



ANOVELIDEA

Richard Denner

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PREFACE by Bouvard Pécuchet

Shaggy curves in a fuzzy country. In turn, a state with roads that aren't on any map.

This story combines mystery, adventure, and inquiry. It's the story of an idea. It is also the inner, outer, and secret autobiography of a man. The measure is time. The place is the mind.

This painting is art brut. The colors are fauve. The forms verge on the surreal. There is a mustache on the Mona Lisa. And, then, it is erased.

This music is punk capriccio. You can hear a requiem contrapuntal to a marching band. *Night in Tunisia* beat out on the lid of a garbage can. John Cage playing an electrified cactus with a feather.

The imaginary prisons of Piranesi. The continuous conundrums of Escher.

Hard whites, infernal yellows, sulfur and yellowgreen. It starts with a smudge of paint and becomes a painting. It starts with silence and becomes the sound of one hand clapping. It is seriously silly. Weep anew!

A rose is a rose is a rose. – Gertrude Stein

A ~~rose~~ is a ~~rose~~ is a ~~rose~~. – Martin Heidegger

~~A rose is a rose is a rose.~~ – Longchen Rabjam

Whence came this idea, from what source, origin, or cause? A full, scientific description of the process an idea undergoes in its formation is not yet possible, but, given the limitations of my memory and my ability to reflect, I can trace the tendrils of the idea I have in mind back to my first readings of Nietzsche, after I had flunked out of Cal Berkeley, in 1960.

The volume I was reading in the area designated for lunch breaks at the State Farm Insurance Company, where I was employed as a bindery clerk in the Administrative Services Department, was the Doubleday Anchor edition of Francis Golffing's translations of *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Genealogy of Morals* by Friedrich Nietzsche. Both books deal with the dissonance between the moral and aesthetic approaches to life.

Aesthetics and morals. Another tendril takes me to a question I asked Allen Ginsberg at the Berkeley Poetry Conference, in 1965. I had ventured north from California State Polytechnic College, in San Luis Obispo, where I had been studying English and Philosophy, to rub shoulders with poets from the Beat Generation, the Black Mountain School, and the San Francisco Renaissance. Having discussed with Gary Snyder my plan to go to Alaska and earn money to start a bookstore in Berkeley and receiving the advice not to start a bookstore in Berkeley but to go to the hinterlands and find a place that needed a Berkeley-style bookstore, I asked Allen Ginsberg whether it was better to be a good business man and a bad poet or a good poet and a bad business man. (Yes, young men ask these kinds of questions.) Allen said, "Just be good!"

And another tendril reaches into a poem I wrote at Lu Garcia's house soon after the conclusion of the Berkeley Poetry Conference:

PATTERNS

look at the numbers
Kant 478a-79d
there is beauty in the moral order
and Bacon who should
be in Everyman's Library
knew Augustine confessed

I have a friend who says

there are 3 principles
the good, the bad
and that which is neither
good nor bad

as for the which is neither
my friend told me to stop
smoking, which changed my life
because I do smoke 2 to 3 packs

I write this sitting
on a Persian rug
listening to a harpsichord
on a Victrola play
Partia #2 in C Minor
Schmieder 826

478793232826
in the bottom of the 9th

The tap root of the idea I have in mind is to be found in Plato. There the *transcendentals* (the True, the Good, and the Beautiful) are ontological properties of Being. Truth can be verified by reason, the Good by action, and the Beautiful by experience of proportional harmony. In the *Symposium* (Cooper, John, ed. 1997. *Plato: Complete Works*, Indianapolis: Hackett, p. 211), Plato says, "The true order of going is to use the beauties of the earth as steps along which to mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty: from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions until he arrives at the idea of absolute beauty." Perusing the *Wikipedia* article on the transcendentals, I see that France Diderot compared the True, the Good, and the Beautiful to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the German J. G. Sulzer, in a supplement to Diderot's *Encyclopaedie* in 1776, translated the ideas in terms of the aesthetic, the moral, and the intellectual. (Crocker L. G., *Two Diderot Studies* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1952, pp. 99-101.) Truth-Goodness-Beauty become linked and convergent, almost like atoms of thought. You cannot have one without the other.

But what is the idea that has come to obsess me? Dear reader, please indulge me a little longer. I am warming to my subject, but I wish to proceed cautiously, introducing important characters and events as ballast to my intellectual endeavor. Ideas can remain dormant for long intervals. Like with a plant, the right conditions may not be present to enable the seed to sprout. The earth may be fertile; the air may be moist; but the temperature and light might be inadequate for germination. I feel my idea needed time not only to germinate but to grow. What other factors were involved in this idea? Who else had a hand in its development?

The idea appeared in my consciousness just after the completion of a traditional Tibetan Buddhist three-year retreat where I was ensconced in the cabin, known as Luminous Peak, at Tara Mandala Retreat Center in the San Juan Mountains, near Pagosa Springs, Colorado. I had completed a cycle of practices known as *Dzinpa Rangdröl* (Self-liberation of Clinging), a mind *terma* (treasure) revealed by Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje (1800-1866).

Ideas are funny things. I use the term “funny” both in the sense of amusing or comical and as curious or strange. Having completed my long retreat, I am amused (or, perhaps, the more accurate term would be to say that it is ironic) that, after all these years of rigorous mental training which were designed to enable me to rest in the nature of mind and stabilize the practice of non-thought, I would be having philosophical thoughts at all. Well, lo and behold, as all Dzog Chen meditators know, even if you have the ability to contemplate emptiness and rest in *rigpa* (ordinary mind), thoughts still arise. Whether you attach and cling to them or not is what is important. One discovers that when thoughts arise, they self-liberate all by themselves. No effort is required. But if a thought arises and the meditator becomes distracted (either caused by an idea from within or an event from without) and investigates the distraction, say traces it to a point in the past or projects it into the future, then the mind of the meditator leaves the state of calm abiding, moves away from the mindful-awareness meditation, and becomes engaged in a process of ratiocination.

As I said, I had completed my traditional three-year retreat. This was in the fall of 2012. There was a facet of the Dzog Chen training still to be transmitted by Tulku Sang ngag, our vajra master, but that would transpire at the lama’s pleasure. My friend, Beth Lee-Herbert, who had completed her retreat in Karuna, a cabin about a mile from Luminous Peak, and I were now trying to re-enter the everyday world.

We were having a rough go of it. As might be expected, it was not easy to leave our snug nests after three years (in our case, four) in isolation. True, we had gone from our cabins to the temple for brief periods to receive transmissions and explanations of the yogic practices we were to practice and accomplish, but for long stretches of time (six to eight months during the inclement months and, at other times, periods of one hundred days) we had only the wild folk as our companions.

Life in the world and life in the sangha (the fellowship of practitioners that had supported us) had continued unabated while Beth and I were in retreat. During the time frame of our retreat, a three-storied temple had been erected at Tara Mandala. Lama Tsultrim's vision, which she had while in retreat during the 1970's, had now evolved and manifested as a world-renowned retreat center in a dramatic physical setting. (Go to www.taramandala.org for more information.) But for the first two yogis to complete the long retreat at Tara Mandala, it was bumpy re-entering samsara. Even a pure land with retreat center is a mini-samsara. And there was facebook and smart phones to contend with, and the economy was coming out of a huge recession, and there were new rules to be followed on the land, and, then, a large statue of Machig Lapdrön (a 12th century Tibetan saint) went missing.

