, it seems to me that Nietzsche does not deny I-thinking in a purely nominal sense, but he downgrades it and resurrects the important notion of "It-thinking," albeit as a trope or a descriptive label rather than a theoretical term.

Let me develop the last idea further by asserting that there are several levels of It-thinking, beginning with our silent thinking, which occurs without reflexivity, such as reverie and daydreaming. It is therefore tautological to say that reflexivity or reflection is *self-reflection* appearing only with the "I" and hence the delusion that the existence of the "I" implies the existence of an ego, self, or soul. I-thinking requires the active consciousness, whereas the "It" operates for the most part in my silently emerging thoughts when, as with visions and dreams, ideas seem to float into my awareness. It is only when I speak or write down my thoughts that the thinking-I can reappear. And as there are different, though finite forms of It-thinking, so is it with the thinking-I. Thus all of us in our everyday living and decision making must necessarily employ I-thinking to function in the workaday world. This form of universal commonsensical I-thinking or practical rationality must surely be differentiated from the Cartesian cogito, the certitude of the ego, and the reification of reason. When dealing with theoretical issues, I will for the most part deal with this last.

At the other extreme from the passive ruminations I mentioned is the kind of meditative ascesis of the Buddhist, and, in between, there are gradations of It-thinking, depending on the degree of the active consciousness's suspension, as, for example, in Doolittle's experience with psychoanalysis. And so is it with our ordinary experience when creative ideas, including abstract thoughts or concepts, occasionally emerge into consciousness during states of "unawareness." These states can be fleeting ones, as for example when I am walking by myself in a cool morning outside my house in Kandy; or during greener years as I jogged or walked along the towpath by Lake Carnegie in Princeton; or when I am lazing around absentmindedly and thoughts simply come to the surface; or when I slip into a moment of unawareness; or when I shower; or (more rarely and ludicrously) when I sit on the commode letting silence invade me.[82]

"The gestation of all really great creation," Nietzsche mused sentimentally, "lies in loneliness" (CN, 128). By "loneliness" he did not mean hostility to human company but "solitude," which opens up the "inward eye" of European romantics such as Wordsworth. For both Wordsworth and Nietzsche, and others like them, solitude is something cultivated, like Marvell's garden, that "delicious solitude" into which the poet escapes and where he experienced his revelatory moment.[83] Our kinds of solitude seekers cultivate the space of silence that permits

It-thoughts to emerge into consciousness. Thousands seek solitude; and modern packaged tours tout them; but not the *cultivation* of solitude which, like the cultivation of meditation, is a disciplinary exercise. If in the nineties I could walk on the towpath of Princeton and let silence steal into my ear, not now as I walk at daybreak in Central Park. I am one of the very few who have not blocked out silence: most of the walkers and almost all joggers have plugged their ears with packaged music or cell phone conversations, as if silence is a noise that has to be eradicated. I am not suggesting that people should not listen to music, because we all do that during our normal lives. Only that, living in our increasingly turbulent world, we must be able to be in tune with the flow of the silence and tap its creative potential. We do know that, however difficult, one can sometimes block out noise that assails the ear and cultivate an area of silence within the stream of traffic, as I believe Wittgenstein did in World War 1 when he jotted his thoughts in his notebook, indifferent to the roar of cannons pounding away their message of death. But it is not easy nowadays to *elect* silence into one's life pattern as Buddhist monks did in times past and Hopkins did 142 years ago:

> Elected Silence, sing to me
> And beat into my whorlèd ear,
> Pipe me to pastures still and be
> The music that I care to hear.

Now let me consider Nietzsche's own visionary consciousness, which few have noted, and follow his aphoristic thinking for which he justly famous, those green thoughts that came to him in the green shades into which he meandered. Nietzschean visions were reported by Resa von Schirnhofer around mid-August 1884 in Sils-Maria, located about six thousand feet above sea level, where Nietzsche stayed at a hotel for several years after 1884, though not continuously. Here he ate alone, refusing the company of others. Here he told von Schirnhofer about "his bouts of raging headaches and the various medications he had tried against them," often deadly self-medications including chloral hydrate and potassium bromide, sometimes signing prescriptions for himself as Dr. Nietzsche![84] She also mentions that, after Nietzsche had remained invisible for one and a half days owing to his endemic illness, she and a friend visited him one morning.

> As I stood waiting by the table, the door of the adjacent room on the right opened, and Nietzsche appeared. With a distraught expression on his pale face, he leaned wearily against the post of the half-opened door and immediately began to speak about the unbearableness of his ailment. He described to me how, when he closed

> his eyes, he saw an abundance of fantastic flowers, winding and intertwining, constantly growing and changing forms and colors in exotic luxuriance, sprouting one out of the other. "I never get any rest," he complained, words which were implanted in my mind. Then, with his large, dark eyes looking straight at me he asked in his weak voice with disquieting urgency: "Don't you believe this condition is a symptom of incipient madness? My father died of a brain disease."[85]
>
> (CN, 164)