The county sheriff's department investigated and determined, based on the evidence—an empty wine bottle left on the altar, an empty bag that had contained beef jerkey, and deep footprints that led into the sagebrush—that the crime was vandalism. Perhaps, someone dared someone else to sneak into the temple and abscond with a statue. Once the police had left the scene, an internal investigation led to a different conclusion. A particular nun was found to be responsible because she had neglected to perform a required protectors practice. However, this particular nun had been invited to attend a yoga workshop and another nun had done the practice. The other nun was deemed an improper substitute because she was from a different lineage, regardless of the fact that she had been practicing with us for over a year. Therefore, it was determined that a karmic break in the protectors' practice had occurred, and demons had found a way to violate the temple. I was fully aware that Tibetans take their demonology very seriously and that the protectors practices are important in and around a temple to prevent harmful influences and obstacles, but I did not expect westerners with a high degree of empirical knowledge to be this superstitious and fall prey to Buddhist fundamentalism. I was shocked by this outcome.

My formal three-year retreat was completed, but I put myself back into retreat to reflect on new developments in my understanding of the nature of reality. *Karma* had now become a concept that bore some consideration. I sat down and read Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in the Anthony Briggs English translation (Penguin Classics). After years of immersing myself in Eastern mysticism, I needed to balance my mind with something from the West. *War and Peace* had the weight needed. Not only is it a great read, it's an extended meditation on causality. Tolstoy reveals that there is but a mere coincidence between the attempts of his characters to shape history to their own desires what is actually happening independent of their actions.

Karma can be described as both the activity and the result. Approaches to karma according to Trinley Norbu (*White Sail*, Shambhala, 1992): (1) karma originates in subjective consciousness (Vaisesika); (2) karma originates in ordinary conscious mind (Sutranta); (3) karma originates in the basis of all phenomena (Yogacara); (4) karma originates in interdependent circumstances (Madhyamika).

There is a basis for enlightenment in all these points of view, even though in the enlightenment stage of realization the effect of karma is transcended. From the practice of Vajrayana one discovers that is unnecessary to divide cause from result, and one thereby recognizes all activity is the spontaneous display of the emptiness of all phenomena and self. One realizes that there is no possessor of phenomena, so therefore all phenomena become illusory with the freedom of non-attachment. From the Dzog Chen (Great Perfection) perspective, there is no karma: if phenomena are unborn, there is nothing effected; therefore there can be no results. Still, karma is taught. Patrul Rinpoche, in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* (Shambhala 1994), writes:

*You know the relative to be a lie, yet still you practice the two accumulations.
You realize that in the absolute there is nothing to be meditated on, yet still you
practice meditation.
You see relative and absolute as one, yet still you diligently practice.
Peerless Teacher, at your feet I bow.*

I knew an idea was beginning to percolate. Bubbles were beginning to appear on the surface of my mind. I had been nearly four years in a cauldron under intense pressure. I read; I reflected; I meditated; and, then I went AWOL.

My gate keeper, Ani Kunsang, gave me a ride to town. I went to my storage locker, started my truck, and drove to Santa Fe. I contacted Lama Gyurme, whom I had assisted in the painting of lintels for the Tara Temple before going into retreat. It was Lama Gyurme who had sealed me into retreat, and I had promised him I would be his assistant upon completion of my retreat, and I wanted to talk with him and make plans for the next stage of my transition back into the everyday world. I stayed with Lama Gyurme and his family in their apartment at Project Tibet on Canyon Road where I contracted some kind of stomach virus, and a flow of vomit and shit projected from my orifices until I was exhausted. Then, I slept for two days and nights, occasionally receiving sips of chicken soup. When I could move around again, I headed back to Tara Mandala, knowing I should be present for a Solstice Ceremony to be held in the temple.

On my way along Hwy 84, just before I reached Abiquiu, I passed an inn with a gift shop, and I decided to turn around and go back in order to buy a present for Lama Tsultrim. Not a smart move. I picked the worst spot along the road between Santa Fe and Pagosa Springs to make this maneuver, and I was hit broadside by a car containing two women with their babies strapped in car seats. The place I had decided to make my U turn was between two curves, so I was not hit by a car traveling at high speed, but the impact was still severe.

The seat belt tightly gripped me. The air bag punched me. The impact sent my vehicle into a spin. I felt as though I was writhing in centrifugal force. My left eye saw dark and my right eye saw light. I looked up and saw the flat top of Pederal Mountain, a mountain I knew from the paintings of Georgia O'Keefe and is a physical and spiritual sentinel, central in the belief systems of the Apache, the Tewa, and the Navajo. A protector if there ever was one.

After the police arrived and it was determined that no one was injured, only shaken up, the vehicles were removed from the scene, the broken glass swept up, and I found myself standing by the side of the road with a satchel of clothes in one hand and a pair of snow boots in the other. A highway patrol man in a cruiser asked me if he could drop me off anywhere. I told him that I wanted to go to the Abiquiu Inn,

which was just around the bend. He drove me there. I got out of the cruiser. The wind was blowing. A tumble weed rolled by. I was wearing my robes, and they fluttered. The cruiser pulled away, and I entered the inn. There was a large photograph of Georgia O'Keefe above the counter. She was seated on the back of a motorcycle behind a man and turned towards the photographer with her hand raised in farewell. There was ethereal parlor music playing on the speaker system. Beneath the photo was a gray-haired lady that looked very much like the famous painter. She smiled and said, "Interesting escort you had." I thought, "Shit, I must be dead." If this were so, it would be ontologically inconvenient for me to return to Tara Mandala for the Solstice ceremony.

"I had an accident on the road," I said. "I gathered as much from the how the traffic slowed down," she said. "Would you like a cup of tea?"

I drank a cup of tea and booked myself into a room. I lay on the bed and stared at the ceiling. There was a stain where water had seeped through the plaster. I concluded from my feelings that I was out of my body and having a transpersonal experience on a subtle level arising from poor judgment on the causal level. I was experiencing confusion, and I attempted to organize my thoughts along the lines of Ken Wilber's 4 quadrants: the subjective, personal experience in the upper left-hand quadrant; the objective, measurable experience in the upper right-hand quadrant; the subjective, shared experience in the lower left-hand quadrant; and the measurable, institutional experience in the lower right-hand quadrant.

The subjective-"I" experience consisting of my eruption from retreat, my broken samaya with my lama, a possible awakening or heightening of consciousness through the recent near death event in the world space. The measurable events involved the various forces (horizontal and centrifugal) of two cars colliding (skid marks, speed) and any wounds or bruises, aches and pains on my body. The subject, shared dimension consisted of myths of descent and dismemberment (Iannah, Dionysus, and the accident happening at the base of Pedernal could easily be a magic-myth archetype image related to *Tröma* the wrathful tutelary deity of my recent meditations, the wrathful, devouring mother of primordial, transpersonal experience/trauma. And the measurable side involving institutional personae consisted of the County Sheriffs Department, the medics, and State Farm Insurance Company, as well as the Albiqui Inn where I was presently residing. At any rate, it was bad spot on the highway to make a U-turn.

The saga continued. I phoned Lama Tsultrim and told her what had happened, and she sent Beth to get me and bring me to the land. After a bath in Epson salts and many consoling words, I returned to Luminous Peak to reflect and heal. There, I re-read Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, looking for the exact moment this saga began. Here are two quotes that I copied into my notebook from Part V:

But to the extent that the subject is an artist he is already delivered from individual will and has become a medium through which the True Subject celebrates His redemption in illusion.

and

Only as an esthetic product can the world be justified to all eternity—although our consciousness of our own significance does scarcely exceed the consciousness a painted soldier might have of the battle in which he takes part.

I left retreat with Lama Tsultrim's Blessing, in February of 2013, and returned to Santa Fe. I moved into a room in a large adobe-style house that belonged to Lama Gyurme, his wife, Yudron, and his young son, Trinley. I received the *Togal* stage of retreat teachings in the Dzog Chen practices at Tulku Sang ngag's retreat center near Glorieta, which he calls "The Seat of Longchenpa." I continued to practice Dzog Chen, assist Lama Gyurme when needed, and work on my autobiography, *Jampa's Worldly Dharmas*, a trilogy running to nearly a thousand pages, written in the third person by my persona, Bouvard Pécuchet.

One morning, while having tea at The Teahouse on Canyon Road, I looked up and saw that a young woman across from me was reading Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. It is not unusual for the students who attend St. John's College to read original texts. It is the required curriculum at this particular school. I asked the woman how she fared in her endeavor. She smiled and replied that she was enjoying the book. We got to talking, and before we parted we both knew we were becoming friends. I even so far as to loan her a copy of a no-longer needed draft of the first volume of my trilogy. She told me she was soon to teach a class on art at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas and would reach me by email. I received the following:

Dear Jampa,

I have been meaning to write you all week to tell you how much I enjoyed our conversation at the Tea House a week and a half ago, the one that began with Nietzsche and moved on to many other things. I have to tell you it came as a particular gift insofar as I had been for the hour or two previous despairing over the dim intelligence of our world, having been subjected just before you arrived to an hour of the most banal conversation imaginable by three very loud women at another table. To encounter someone as well read and thoughtful and insightful as you felt at that moment a minor miracle.

Also, I am really enjoying your book! I have to admit that after I left the Tea House, some hesitation set in and I wondered if I should have agreed to take it. It is something I usually avoid doing, due to the fact that I am an exceptionally critical reader and find myself hating most of what I read, particularly if it comes from someone who hasn't been dead for many years. To read something bad from a person I like is deeply unpleasant experience. But not only do I not hate your book, I am thoroughly enjoying it! This may come as no surprise to you, but as we were strangers, I couldn't have known. It has a wonderful liveliness; it's funny and odd and also insightful, and the poetry tucked within it is quite lovely.

I am also struck by a number of curious parallels with myself and my life, which is perhaps not surprising in light of our conversation. I read the "Boats" chapter today - Moby Dick is a very important book for me, and your writing reminded me of a little photo book project that I assembled but never got printed up. Have you read much Conrad? I've been enchanted with his sea novels lately (especially Nostromo [not purely a sea novel, but a brilliant novel that involves the sea] and Lord Jim), largely for reasons you point to in Melville. Also, I am writing a novel about a cattle baron ("Animals"), and have written a great deal about art ("Art").

I will save more extensive commentary until I have finished, but in the meantime please know that I am enjoying it.

I'm writing from a hotel room in Las Vegas, Nevada. I'm here to teach a couple of four-week classes to art students at UNLV; I was nervous to come, for various reasons, but the first week went fine and at the moment I am happy for the quiet

and the isolation. I deeply dislike Las Vegas, but there is a special kind of peace to a cheap hotel room - I am, in many ways, a monastic at heart - and the writing has been going well. As I said, I am writing a novel about a cattle baron in western South Dakota around the turn of the last century, and about his granddaughter, who is half Lakota. It was largely for this book that I was reading Nietzsche, because it is also a book about the story of western philosophy, and about American history. It's a book about a lot of things. It is my second novel. I should be working on getting the first one published but I am dragging my feet, so it languishes.

Most of my published writing has been art criticism. I lived in LA for fifteen years before moving back to Santa Fe (my hometown) last summer, and I wrote for the LA Times and various magazines - that is why I'm here in Las Vegas. But I've had a kind of crisis of faith with all that and I don't really know where it's going anymore. I'm supposed to be working on a book about art, specifically the concept of value in art - that is what my classes are based on. But every time I sit down to try to do it, I spin out very quickly into despair - from why does art matter? to why does anything matter? It's been a problem. I have always wished I could be a scholar of some obscure and narrow field - but it was not meant to be: everything spins out to the existential. It's maddening.

Well, I hope you don't mind a long-ish note. Thank you again for your book. I've been noting, in pencil, typos here and there, as you suggested - though very few. Best of luck in your continued reading/revision/reflection with the other two.

Best, Holly

I replied:

dear holly,

thank you for your note, it touched me, meaning that i felt a sympathetic soul responding to my work, and it touched on some important philosophical, maybe spiritual, issues i too have been struggling with

yes, our lives do seem to have points of contact, like your writing about south dakota, because just before i went into retreat, i was at the pine ridge reservation, in my robes, dancing with the lakota under the arbor, while my son completed his sundance for that year

and one of my daughters is working on her dissertation to complete a doctorate in art history at the university of washington, her thesis on the italian art movement of arte povera, and she will soon travel to milan to interview germano celant, the organizer of that art movement and now artistic director of the prada foundation, believe me, she has similar concerns, and she is a "scholar of some obscure and narrow field" as you put it and she too has existential angst, yes, it is maddening, but she presses on with her work

i suppose i have a slight advantage in this angst business being a buddhist, since we don't get upset that there is no conceptual "meaning to things" and we just relax into the "emptiness" rather than freaking out, and i can do art for the sake of art, selfish of me to be sure, and my writing i do for the "invisible circle" and for "the process" rather than for any material reason, lucky me

as for meaning, well, guess what? right now, i'm trying to figure out a new system of ethics based on aesthetics, something stimulated by the quote from c.s. lewis, "beauty will save the world...but what kind of beauty?" hmmm, maybe you have an idea

you see, we are in a dark void without beauty, and it's no wonder we fall into despair and wonder about the meaning of life, and it doesn't help being told we think too much, since it is really the case that no one seems to be thinking at all, so there's a lot of work to do to change the moral landscape rather than just leaving things in the messy mess they are at present, and a good place to begin is to "worship at the font of beauty" as pound put it, since so few do

oh, well, how i do go on, an email is no place for this, and i hope we can talk later, when you return

in the meantime, keep the faith and teach well

your friend, Jampa

“Beauty will save the world...but what kind of beauty?” Reflecting on Lewis’s question brought me to a line in my poem “Patterns”:

there is beauty in the moral order

and I asked, “Is there morality in the aesthetic order?”