In spite of his Dionysian ideals, Nietzsche was in reality an Apollonian thinker searching for the stated ideal he could never realize, except in theory and in his fictionalized creation Zarathustra. It is not surprising therefore that he seemed unable to cultivate these visions (whether evoked spontaneously or provoked by his medications) and incorporate them into his being. Instead he related them in rational fashion to his inherited madness, thus pathologizing them as his middle-class contemporaries did, failing to accommodate these visions of burgeoning life into his intellectually formulated Dionysian scheme of things. Resa von Schirnhofer thought his condition at this time was one of "rampant anxiety." She adds that she could not find in the copious Nietzsche literature any reference to such a direct statement of his madness, fears that apparently attracted him to Strindberg, the dramatist who dealt with familial turmoil arising from inherited diseases (CN, 165). It is the case that in his later years Nietzsche was fearful of madness and, though he confessed it in his notebooks, he could not talk about it freely with others. Yet, the version he gave Schirnhofer was probably not fully symptomatic of his psychic state because this was the period he was working on book 3 of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. It is hard to believe that, although he was fearful of his mental health, Nietzsche was immune to the spirit of the prophet he had just created, his idealized alter (or "ego-ideal"). When he visited his old friends Franz and Ida Overbeck in Basel on June 15, 1884, the former wrote with rare insight: "It is now only in the world of his visions that he can sometimes feel happy, until it comes over him that he is, for the time being, alone in his understanding of them."[86] There was almost no one he could talk to freely, let alone find a congenial community to associate with. Ronald Hayman says that he could hardly speak of his philosophical work with his colleagues. "[Jakob] Burckhardt, embarrassed at having to comment on *Zarathustra*, asked whether he had ever thought of trying his hand at drama, and he [Nietzsche] failed to gather reassurance from his other ex-colleagues: 'It was like being surrounded by cows.'"[87] Surrounded, as he was, by cows, it was not surprising that Nietzsche kept his visions to himself, thereby closing the door on them as, unfortunately, he did with us as well.[88]

Nietzsche was an ascetic wanderer living under the shadow of chronic disease and dread of madness, never in one place for long, rarely in his German homeland. Many a friend or stranger noted Nietzsche's unending pain of mind *and* his creativity during his wandering life. As early as 1877, while still in the University of Basel, he was vacationing with a group of friends in Sorrento when one of them noted: "he walked with his head leaned back, like a Sorrento prophet, with half-closed eyes, through the long avenues of blossoming orange trees. . . . His manner of speaking was undramatic and matter of fact; in the simplest tone of voice he could pronounce sentences which were so seminal and significant that they seemed spoken *sub specie aeterni*" (CN, 92). Much later, Paul Lanzky, an older acquaintance, called him "the wandering philosopher" and "the former professor, now a fugitive" (CN, 174, 178). Victor Helling dubbed him the "great hermit of Sils-Maria" (CN, 21). Once, while walking with a stranger, Sebastian Hausmann, the latter reported: "He spouted his thoughts forth, more in the form of aphorisms, always leaping one to the other" (CN, 139). Another acquaintance reported in 1885 from Leipzig where he stayed on several occasions: "Every afternoon he strolled pensively, his hands behind his back . . . not far from the zoological garden" (CN, 141). Paul Lanzky thought that Nietzsche really valued human company; yet he also mentioned his "longing for stillness, indeed this temporary reveling in the idyllic" (CN, 171). The ambivalence toward his solitariness was intrinsic to his character, and, though he complained of his isolation and loneliness, he also seemed to enjoy it and could not do without it. That longing was probably best realized in Sils-Maria with its secluded forest paths tempting the wanderer to be alone with himself (CN, 182–83).

One reporter noted in September 1885 the philosopher wandering in a "heroic landscape." "The sight of the wanderer striding with a rapid step and upright head in the evening sun will always remain unforgettable to me" (CN, 188). It was in this kind of solitude that the aphorisms of *Daybreak*, *The Joyful Science,* and *Beyond Good and Evil* were written, according to Lanzky (CN, 161). But let us listen to Nietzsche himself praising the calm and silence of Sils-Maria in a beautiful poem composed sometime between 1882 and 1883 when parts 2 and 3 of *Zarathustra* were being written, inspired perhaps by the vision of the prophet himself:

I sat there waiting, waiting—not for anything.
Beyond good and evil, enjoying soon the light,

Soon the shade, now only play, now
The lake, now the noon, wholly time without end.

Then suddenly, friend, one became two
And Zarathustra passed by me.[89]

It is in such silent meditative contexts that aphoristic thinking emerges into consciousness without an intrusive I. I think these contexts led Nietzsche to downgrade the ego and reify the It. Visions were not Nietzsche's forte; but not so with his nondiscursive silent thoughts reexpressed by him through the literary genre of aphorisms. For Nietzsche, as for Wittgenstein, aphorisms became the vehicle for the expression of It-thoughts. Needless to say, they could also be expressed in other ways, for instance when aphoristic thinking can be reformulated in the highly discursive language of the thinking-I. Malwida von Meysenbug reports that it was Nietzsche's acquaintance with the French moralists that "led him to express his thoughts in aphorisms" (CN, 84). This observation was confirmed much later by Lou Salome: "For many years he [Nietzsche] had been walking around with a La Rochefoucauld or a La Bruyere in his pocket" (CN, 118). But it is a mistake to confuse the French *model* of aphorisms for Nietzsche's need or motivation to give aphoristic expression to his most profound nonreflexive thoughts. Thus what I call aphoristic thinking is not necessarily congruent with the literary genre of aphorisms; they can be expressed in other genres also, as in Blake's "proverbs of hell" and Laocoön;[90] and in the opening lines of Yeats's poem of my epigraph appropriately named "Fragments":

Locke sank into a swoon;
The Garden died;
God took the spinning-jenny
Out of his side.

Whether these aphorisms came from a medium's mouth as the poet claims or otherwise, one might appreciate the significance of his saying "out of nothing it came," if one takes that phrase to mean something indeterminate: a nothingness, an abyss, a void, a Buddhist store consciousness, an unconscious, or a state of unawareness. All these terms will appear in this essay. Similar "fragments" appear in the well-known enigmatic sayings of Zen masters. And consider this one line in Blake's "proverbs of hell" in his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom." Blake's proverbs have a nice sound to them, but can one make sense of that one line without a full exegesis? Even if we reasonably take "palace of wisdom" to mean what it literally says, there is much we miss unless we can understand some of Blake's own ideas that can fill the semantic space left undetermined by the enigmatic statement. For example, we

know that Blake felt that the "cleansing of the doors of perception" is a prerequisite to wisdom because "perception" is clouded by the physical senses extolled by rational science. Another aphorism makes the point that by yielding to sense perceptions man has "closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' the narrow chinks of his cavern" (CW, 154). We have to cleanse ourselves of bodily perception to reach spiritual knowledge or the "palace of wisdom." And we would miss the significance of "excess" unless we knew a little bit of Blake's own background knowledge, the impress of Luther's commentary on Psalm 115: "That is excessus when a man is elevated above himself . . . and illuminated sees that he is nothing. He looks down, as it were, from above into himself, into his own shadows and darkness. Nevertheless he is looking down from his position on a mountain."[91] Luther in turn borrowed the term from medieval theology, for example in Bonaventure for whom *excessus* refers to the adoration of God through prayer that leads the soul to ecstasy.[92] Thus it seems that while some aphorisms might have immediate intelligibility, others are often enigmatic, clouded in dense expressions requiring detailed exegeses.

I will borrow Lou Salome's phrase and label Nietzsche's silent thinking processes the "aphoristic mode of work" (CN, 118). The aphoristic mentality—the mentality that converts nonreflexive thought into aphorisms and other literary forms—does not necessarily require trance or somnolent states. It only requires moments when active egoistic thinking is in abeyance or, Wordsworth said, when one is "in vacant or in pensive mood." As in the case of dreams, one cannot capture such thoughts as they emerge into consciousness but, as with dreams, one has to be satisfied with the remembered text. I am not given to express my thoughts aphoristically, but when I used to walk into solitariness I sometimes carried pencil and paper to jot down thoughts floating into my ken. Why so? As with dreams, it is difficult to fully recollect ones It-thoughts, although one can be trained to do so, which clearly was the case with Nietzsche. In 1877, while still at the University of Basel, Reinhardt von Seydlitz reports that Nietzsche "kept next to his bed a slate tablet on which, in the dark, he jotted down the thoughts that came to him on sleepless nights" (CN, 91). Again much later, in 1884, in his favorite place, Sils-Maria, our prophet repeats the same marvelous advice to Resa von Schirnhofer: "keep paper and pencil in hand at night, as he himself did, since at night we are often visited by rare thoughts, which we should record immediately on awakening in the night, for by morning we usually do not find them again, they have fluttered away with the nocturnal darkness" (CN, 149). But these thoughts must also have arisen during his daytime walks into solitude, for it must be remembered that Nietzsche was near blind, so that he could hardly "recognize a person on the street" (CN, 33). Like the blind Tiresias, he also could

see the truth with his powerful, penetrating near-blind eyes, noted by virtually everyone. For Nietzsche there was not that radical a distinction between night and day, between nocturnal and daytime creativity. In his early academic career, when he was lecturing at Basel, he could not tolerate sunlight, so that "even with moderate sunlight the window blinds had to be half-shut" (CN, 37).

If, in the case of shamans and similar visionaries, a drastic illness or a drastic asceticism, in the case of the Buddha myth, or a dark night of the soul (or combinations of these) was seen as a symbolic death heralding the visionary experience and the adoption of a religious vocation, not so with the Antichrist Nietzsche. The "nocturnal darkness" of approaching death and illness haunted his life, so that, I am sure, he would have sympathized with Alexander Pope who spoke of "this long disease, my life."[93] Nietzsche's was a prolonged but diffuse dark night of the soul at the end of which lay not a rebirth, or an awakening, but an unending silence and a blankness of mind and thought in which a great human being was metamorphosed, one might say, into the Idiot.[94] And Nietzsche seemed to have an intuitive grasp of that impending fate. Explaining to Arthur Egedi around 1882 about the practical necessity for his "aphoristic mode of expression," Nietzsche added: "I felt close to death and therefore pressed to say some things which I had been carrying around me for years. Illness compelled me to use the briefest of expression; the individual sentences were dictated directly to a friend; systematic realization was out of the question. That is how the book *Human, All Too Human* was written. Thus the choice of the aphorism will be understandable only from the accompanying circumstances" (CN, 129). This book contained the first mature expression of his aphoristic mode of thought and was written in 1878, a year before he retired from the University of Basel owing to unsupportable illness. It contained 638 aphorisms; in the next two years 758 were added.[95]