I proceed, as is the wont of the present generation, to surf the net, and I encountered a philosopher, unknown to me, by the name of Slavoj Žižek. I like the guy. He’s on *you tube*. You can watch him fidget. He wipes his nose with one hand and pinches himself (perhaps, to be sure he exists) with another. He sweats. He complicates things. He turns out to be a superstar on the philosophical circuit, and in one of his online lectures, Slavoj Žižek (1949-), a Slovenian Marxist introduces me to work of Fredrich Wilhem Joseph Schelling (1775-1854), a German Idealist considered to be the Father of the Romantic Movement.

I looked for a copy of Žižek’s *The Invisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters* at the Meem Library on the St. John’s campus, but it was not in the catalog. Schelling was there, and I found his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Thinking*, or I thought I had, but, later, at the betterday coffeehouse, upon looking at the book I had checked out, I found that it was *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* by Martin Heidegger, translated by Joan Stambaugh. “Oh well,” I thought, “secondary material is frowned on at St. John’s...Heidegger(!?)...might be alright (...even if he was a Nazi?...yes)...” And so, I began in a reasonable manner to deconstruct my sense of Philosophical Thought...in a reasonable manner, mind you...to be open to new themes and new meems to generate God knows what.

The use of “God” here may seem odd for a Buddhist, but I thank God for all His blessings and for the many, many instructive lessons that I have received. I am grateful for this life, even if, as St. Augustine put it, we are born amid piss and shit. Jampa was born with a silver spoon in my mouth, the better to feed off the offal.

How do I reconcile my Judeo-Christian faith with that of Buddhism? To me it is easier to be a Buddhist and a Christian than it is to be a Christian and a Buddhist. The First Commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” is not a

problem for a Buddhist, since we do not believe in a creator god. Gotama and other buddhas are men and women who are given respect because they have attained the state of enlightenment, the true understanding of the nature of mind, comprised of luminous cognitive emptiness. And I do not presume to equate EMPTINESS with God, even if the mirror-like wisdom inherent in the natural state of mind (emptiness/well-being) allows us to create the concept of God in our own image.

Buddha-mind is said to be, by those who have attained this realization, to be beyond description, but the path to enlightenment can be communicated. The Buddhist approach to the meaning of Life is understood within a psychological context, and the metaphysical approach of Christians, with the emphasis on proving God's existence independent of humans, is abandoned. The ontological solution is: nothing really exists in and of itself. Even Heidegger's inquiry into "Being" could be considered an etymological tempest in a teapot.

However, Heidegger might not agree, or maybe he would, resting where he rests. But I digress.

Morality in the Aesthetic Order. Could be a title, I thought.

Is it possible to have knowledge of what is right and wrong? What foundation for morality is there beyond the Good. How separate the Good from the True from the Beautiful and expect right action?

Freedom, according to Heidegger, determines true Being and transcends all human being. Man is grounded in Freedom, but as Heidegger points out: "The God in becoming emerges in his becoming to something which has become and is the one who he is in this becoming as it. The inner-divine becoming is originally the self-seeing of the God himself in his ground so that this look remains in the ground. Just as when one person looks at the other in distant correspondence and, looking into him, longing becomes clearer in the self-seeing of the God in his ground, but that means precisely all the more aroused and craving. The ground thus wants to be more and more ground, and at the same time it can only will this by willing what is clear and thus striving against itself as what is dark." (Schelling's Treatise on the

Essence of Human Freedom, Martin Heidegger, translated by Joan Stambaugh, Ohio University Press, Athens, 1985, p. 136.)

Nietzsche also propounds this idea *Beyond Good and Evil* but gets bogged down with the polemics of conceptual schemes and relative perceptions. The freedom to think. To think beyond the box. To throw one's body into the painting. To think with the feelings. Is this a possible form of morality?

In Dante's ethics, reason and will should control passion. Lust allows passion to subvert reason and will.

According to a note (p. 557) in Allen Mandelbaum's translation of Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*, "...true or 'refined' Love was a quality of noble lovers...true Love had been presented as necessarily accompanied by nobility of heart, that is by virtue... Francesca goes on to define Love as an irresistible mutual passion (line 103) [of Canto V of the Inferno"], thus blaming Love as a universal force personified in the terms of contemporary courtly poetry, masking her own responsibility for her damnation..."

And this takes us back to the issue at hand. The appreciation of Beauty as the foundation of right behavior. Right behavior being the happiest course of action for the individual and for the group. Without a lot of bloodshed and shame. Something beautiful. Donne's line: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. Not a bad metaphor for meditative absorption. Rigpa.

. . .
Rigpa. According to Wikipedia: In Dzogchen teaching, rigpa (Tibetan: རིག་པ།, Wylie: rig pa; Skt. vidyā; "knowledge") is the knowledge of the fundamental ground or Buddha-nature. The opposite of rigpa is marigpa (avidyā, ignorance).

Knowledge of the ground. Schelling raises the question of man's place in nature, one that does not serve any systematic purpose. Evil introduces a necessary imbalance into the system of the world, that this is the origin of life, yet is chaotic, dissonant, and a threat that attempts to turn system into a servant.

Ground in contrast to existence; darkness in contrast to light; retreat in contrast to unfolding; and, finally, intelligence, the emergent rationality, the word. "Vitality" becomes the good, the highest value in this system.

Schelling attempts to reconcile God's necessary nature with his freedom. In their introduction to Schelling's *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, Love and Schmidt state, "God plays a delicate balancing act in his own self-revelation, which may (as conditioned by the ground) and must not (as somehow overcome this condition) end in a disastrous contraction back into the ground."

Compare this to Longchenpa's Dzog Chen analysis of the ground. Here I quote from page 66 of David Germano's introduction to his *Poetic Thought, the Intelligent Universe, and the Mystery of Self: the Tantric Synthesis of rDzogs Chen in Fourteenth Century Tibet* (a doctoral thesis at the University of Wisconsin – Madison) which is a translation and commentary on Longchenpa's *The Treasury of Words and Meanings*. Germano comments, on page 66:

While spontaneous presence itself forms a shimmering mandalic panorama utterly devoid of materialization, duality, or ignorance, the key lies in the emergent capacity for self-reflection and awareness deriving from the Ground's compassionate resonance, which in that instant of the Ground-presencing's manifestation is suddenly confronted by this swirling play of rainbow colored lights. In this single instant, this capacity for awareness can either self-recognize the lights as its own self-presencing and hence in the second instance become liberated as a Buddha, or fail to self-recognize the lights and hence inexorably move towards the dualist creation of the Other as it strays into dualistic existence as a "sentient being." This split at the Universe's first instant is expressed as the "freedom" of transcendence in contrast to the "straying" of cyclic existence, and hence it is said that the indeterminate, neutral Ground-presencing can either serve as the "foundation of freedom" (in the case of recognition) or the "foundation of straying" (in the case of non-recognition).

So, Buddha nature in Dzog Chen parlance and God in Schelling's conception teeter on the edge of presence. The difference in interpretation is between a divine being risking a return to anarchy and an experience of self-recognition by a transcendental state of cognitive emptiness. This teetering is the enigma of phenomenal existence. Perfect. Or not.

In the Dzog Chen (Atiyoga) view, the essence of mind is emptiness; its nature is to manifest; and its resonant energy is compassion. This spontaneously present and clear, primordial wisdom is the nature of mind and the universe. It is free from concepts and duality, and when one's mind unites with this primordial wisdom it can be said that one has attained Buddhahood.