It would seem that Nietzsche's solitariness was conjoined to a prolonged, secular form of the dark night of the soul of those hermits, sages, shamans, penitents, and ascetics well known to us. No wonder the person who perhaps knew Nietzsche best, Lou Salome, found his thought and his solitary wandering life to be an expression of a "mystical" trait and that, at some level he was "a religious genius."[96] Nietzsche told Ida Overbeck that, though he had rejected the Christian god, he well might "perish from my passions, they will cast me back and forth; I am constantly falling apart, but I do not care" (CN, 145). Of his work style, Resa von Schirnhofer nicely noted it as "intensive work in brooding solitude" (CN, 146), and an acquaintance, Richard Reuter, described him as "a lonely man, seeking and loving loneliness, yet suffering deeply and painfully from it, lonelier of soul than any hermit ever was" (CN, 146, 82). Naturally, one might say, for here was a man suffering from painful illnesses, from the dread of impending

death and oncoming madness. When he was abandoned in 1882 by Lou Salome, the one woman he truly loved (after his own fashion), Nietzsche could say that during the winter of his gloomy discontent he had become like Timon of Athens. And, owing to his sister's jealous hostility to Lou, he mournfully noted that "this internal conflict is pushing me step by step, closer to madness."[97] Yet I would like to stretch my metaphor to say that Nietzsche, even during his bleak nights of despair, remained *awakened* to thoughts, perhaps even to visions that reached him from the shadows encircling him until these shadows choked him into a permanent silence, a silence without redress.

It is now time to leave Nietzsche temporarily and get back to the Buddha's discovery of the highly complex doctrine of causal interconnections known as dependent origination (*paticcasamuppāda*). I noted that in the third, or dawn watch, thoughts are no longer represented in picture form but rather as ideas that enter into the passive consciousness of the thinker when deep trance is thinning out into daybreak. Unlike the discovery of the Four Noble Truths, which also occurred on the third watch, we can make an informed guess as to how conditioned genesis entered the mind of the Buddha. There are detailed discussions of this doctrine in Buddhist texts; yet one enigmatic formula repeats itself with only minor variations. For example, in *The Shorter Discourse to Sakuludāyin*, the Buddha tells Sakuludāyin "I shall teach you the Dhamma: when this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases."[98] In this discourse, at least, the Buddha equates conditioned genesis with the doctrine itself, anticipating similar formulations by later Mahāyāna thinkers. Here the formula exists by itself, whereas in the very next discourse it is incorporated in a larger context and then given a conceptual designation: *paticcasamuppāda*. Here one of the Buddha's favorite disciples, Ānanda, deliberately asks a question, "In what way can a bhikkhu [monk] be called skilled in dependent origination?" The Buddha responds:

> When this exists, that comes to be;
> With the arising of this, that arises.
> When this does not arise, that does not come to be;
> With the cessation of this, that ceases.

He then briefly *explains* the enigmatic formula thus: "That is, with ignorance as condition, formations [come to be]; with formations as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, mentality-materiality; with mentality-materiality as condition, the six-fold base; with the six-fold base as condition, contact; with contact as condition, feeling; with feeling as condition, craving;

with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, being; with being as condition, birth; with birth as condition, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering."[99]

The discursive strategy is reasonably clear. The formulaic four-line statement is elaborated in various degrees of complexity in the Buddha's discourses. In another example a simple elaboration of the formula is given in a discourse explicitly entitled "Dependent Origination," very much like the statement mentioned earlier. This brief exegesis is followed by a much longer and more detailed one in the next discourse, significantly named "*Analysis* of Dependant Origination."[100] According to a collection of short texts known as *Udāna* (Inspired Utterances), the Buddha is said to have uttered the same formula in the first watch in the order given above, and in the second watch in the reverse order and in the third watch in both forward and reverse order, but in effect repeating the formula uttered during the first watch!

> This being, that is; from the arising of this, that arises; this not being, that is not; from the cessation of this, that ceases.[101]

What is happening with the four-line formulation of dependent origination is that, as with the Four Noble Truths, ideas also reach the Buddha when everyday consciousness or I-thinking is suspended. Because conditioned genesis is a further theoretical understanding of the Four Noble Truths, it makes sense for us to assume that this knowledge also entered the consciousness of the Buddha during the third watch. Remember that in the Buddha's case he discusses conditioned genesis in soteriological terms—in terms of life's ills and their cessation. It was left to the great Buddhist philosophers, particularly Nāgārjuna and his disciples, to deal with conditioned genesis having applicability to all of existence. The present Dalai Lama explains the formula succinctly: "Everything is composed of dependently related events, of continuously interacting phenomena with no fixed, immutable essence, which are themselves in constantly changing dynamic relations. Things and events are 'empty' in that they do not possess any immutable essence, intrinsic reality, or absolute 'being' that affords independence."[102] As Buddhist texts put it, "this is the way things really are" (*yathā bhūta*). In the West it is David Hume who came close to the Buddhist position.[103]

I suggest that the Buddha's formula of conditioned genesis not only fits the third or dawn watch, or daybreak, but, as an expression of aphoristic thinking, it is not at all alien to us. While the Buddha is not given to aphorisms in general, Mahāyāna thinkers such as Nāgārjuna are masters in the aphoristic mode

of expression. It is immaterial to me whether the empirical Buddha actually had this revealing experience during the third watch because often enough mythos represents in symbolic form the reality search of the truth seeker. The Buddha's dawn watch opens one's dimmed consciousness to aphoristic thinking wherein one can observe again the "passive intellect" at work. Aphoristic thinking condenses It-thoughts, just as dreams might be condensations of images. When I put my thoughts down as I walk lost in thoughtlessness, I, like the lonely Nietzsche, have had similar (admittedly less powerful) condensed insights that I then expand into discursive writing, although not as aphorisms. Even with Nietzsche or Wittgenstein, the written aphorism can be interspersed with I-thinking. Yet when written aphorisms are close to their original thought processes they exemplify the kind of enigmatic quality we noted in Blake's proverb on excess. They are not only thick with meaning but also frequently require exegeses, either by the author or by others, for them to be fully comprehended. The enigmatic, thick, often poetic nature of aphorisms defy translation and are amply demonstrated in Nietzsche's work and in the work of Wittgenstein, another wanderer with no fixed abode, and one who gave up his wealth and a comfortable existence for a life of ascetic simplicity.

Wittgenstein was familiar with Nietzsche's work, but it is not clear how much the latter influenced his own style of thinking, living, and writing. Some similarities are obvious. There is what I will call the "sensibility of the spirit," without giving the idea of "spirit" a narrow Christian doctrinal meaning. Nietzsche had killed the Christian god, but his biting denunciation of his father's religion in *The Anti-Christ* was tempered by his admiration for the sensibility of the spirit exemplified in Christ's own life and dispensation, without, however, the belief in God or in redemption through Jesus. His, I would say again, is a form of "secular spirituality." "Even today such a life is possible, for certain men even necessary: genuine, primitive Christianity will be possible at all times."[104] Wittgenstein, while rejecting the beliefs of his Catholic heritage or the trappings of the Church, was much more given to accepting the existence of God and redemption through him, even if the god was his own construction (inspired by Tolstoy's God) and was far removed from the abstract God of the philosophers of his time and of other times. Both were fascinated by Dostoyevsky: Nietzsche for Dostoyevsky's probing of the depths of the human psyche and Wittgenstein for his unique and unorthodox version of Christian mysticism. No wonder Wittgenstein also admired Blake, who rejected the "moral law" of the Christian churches for his own Dissenter's view of the Everlasting Gospel. Both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein eschewed the propositions of traditional logic, and both were sensitive to the power of music but ambivalent toward contemporary science, especially

Darwinism, to which they were hostile.[105] Perhaps both did not care to understand Darwin, although I think that Nietzsche was influenced by the evolutionary model when he sketched the prehistory of our ideas of punishment, guilt, and bad conscience in his *Genealogy of Morals*. Blake was the most radical of the three in flatly rejecting all propositions of science and logic and all forms of Enlightenment rationality. Wittgenstein and Nietzsche were also skeptical of the thinking of philosophers, with Wittgenstein brashly proclaiming that he had not read Aristotle, quite unlike Martin Heidegger who, in his lectures on Nietzsche, foolishly urged his students to "postpone reading Nietzsche for the time being, and first study Aristotle for ten to fifteen years."[106] Nietzsche did read Aristotle; but his resentment fell on his European predecessors, especially Kant, who, he felt, had no sense of the lived world, even as he formulated such notions as the categorical imperative and, especially, the idea of the noumenon ("the thing in itself"), owing to its vague and unverifiable nature.

If Nietzsche and Wittgenstein occasionally abjured Enlightenment rationality, it was because they felt, as Blake did, the expense of spirit that it fostered. Hence Blake and Nietzsche, if not Wittgenstein, idealized art in which they found spiritual solace for the ills of modernity. Our two philosophers were interested in psychology, but Wittgenstein, in spite of his avowed sympathy for Freud, was not interested in depth psychology, although he had brilliant discussions of perception, strongly influenced by the gestalt psychology of Wolfgang Köhler. He also, like Nietzsche, lived under the shadow of madness and impending death. And while Wittgenstein could often enough talk about "guilt," directly or indirectly, in respect of his own feelings, he could not probe the genesis or genealogy of guilt as Nietzsche did in his *Genealogy of Morals*.[107] Nietzsche, it seems to me, was the more profound thinker of the human psyche, while Wittgenstein was the more astute critic of philosophy and psychology. Yet, for me at least, Wittgenstein swam in the shallows of the psyche whereas Nietzsche plunged into its depths.

In both there lies a nobility of purpose in their intellectual honesty and passionate commitment to "truth," especially exposing intellectual obfuscation and "fishy" thinking. Nevertheless, the prejudice expressed in my earlier sentence compels me consider a few of the differences between them. To me the most appealing feature of Nietzsche's political views were his unpopular and no-nonsense criticism of German nationalism and his anti-anti-Semitism. Nevertheless he also succumbed to the prejudice of his times in asserting that blacks were an inferior race, quite unlike Blake, who had a more profound sense of species unity. By contrast, Wittgenstein was passionately German and fought for his nation in the First World War, proclaiming that he was "German through and through." He confessed that the "thought our race will be defeated depresses

me tremendously," this in spite of his family or because his family, like that of Teresa's ages ago, were "conversos."[108] Wittgenstein's anti-Semitism, often unpleasantly virulent, was part of the self-hatred for his Jewish heritage, which he felt was a "tumor" in the body politic. He was insensitive to the tumor in the body politic of his beloved Austria, until its annexation by the Nazis.[109] And worse, notwithstanding the tragedy of Hiroshima, he seemed to have loved the bomb, foolishly believing that it might be a deterrent for future wars but also perhaps implicitly pitting himself in almost all his writing against the unrelenting pacifist Bertrand Russell, the father figure he both loved and hated.[110] And, while he expressed sympathy for what he considered mysticism, his imagination, nurtured by pulp detective stories rather than science fiction, found the thought of sending a person to the moon an "outlandish" one.