According to Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche (1938-):

When this illusion [of duality] is cut through the individual experiences his or her own condition as it truly is, beyond all limits of form whatever. To realize this is to realize the 'Dharmakāya', or 'Body of Truth', better rendered as the 'Body of Reality as it is'...Infinite, formless energy (Dharmakāya) manifests at the level of the essence of the elements, which is light, as non material forms only perceivable by those with visionary clarity (Sambhogakāya), and at the level of matter in apparently solid material forms (Nirmānakāya).

So, by means of these examples, an oral introduction is given by the master to the Base, and an explanation is made of the way in which it manifests as the three modes of energy. This is the open secret, which all can discover for themselves.

(The Crystal and the Way of Light, Routledge & Kegan Paul, New York & London, 1986, page 67-68.)

According to Vairotsana (8th c. CE.) in *The Great Garuda in Flight (Eye of the Storm: Vairotsana's Five Original Transmissions*, translated by Keith Dowman, Vajra Publications, Katmandu, Nepal, 2006, page 18-19):

(13)

Analyzed it is nothing—letting it be, fine exaltation;
it is truly invisible, yet it gratifies every need:
the master, innocent of self and other, a treasure trove;
the happy isles, revealed in selfless compassion.

(14)

Unmoving within, it is nothing that can be found within
And turning outside, it cannot be imaged or isolated;
Neither extruding nor intruding, this selfless compassion
Is inalienable—it abides here timelessly.

Compare this to the metaphysical connection of Between God and things in Schelling, or at least as Heidegger interprets Schelling (*Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, Martin Heidegger, translated by Joan Stambaugh, Ohio University Press, Athens, 1985, page 123):

The Being of the existing God is becoming in the primordial simultaneity of absolute temporality, called eternity. The being of things is a becoming as definite emergence of divine Being into the revealedness of opposites still concealing themselves. The thinghood of things is so little determined by an indifferent objective presence of material bodies that matter itself is conceived as Spirit. What "we" feel and see as matter is Spirit which has congealed into the extended gravity of inertia.

. . .

After all the hierarchies, after all the palaver, after all the cups of tea, how are we to know how we are to behave?

Here is a poetic assay into the history of descriptive (precept) ethics:

(I owe a debt of gratitude to Wikipedia. Forgive me the lack of footnotes.)

Is it possible to have knowledge of what is right and wrong?

Socrates admonishes us to look inward

towards our humanness, not towards the world—

Character is the key to virtue

If we can reach our full potential

Become real, we will do good, says Aristotle

Self-realization is the key to virtue

For Stoics, peace of mind is the goal

The inviolate will is the means to this goal

Freedom from attachments is the key
Fulfilling the momentary desire or pursuit
Of spiritual bliss is the principal of Hedonism

“Eat, drink & be merry! Fear not death!”
Mohists promote the benefit of all under heaven
And eliminating harm to all under heaven

Confucians emphasize relationships
As the most important consideration in ethics—
To be ethical we do what our relationships need

Nonviolence towards all sentient beings
To find happiness and the causes for happiness
Discipline is the key of our Buddhist virtue

“You may wind up in another’s shoes
In the next incarnation—be selfless
And kind,” say we Hindus

Moral responsibility is the key to Heaven for Muslims
“Keep God in your heart and the world in your hand”
God grants us the faculty to discern good from evil

Love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness due to sin.
With divine assistance, we Christians are called
To become virtuous in both thought and deed

Go to the Bible, to the wisdom narratives
To answer Judaic moral questions—note the
Dynamic interplay between law and ethics

From a Consequentialist standpoint,
A morally right action produces a good outcome—
“The ends justify the means”

Utilitarianism argues the proper course of action
Maximizes a positive effect, such as “the greatest happiness
Of the greatest number,” according to Bentham
Page 4

Kant argues that we must act from duty—it is not
The consequences but the motives that are important
And the only real good is a good will

Pierce, James, and Dewey, pragmatists, believe
We should emphasize social reform over attempts
To account for consequences, individual virtue, or duty

Postmodernists study the conditions of actions—a simple
Alignment of concepts and actions is impossible—
Accept the messy nature of humanity as unchangeable

So, where does this leave us? Is it possible to have knowledge of what is right and
wrong? As Webster Hood says, “It seems that the best we can do is to admonish
everyone to be nice.”

Back to Germano’s introduction to Longchenpa’s *Treasury of Words and Meanings*:

Longchenpa then turns his attention to the authentic identity of this
“Ground” (which is closely related to Heidegger’s conception of “Being” and
Jantsch’s notion of the “Universe”) with an emphasis on showing how its
pure vibrant nothingness can give rise to the wild variety of worlds we
currently experience, which he presents in terms of the key dyad of its
“original purity and spontaneous presence”, and its expanded (and equally
important) triune identity as “its essence, nature, and compassionate
resonance”. “Original purity” signifies the Ground’s utter emptiness wherein
no-thing at all can be said to exist (“totally purified by any materialization
from the very beginning”), while “spontaneous presence” signifies the
Ground’s inherent dynamism which serves as the pure source-potential of
everything that comes to exist. The Ground’s utter emptiness and openness
is in perfect union with its spontaneously dynamic light energy, such that its

emptiness is inherently dynamic and luminous, and its luminosity is thoroughly empty and unmaterialized—the two aspects are merely conceptual isolates abstracted from a unitary seamless reality.

Logical enough. Not possible to test this empirically. Logic suffices this far. But one can't do Dzog Chen with concepts. Intellectual intuition is the key. Here, I turn to F.S.C. Northrup (via Wiki). A wiki elf posits:

One early claim by Northrop in Ch. 2 of "The Meeting of East and West" was that Eastern Thought in general (really most applicable to Chinese thought) is that Eastern Thought deals with the world as an "undifferentiated aesthetic continuum." That is, reality is all connected and unified, not separated into distinct objects (undifferentiated continuum) and is in reality qualitative as perceived (aesthetic = perception, but later related to theory of art). Some Chinese have dismissed this as racist and simple-minded. Others have embraced it as a correct characterization. What Northrop contrasts with it in the west is an abstract, mathematical or formal conception of reality along with an atomistic conception of reality as fundamentally separate objects. Concepts are in the west "by postulation," while in the East "by intuition."

A meditative experience of bliss-emptiness. Not a thought—resonate compassion as an intellectual-physical intuitional experience of the Ground as an undifferentiated aesthetic continuum. Resonate compassion as the aesthetic foundation for right behavior. That Beauty.

Once I had a rough draft of the idea in my consciousness, I began to see the difficulty of composing this idea? How present the idea formally, keeping poetic license and multi-value word games to a minimum? I read more Heidegger (*Poetry, Language, Thought*); I read Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*; I read Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*; I read *Creative Meditation and Multi-Dimensional Consciousness* by Lama Anagarika Govinda; I read *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* by Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch. I even read the long version of Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, not that it had anything to do with this idea, but it was a beautiful story when fully told. I reflected on my readings, and I did mindfulness-awareness meditation.