What then ties Wittgenstein to the paradigmatic third watch of the Buddha's meditative night? This lies as with Nietzsche in his search for solitude, that creative ground of aphoristic thinking. Fania Pascal, Wittgenstein's friend and teacher of Russian, mentions his craving for solitude: "When Wittgenstein wished to flee from civilization, no place was remote or lonely enough."[111] For the early Wittgenstein, this was Norway. In spite of the bitter cold, he loved it and had built his own house with the thought of Norway as a permanent home (a thought that never materialized or never could because he was by destiny a wanderer). Till the very end of his life, Wittgenstein idealized his sojourns in Norway, such that "Norway" had become a state of mind rather than just a place. And, when Norway was not there, there were many places in Ireland to retreat into. He loved walks into the countryside whether he was in Norway, Ireland, Cambridge, or admiring the coastal beauty of Wales around Swansea. At Red Cross in Ireland he carried his notebook with him. A neighbor who "often saw Wittgenstein out on his favorite walk, reports that he once passed him sitting in a ditch, writing furiously, oblivious of anything going on around him."[112] This is not surprising because, as early as 1931, he could say: "I really do think with my pen, because my head often knows nothing about what my hand is writing."[113] During the latter period of his life he also communed with himself aloud: "Nearly all of my writings are private conversations with myself. Things that I say to myself tête-á-tête."[114]

I have affirmed that solitude is something cultivated like Marvell's garden, and Marvell's garden in turn leads me to speculate on the role of gardens in meditative settings of different sorts and in different places and times. The Buddha initially isolated himself in the forest, and when monasteries were formed in the Buddha's own time there were spaces for meditative solitude. Indeed donors gifted their orchards and gardens to monks in the very earliest period of Buddhism. When Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka in the second century

BCE, the evidence is clearer: monasteries were associated with enclosed forests, gardens, or orchards. The myth of the arrival of the Buddhist missions into Sri Lanka gives us hints as to how this occurred. It says that the Buddhist saint (*arahant*) Mahinda flew through the air and arrived at a forest later known as Mihintale where the king Tissa, in accordance with the royal (*kṣatriya*) lifestyle was out hunting, which, according to Buddhist doctrine, was an archetypal wrong act. The monk converted the king, while the place of the hunt became the first monastic complex in Sri Lanka. The myth expresses a reality that went into later Buddhism where the forest is tamed and converted into a garden and a space for solitude. Buddhists believe that the meditating monk, then and now, has also tamed the forest animals through the emanation of his compassion and they can do him no harm. Compassion itself possesses power. The model of the forest monastery is not unique to Buddhism but is based on a long Indic tradition of the relation between the ashram and the forest, as Romila Thapar nicely points out.[115] Viewed in this light, the episode of the place of the hunt being converted into a meditational site is simply a Buddhist manifestation of this structural opposition in Indic thought.

Coming into more recent times, that is, sometime during the period of the last kingdom of Kandy (1469–1815), the Royal Palace was linked to a forest known as *uḍavatte kälē*, "the upper side forest garden," that still exists under the same name as a haunt for lovers, tourists, a few meditating monks, and lots more monkeys. What has happened here is that the forest has been tamed and incorporated as part of the royal gardens. We know that Sri Lankan queens had paths in their gardens for solitary meditative walks, and from very early times Buddhist texts mention walkways for monks to engage in meditation. Ashrams and gardens and similar places provided for meditation are also *retreats,* offering the monk or layperson a chance to opt out of life or more often temporarily retreat from the noise of political conflict and the less strident noise of everyday life. So is it with Zen and Japanese Buddhism in general where aesthetics, meditation, and silence fuse into a single conception. It is in gardens or in spaces of solitude like those provided by gardens that the enigmatic or aphoristic utterances of Zen monks happened. Unfortunately, for us South Asians living today, and for those who have outlived their yesterdays, we have become hopeless witnesses of ashrams sprouting everywhere and thrusting themselves into the political arena. So is it with Buddhist temples. Rarely are they spaces of silence and sanctuaries for ordinary people to retreat into. Worse: hideous statues of the Awakened One appear everywhere, even in choking intersections spewing smog, a sign that the Buddha has been transmuted into a figure of our hapless modernity. And Hindu and Bud-

dhist spirituality, imitating its Western forms, can now be bought and sold in the market place. Hope withers on its stalk when *noise* invades the ashram.

Solitude is not the search for loneliness: the Buddha, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Zen monks, and others like them enjoyed congenial human company whenever it was available, and some of us know that such company is hard to find. Rarely did meditating monks live in total isolation from the world. Outside the cultivated spaces for solitude, they enjoyed the company of fellow meditators and lay folk without losing the capacity to be absorbed unto oneself, to live alone like the single horn of the rhinoceros.[116] Wittgenstein once put it, during his sojourn at Red Cross in Ireland where mental solitude was conjoined to the physical: "Sometimes my ideas come so quickly that I feel as if my pen was being guided," which, he well knew, simply could not occur in the stuffy academic world of Cambridge and its overwhelming preoccupation with Enlightenment rationality. Hence he could add, "I now see clearly that it was the right thing for me to give up the professorship."[117] The rejection of Enlightenment rationality could not be the sole reason for rejecting academia, but I suspect it was a major one.

I am also not sure whether Wittgenstein was aware of his spiritual affinity with some of the European visionaries who will appear later on in this book: Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, William Blake, and Madame Blavatsky, all of whom claimed that large chunks of texts simply came to them through some divine or mysterious source, thoughts without a thinker as it were. It should be remembered that this was also a time when Wittgenstein came closest to orthodox Christianity: "I pray a good deal," but he is not sure "whether in the right spirit."[118] Nevertheless, I would say in relation to Nietzsche and Wittgenstein and to aphoristic thinkers in general that, in order to let oneself be hit by intuition, one does not have to *collapse* on the road to Damascus.

Unlike Nietzsche, Wittgenstein was not exclusively an aphoristic thinker. His *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was written in aphoristic form, but not all of his work. Yet, aphorisms sparkle everywhere in his writing, and it is no accident that his views of Descartes seem to echo Nietzsche's, perhaps even borrowed from the latter, as when he says in the *Tractatus*:

> There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas (5:631)
> Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found (5:633)
> Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it (5:64)[119]

Bertrand Russell pointed out the significance of this mode of work in the *Tractatus* when in an admirable understatement he described some of its propositions as "obscure through brevity."[120] Wittgenstein's aphoristic density of expression eluded the brilliance of his two mentors, Russell and Gottlob Frege. When he was given a copy, Frege could barely begin to read it, and Wittgenstein thought that Russell did not understand a word of it. Neither could most philosophers until painful exegeses by Wittgenstein's disciples made his thoughts accessible to a larger audience of philosophers. Those enigmatic statements of the *Tractatus* are evident in its opening propositions, perhaps the very ones that baffled Frege and put him off:

1. The world is all that is the case.
1.1. The world is the totality of facts, not of things.
1.11. The world is determined by the facts, and by their being all the facts.
1.12. For the totality of facts determines what is the case, and also whatever is not the case.
1.13. The facts in logical space are the world.
1.2. The world divides into facts.
1.21. Each item can be the case or not the case while everything else remains the same.[121]

These propositions are expounded later in further aphorisms and therefore, in fairness to Wittgenstein, his aphoristic statements are less haphazard than Nietzsche's but ordered into a greater systemic totality through I-thinking without, however, losing their aphoristic quality. Nevertheless, whether it is Nietzsche or Wittgenstein, aphoristic thought is hostile to footnotes or bibliographical references. One could even say that it is meaningless to have such things in aphorisms. They would dilute, and distract from, the power of the aphoristic message.

SCHREBER AND THE PICTORIAL IMAGINATION

> I cannot undertake to deny that madmen and dreamers believe what is false, when madmen imagine they are gods or dreamers think they have wings and are flying in their sleep.
>
> —Plato, *Theaetetus*, 158b

Daniel Paul Schreber was surely the most famous madman in modern history. It was Freud who first used Schreber's *Memoirs* in his pioneer study of the psychodynamics of paranoia. Since then, Schreber has been "rehabilitated" such that he now appears to be a misunderstood genius, an avatar of modernity, a man haunted by his father's cruel ghost—to sample a few the bewildering ways in which he has been represented.[122] From my point of view he was all of the above—a madman who eludes all conventional classificatory labels, a "mystic" and "religious genius," and like Nietzsche a critic of the traditional philosophy of religion and of contemporary modernity while at the same time representing modernity as well in his critical stance. Perhaps the most sympathetic and insightful portrayal of him is found in Zvi Lothane's *In Defense of Schreber*. I however want to supplement the list of his virtues with my take on him as a penetrating and yet befuddled thinker about It-thinking.

Because so much has been written about the life of Schreber and his family from different viewpoints, I am only going to deal with a few of his visionary experiences and his attempts to theorize about them. (See the following note for a synoptic account of his life.)[123] Schreber's visions are not ones that were immediately experienced by him, but those recollected and written down later in his *Memoirs*. In this sense everything Schreber says is based on later reflection and is analogous to the distinction one makes between the dream as dreamt and the script of the dream as it is later put down in writing. Nevertheless, to depict the realm of what Schreber called "religion" or the mysticism of Wittgenstein and that of other virtuosos is a difficult if not impossible task, unless one takes the easy way out and asserts with the beautiful but unreasonable (even tautological) aphorism that concludes the *Tractatus*: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." Many recognize that the way out of tautology is to assert that that there are no words for expressing certain things, as for example the thing called "mysticism," a point we will take up later. One can nevertheless forgive Schreber if he sometimes finds it hard to express the "incomprehensible" in ordinary discourse without contradiction and ambiguity, even obfuscation and obtuseness. Yet at other times Schreber can employ his own visionary experiences for giving what he considers rational answers to "mystical" problems. Thus Christ's virgin birth could occur "only in a mystical sense" because "nobody would maintain that God, as a Being endowed with human sexual organs, had intercourse with the woman from whose womb Jesus Christ came forth" (M, 17). So is his explication of what he considers dubious points of Christian doctrine, such as the Ascension, which simply could not occur in reality. They were only visions seen by his disciples and must, according to the theories he developed, be a prod-

uct of "nerve" force.[124] But I suspect that he is also making a case that, while his own visions were for the most part true, those of Christ's disciples were illusory.