How was I going to formulate my feeling that a meditational experience of emptiness is an aesthetic experience? And not only were they analogous but there was a trail of thinking leading out of the Platonic tradition through Schelling to Heidegger to my poetry?

Logical positivism to the rescue. Knowing full well that if I might be positing a false premise and thereby wind up proving most anything, I proceeded to (1) looking to the authorities, even as a weak form of argument, to see if there was any consistency in their thinking on a subject that can only be verified subjectively; (2) to satisfy myself that my personal meditations were on par with these authorities in quality, if not in complete stability, and so confirm their conclusions myself; (3) build a framework that would bridge the gap between eastern and western thinking on this idea, defining terms and giving concrete examples. I had recently come out of retreat. I had the courage.

In the next stage of the saga, I went to Ellensburg, Washington, a town with which I have had a forty-year connection. I came to visit my family and decided to move back to this valley of peace and plenty. I attended The Northwest Philosophy Conference at Central University, home of the Wildcats, in November of 2014. I went not to beard the philosophers but to see what the contemporary mind-set is like. If I was going to convince anyone that mindful-awareness meditation has a convergent connection with aesthetic appreciation and has been realized within the western philosophical tradition I would need to structure my argument within the context of the history of ideas.

I would begin with Descartes—his tree of knowledge, metaphysical roots, trunk of physics, branches of ethics, aesthetics, teleology, and so forth. I would move to Leibniz's theodicy and God's plan for the human race, that the Good is an evil servant of God and not an individual human's responsibility—to Kant, taking a radical step and seeing that the Good is man's responsibility, that humans can make evil decisions—to Schelling accepting Evil as necessary, much like Goethe's notion in *Faust Part 1*, that God knows what's what and wants Faust to know Him, and Mephistopheles is a puppet helping Faust have this experience. For Schelling, Evil is a dissonance in God, a tension between God, Nature, and Man. Nietzsche kicks God out of the equation with his exclamation "God is dead!" and falls into existential despair. Once the language analysts and the deconstructionists got

through with the history of ideas, the logos was floundering and philosophy seemed to be as dead as ash. However, Heidegger trudged on, asking, “Why is there anything at all and not just nothing?”

Descartes’ methodology set science on a firm footing, and the mental path of history went the way of science in a big way, and even Schelling (as suggested by Žižek in one of his lectures) might have contributed to the concept of dialectical materialism and the eventual rise of global capitalism, but if this trend is to be modified and mindfulness-awareness meditation is to be a pedagogical tool for a wisdom ethic and not just a means of stress reduction, I must show that this form of meditation is a method to experience the ground of the philosopher’s God, and that this “God” is the same as resting in Dzog Chen *rigpa* (in contrast to *sems*, or conceptual mind). The problem is, of course, that these are subjective experiences, and each philosopher-meditator will be on their own.

I attended lectures on German Idealism in the early 19th century, as well as lectures on Nietzsche and the practice of his “gay science.” I could see that Fichte was hitting a wall looking for things-in-themselves, Hegel was dissolving in a cult of the self, and only Schelling could see that metaphysics did not need to be a study of things-in-themselves but could be about our spontaneous understanding of things. His question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” shifts the focus from metaphysics to ontology and aesthetics. Therefore, I had three points to make: (1) find an ontological convergence between Dzog Chen and a western stance, say existentialism or phenomenology; (2) determine the relationship between meditation and art; (3) then, ask if there could be morality in the aesthetic order. Because this is a cross-comparison between eastern and western concepts, my question becomes six-fold. It is never simple. Still, I will apply Occam’s razor to the best of my ability.

Morality in the Aesthetic Order

1. Ontological

Argument by authority in the red tights: Longchen Rabjam (1308-1363), Tibetan. Nyingma scholar-yogi-monk. (*Old Man Basking in the Sun: Longchenpa’s Treasury of Natural Perfection*, translated by Keith Dowman, Vajra Publications, Nepal, 2007, number 41, page 113).

Thought is Resolved in Pure Vision

The intangible samadhi that lacks any field of meditation,
Pristine, simple, intrinsic gnosis,
Consumes all events in consummate resolution,
And all experience spent, itself is consumed.
Since the consuming or non-consuming is resolved in absence,
Its existence as ineffable is never in question.
What is, is a vast nonreferential,
All experience consummate, 'no mind!'
And that is the yogin's delight!

A single field of dynamic space
Integrating past, present and future,
An unbroken holistic field of reality,
This is the arena shared by buddhas and masters of gnosis.

Argument by authority in the blue tights: Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), German philosopher, here quoting Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), a Bohemian-Austrian poet in support of his concept of "Being," (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter, Harper Perennial, New York, 2001).

First, a stanza from a poem by Heidegger:

In thinking all things
Become solitary and slow.

Patience nurtures magnanimity.

He who thinks greatly must
Err greatly.

(From *The Thinker As Poet*)

Next to Heidegger's poem I posit this quote from Rilke to be found in Heidegger's essay, *What Are Poets For?* (Page 105):

You must understand the concept of the “Open,” which I have tried to propose in the elegy [here referring to the eighth of the *Duino Elegies*, in *such* a way that the animal’s degree of consciousness set it into the world without the animal’s placing the world over against itself at every moment (as we do); the animal is *in* the world; we stand *before it* by virtue of what peculiar turn and intensification which our consciousness has taken. [Rilke goes on,] By the “Open,” therefore, I do not mean sky, air, and space; *they* too, are “object” and thus “opaque” and closed to the man who observes and judges. The animal, the flower, presumably is all that, without accounting to itself, and therefore has before itself and above itself that indescribably open freedom which perhaps has its (extremely fleeting) equivalents among us only in those first moments of love when one human being sees his own vastness in another, his beloved, and in man’s elevation toward God. (Translated by Maurice Betz, *Rilke in Frankreich*, Reichner, Vienna, 1937.)

Argument from authority by the one in the maroon robes: Jampa Dorje (1941-), Poet-Printer-Yogi-Monk (*A Book from Luminous Peak*, Vol. 13, Luminous Peak Notebook, 2011.)

There is a parcel of space
That, once, was an “I” —
Now, there’s just the sky

3 precepts of psycho-cosmic real estate
Happy wherever
Happy wherever
Happy wherever

A yogi can be happy in hell

2. Meditation and Art

In the red tights: the dynamic trio from MIT, Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch. (*The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1993, page 24.)

How can this mind become an instrument for knowing itself? How can the flightiness, the nonpresence of mind be worked with? Traditionally, texts talk about two stages of practice: calming or taming the mind (Sanskrit: *shamatha*) and

the development of insight (Sanskrit: *vipashyana*). Shamatha, when used as a separate practice, is in fact a concentration technique for learning to hold (“tether” is the traditional term) the mind to a single object. Such concentration could eventually lead to states of blissful absorption; although such states were assiduously cataloged within Buddhist psychology, they were not generally recommended. The purpose of calming the mind in Buddhism is not to become absorbed but to render the mind able to be present with itself long enough to gain insight into its own nature and functioning. (There are many traditional analogies for this process. For example, to be able to see painting on the wall of a dark cave, one needs a good light protected from the wind.) Most present-day schools of Buddhism do not practice shamatha and vipashyana as separate techniques but rather combine the functions of calming and of insight into a single meditation technique. [They go on] As the meditator again and again interrupts the flow of discursive thought and returns to be with his breath or his daily activity, there is a gradual training of the mind’s restlessness. One begins to see the restlessness as such and to be patient with it...Eventually meditators report periods of a more panoramic perspective. This is called awareness.

In the blue trunks: Lama Anagarika Govinda (1898-1985) German painter-poet and expositor of Tibetan Buddhism and Buddhist meditation. (*Creative Meditation and Multi-Dimensional Consciousness*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinois, 1976, page 151-152.)

Art and meditation are creative states of the human mind, both are nourished by the same source, but it may seem that they are moving in different directions: art toward the realm of sensuous and outward manifestation, meditation toward inner realization and integration of forms and sense-impressions. But this difference pertains only to secondary factors, not to the essential nature of art and meditation.

Meditation is neither pure abstraction nor negation of form except in its ultimate illimitable stages. It means the perfect concentration of the mind and the elimination of all unessential features of the subject in question, until we are fully conscious of it by experiencing reality in a particular aspect or from a particular angle of vision.

Art proceeds in a similar way: while using the forms of the external world, it does not try to imitate nature, but to reveal a higher reality by omitting all accidentals,

thus raising the visible form to the value of a symbol, expressing a direct experience of life.

In the maroon robes: (Richard Denner, *Collected Poems: 1961-2000*, Comrades Press, Warwickshire, England, 2001, page 347.)

PICTURE FROM WILLIAMS
for Jane

she did a painting, which in
keeping with the spirit was to be
a red wheelbarrow
 rain-drenched
 with chickens
no fuss, straight up

finally, tore the sky
 into four pieces, each
 had a line of verse
and framed the botched wheelbarrow
and too bright interpretation of
chickens with sewn on feathers
by thumbtacking it to a stretcher bar

so much depends upon

3. Is there morality in the aesthetic order?

Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*:

In “*Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*” (1794/5), Schiller examines the relationship between natural necessity and practical freedom and addresses two problems raised by Kant: How can a creature governed by natural necessity and desire ever become aware of its own freedom and thus capable of autonomous moral action? And how can these two sides of human nature—the natural, sensuous side and the rational, super-sensuous one—be reconciled? In

contradistinction both to those who subordinate principles to feelings (“savages”) and to those who insist that one should strive to subordinate feelings to principles (“barbarians”), Schiller posited an intermediary realm between the sphere of nature and that of freedom, as well as a third basic human drive capable of mediating between sensuous and rational impulses. This third impulse is dubbed the “play impulse,” and the intermediary sphere to which it pertains is that of art and beauty. By cultivating the play impulse (i.e., via “aesthetic education”) one is not only freed from bondage to sensuality and granted a first glimpse of one’s practical freedom, but one also becomes capable of reconciling the rational and sensuous sides of one’s own nature. This idea of a condition in which opposites are simultaneously cancelled and preserved, as well as the specific project of reconciling freedom and necessity, profoundly influenced subsequent thinker such as Schelling and Hegel and contributed to the development of German idealism

To illustrate the difference between awakened mind and discursive mind, a Zen Master says, “When you have Satori you are able to reveal a palatial mansion made of precious stones on a single blade of grass; but when you have no Satori a palatial mansion itself is concealed behind a simple blade of grass.” (Lama Govinda, *ibid.*, p. 157.)

Realization of Full Confidence in the Natural Dynamic (Longchenpa, *ibid.* page 133.)

With spacious intuition of the brilliant emptiness of reality,
unconfined gnosis is a seamless infinite openness,
And free of belief, all ideation dissolving,
all things converge in the matrix of the gnostic dynamic.
The blissful ground and a happy mind blended,
Inside and outside the one taste of pure mind,
This is the vision of reality as the consummate way of abiding.

The man in the maroon robes (from *Jampa Dorje’s Worldly Dharmas*, by Bouvard Pécuchet, Kapala Press, Santa Fe, 2014, Vol. 1):

Now, back to Berkeley. It was here that Jampa first came into contact with Tibetan art. For Tibetan artists, the definite outline is of utmost importance in their *thankas*, which are paintings very often depicting deities used as support in meditation practices. Precise and highly proportional use of form,

line and color allow these artists to render their experience of visionary realms. The line is a spiritual energy. This was so for William Blake (1757-1827) as well. Blake takes a radical stance on this issue.

“The great and golden rule of art, as well as life, is this: That the more distinct, sharp, and wirey the boundry line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism, and bungling.” (from “A Descriptive Catalog &c. No. XV, *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. By Geoffrey Keynes, Nonesuch Press, 1967)

Blake detested what he termed, “the infernal machine called Chiaro Oscuro,” which he equated with the mechanistic universe as conceived by Bacon, Newton and Locke— the “Satanic mills” of causality. (*William Blake*, Kathleen Raine, Thames & Hudson, 1970, page 20.)

Blake would not have approved of the painting of light developed by the Impressionists, after the invention of photography, and much of modern art would be anathematized. He might acknowledge Hellenistic traces in the lines of Picasso, Dali, Matisse and Cocteau, though their forms would be repugnant to him.

The “definite outline of the almighty” may be ore the province of spiritually oriented art, where the source of illumination comes from within, and the use of shadow and perception of depth are not so critical. Blake had his art roots in Gothic art, and he was reaching across the horrors he perceived in the so-called Age of Reason towards a vision of a pure land.

But I am beginning to write on Blake, and there is a chapter on him yet to come. What of Jampa and Lu Garcia? They are artists working after the Second World War, 1945 into the present. Much of what was disturbing to artists of the first half of the twentieth century— the acceleration of events, the fragmentation of culture after WWI, the increasing industrialization of nations, the astonishing flow of information, the effects of applied science, and the relativity of values— all this is taken pretty much for granted by artists now.

During the days of urban renewal, in the '60s and '70s, architects were faced with an esthetic challenge to create buildings that would fit into neighborhoods where there was a mishmash of styles. So, they borrowed a bit of this and a tad of that and came up with an eclectic blend, to be known as post-modern. This using mixed media and the incorporation of a variety of painterly styles in one work is evident in the pictures of many contemporary painters and certainly in the work of collage and assemblage artists.

William Blake would consider Jampa's art ugly, the work of Fumble and Bungle, but Jampa is undeterred. He admires Blake's bold pronouncements, his iconoclastic beliefs, his view of the eternal artist and the imaginative principal, and above all his perseverance in an age that dismissed his art as old-fashioned, when in fact it was modern and revolutionary.

I am still writing about Blake. Let me turn decisively to the work of Jampa. Most of Jampa's artwork is signed "Rychard." Jampa says, "The y can simply replace the i in Richard, and the pronunciation stays the same, or it can have a French affectation and be Reecharde, as you wish." Here is his artist's statement from *Rychard's Assemblages*, D Press, 2007:

I contemplate and move objects around until things "fall into place." I like there to be a fit, and I try to interlock the shapes of the objects to give structure to the piece—an architecture of mind—keeping nails, glue, wire, staples, screws, welding to a minimum. I bring disparate objects together—eggshell Styrofoam, curtain lace, blurry photos and plastic water pipe—hoping for a most fortunate accident of composition that will capture the tension between chaos and order. Look for nothing behind the junk.