However, when Schreber speaks of nonreligious matters such as the accounts of his stay in asylums or his plea for release to the high court, or when he is criticizing the psychiatry of the time, he is a model of clarity. I especially find his remarkable critique of the great psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin very appealing and in line with his views of the unspeakable nature of the "supernatural." Kraepelin, he says, may be partially right in his negative characterization of the "supernatural communication" of his sick patients, but "science would go very wrong to designate as 'hallucinations' *all* such phenomena that lack objective reality, and to throw them into the lumber room of things that do not exist." Kraepelin may be on the right track, however, when he is dealing with phenomena that cannot be characterized as "supernatural." "If psychiatry is not flatly to deny everything supernatural and thus tumble with both feet into the camp of naked materialism, it will have to recognize the possibility that occasionally the phenomena under discussion may be connected with real happenings, which simply cannot be brushed aside with the catch-word 'hallucinations'" (M, 84).[125] It is these "real happenings" that Schreber describes in his maddening memoirs. Yet, in criticizing naked materialism, he was close to many visionary thinkers such as Blake and to his near contemporaries the Theosophists and the many educated persons in Europe and in the U.S. influenced by evangelical and spiritualist movements.

Visions, in Schreber's own theory, are not based on ordinary human language but on the language of "nerves," which embraces both the ordinary meaning of *nerves* and an extended or extraordinary meaning of "spirit" or "soul stuff." Nerves don't speak, but they "vibrate in the way which corresponds to the use of the words concerned," as a kind of substitute for ordinary language (M, 54). Ordinary healthy individuals are incapable of understanding this "nerve-language." Schreber's God, who lives in the "forecourts of heaven," is literally a bundle of nerves, that is, he is constituted of soul material. Unhappily, that Being is somewhat otiose; but if human beings act according to the "order of the world" no clash could occur between God and man.[126]

In his thinking, the rays emanating from God can "infuse dreams into a sleeping human being," thus causing either weal or woe (M, 55).[127] In Schreber's case, his psychiatrist Flechsig somehow used his (Flechsig's) nerves to cause woe to Schreber. He mentions that Flechsig has a dual persona; his hospital persona might be that of a humane person of "integrity and moral worth." But there is another Flechsig who, via his own nervous system, "maintained a hypnotic or similar contact with me in such a way that even when separated in space, you exerted an influence on my nervous system," that is, when he was in Pierson's or

Weber's lunatic asylum (M, 10). This means that Schreber has no mastery over his own nerves, a violation of his "natural right." Because he also experienced other voices of supernatural origin speaking to him, it may be that Flechsig wanted to investigate them out of "scientific" interest. It seems that Schreber's retrospective discourse reconciles the humane Flechsig with the Flechsig who runs the asylum. It is the latter Flechsig who causes "soul murder" by engaging in medical "malpractice."[128] The effect of his deleterious nerve contact on Schreber is "compulsive thinking," that is, being compelled "to think incessantly," although by "thinking" he does not mean rational discourse (M, 55).

Like other visionaries, Schreber also suffered the dark night of the soul from around the middle of March to the end of May 1894, which he characterizes as the "gruesome time" of his life but also "the holy time" because he was in constant touch with supernatural beings. He describes in graphic detail the cruel treatment he received from the outside, that is, the asylum; yet paradoxically this very situation facilitated "supernatural inspiration" when he was filled with the sublimity of God and Order of the World. He says that he was not a person given to passion; clearheaded and sober he was, implicitly imploring the reader to take him seriously. He had been a materialist and a believer in evolution, but all this changed during this "holy time," which was also a time of pain. He has to recollect the experiences of that time from memory because he lacked writing material. The last statement is a bit ambiguous because at this time he believed mankind had perished "so that there was no purpose in writing notes" (M, 71). Very likely he did have access to writing material, but the power of his religious experiences were such that perhaps he could not write, because writing entails a form of discursive activity that can only occur as "secondary elaboration" for those who experience visions. His later capacity for a more rational and reflective form of thought makes him skeptical about the empirical reality of some of his experiences. For example, he says "it is extremely difficult to distinguish mere dream-visions from experiences in a waking state, that is to say to be certain how far all that I thought I had experienced was in fact historical reality," a dilemma that also appears in others inhabiting this essay (M, 71). Then, in tune with his later reflective scribal spirit, Schreber draws a neat sketch of Flechsig's "nerve clinic" at Leipzig University, the premises where he lived, though occasionally in spirit form. "I was somewhere else for a time" existing in the other worlds or immersed in other states such as his downward descent and his reversed evolutionary fantasy that I have already mentioned.

I will describe a few more of Schreber's religious experiences. With the increasing sensitivity of his nerves, he is subject to increasing "attraction" by spiritual forces, especially of those souls who had known him when they were alive.