Although there are examples of combining found-objects and of pasting together paper images in the folk art of the 19th century, as well some mixed media in the early work of Picasso, it is Kurt Schwitters, a German artist of the 1920s who is considered the father of collage. He created what are known as "Mertz," after finding a scrap of newspaper torn from the word "commertz." The idea that this lowly fragment of commerce could be recycled into the economy intrigued him. That which is rejected, ignored, cast aside, is still a part of the system, and the artist threads it back into the

fabric of society. This art was considered decadent, meaningless by the Third Reich, so Schwitters's work was burned, and he had to flee to America.

I am not a trained artist. I took printmaking and a class in drawing from Terrance Choy at the University of Alaska in the early 1970s. Mainly, I have hung out with artists that eat, drink and dream art, and I've watched them work and sat in cafes and walked the streets, talking with them. I go to museums and galleries and look at the pictures. I was 19 when I went to my first art show at the San Francisco Modern Museum of Art and saw Robert Motherwell's blue collages of Gualois cigarette wrappers mixed with paint. I saw an exhibit of Brancusi and Giacometti sculptures and a retrospective of Kandinsky paintings. All of these exhibits strongly affected me—the "tearingness" of collage in the work of Motherwell, the solid presence of the Brancusis, the organic economy of the Giacomettis, the ethereal precision of the Kandinskys. Later, other famous and not so famous artists would have effect on me. Luis Garcia's collages, for example, revealed to me that materials are everywhere, and I still strive for the sense of alignment I feel in his work.

I have used the skills of a carpenter, a plumber, a printer, a painter—trades I work at and enjoy—to make my artworks. The best carpenter is the one who can hide his errors. However, here I like to see the "errors," the crustiness, the broken, bent, wrinkled, burnt, twisted materials, the wire, thread, nails, and the seams in the cut paper. I paint with junk, exploring space, positioning this "trash" to reveal its overlooked beauty.

INTERVIEW WITH JAMPA DORJE by Bouvard Pécuchet

I made my way, wearing snowshoes, along the faint traces of a trail in the deep snow to Luminous Peak, the cabin where Jampa is ensconced. He welcomed me with a big smile and a hot cup of tea.

Bouvard: This tea has an interesting flavor. What is it called?

Jampa: Lapsang Souchang. It comes from the Fujian province of China. Smokey, some people say it tastes like boot polish. I have some other choices, if you'd prefer.

Bouvard: No, this is delicious, but don't yogins avoid becoming attached to fine teas?

Jampa: Well, there's no reason for throwing away good tea. Enjoy your tea, and then we'll get down to business.

Bouvard: Do the Tibetans have a tea ceremony like the Japanese?

Jampa: Not that I know of, but they do use tea as an offering, and I have heard that, if there is a limited amount of tea available, the first steeping is called the "nirmanakaya" and the second is the "sambhogakaya" and the third is the "dharmakaya." Each kaya, or dimension, is progressively more rarified, until it is tasteless. (Jampa laughs.)

Bouvard: Can you tell me about your assemblages?

Jampa: Assemblage is a process of making a painting by combining found objects. Assemblage has its roots in collage, and collage has its roots in folk art. Picasso added real newspaper and pieces of a guitar to one of his paintings. Schwitters used found materials. Philip Whalen said, "Kurt Schwitters tore it all into COLOR." Abstract Expressionists, like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg took assemblage to new heights of composition and absurdity. It is not all to be viewed in a serious vein. There is also humor in this work, although some critics see it as "anti-art" or "the end of art." A gallery curator told me that my Cowboy Funk pieces were too dirty to hang on her walls. The outdoors does cling to my combines, which is another name for these objects, and I feel they are akin to environmental artworks.

Bouvard: Many of your assemblages hang on sheds and fences. I saw a number of these, as I walked towards your cabin. Do you see them primarily as belonging outdoors? You also make collages and boxes, right?

Jampa: Yes, the collages and boxes are made of more delicate materials. They are more intimate. The junk pieces I like to see outside. They highlight an otherwise overlooked structure, and the various objects around old buildings seem to become a part of the assemblage itself.

When I was hanging out with Don Webster, an artist I knew in Aptos, I was sweeping up a bunch of debris into a wooden box, and I decided to pour in some glue. Why not? Of course, it didn't hold together, but it was a start. If you want a combine to hold up under the force of the elements, you have to give some consideration to how you construct it. I often begin by laying the parts I have collected on the ground and leaving them. I rearrange them a few times, taking into account how they fit together, structurally and esthetically, and how I am going to eventually mount them, what wire, nails, screws will be used.

Once I am satisfied with my composition, I start with the background level and begin to build, changing things as necessity dictates, as the materials demand. It never comes out as I planned, but that is half the fun. I do tend to over work my pieces, not to let well-enough alone, to get cute, “to put a bird on it.” Literally.

At the gallery I mentioned earlier, where the curator was concerned about the crustiness, the rustiness, the flakiness, I did get three works accepted in a community show and won first, second and third prize in the mixed-media category. I asked the judge, later, why the one piece received third place, and she told me that the little hand-crafted bird I had added to a projecting piece of metal was silly. Maybe so, maybe not; I had added it because I didn't want someone to poke out their eye. There's a bird in Rauschenberg's Canyon. Maybe, if I had spray-painted my bird black, it might have flown.

Bouvard: Where do you find your materials? How do you choose?

Jampa: There's a lot of junk out there to choose from, too much really. I set rules for myself, like I will only pick up pieces of stuff I find along the roadside on my morning walk. Occasionally a piece “presents” itself and goes to complete a work still unfinished. People give me things: “Jampa could use this,” they say. Sometimes, I find a huge stash of materials, on a ranch or in a junk pile. I get excited. I want it all; but I settle on pieces that interest me. Another rule is to use things from other projects I'm working on, say, doing some plumbing or fixing a garage door. I may incorporate the broken parts or the left over materials in my art.

When I lived on a ranch near Ellensburg, Washington, there was a mound of junk out in the desert. The guy I worked for had problems, work pressures, girlfriend pressures—he was a man in a mid-life crisis—and he used my shoulder to cry on. We had a good working arrangement, a rent-free house and a monthly salary, but the added “psychologist” part on my days off had not been part of the original deal, and it became oppressive. I continued to do my chores, but I took out my frustration by covering a large shed with junk. This was my first big work. My boss sold the spread, and the man who bought it was going to bulldoze the “Tack Shack,” as it was called, but his wife said it was a treasure, that she loved it, and it was saved from destruction. Kind of a happy ending, unlike the fate of the wall in The Horse's Mouth.

The opening scene of Sam Albright's video, *The Collage Artist*, takes place in front of the Tack Shack. I appear in a black tweed overcoat and fisherman's cap, working on my art. I get in a battered GMC van and drive down 4th Parallel Road towards Ellensburg. Mt. Rainier can be seen above the Manastash Canyon, and there's a great shot of a hawk cutting the air in front of the van. The video follows the activity of an artist preparing a retrospective art show. There are three parts: the ranch scene and trip to town; a café scene, shot in the Four Winds with a part that is an interior monologue; and a final, Chaplinesque scene of Chris Shambacher and myself, accompanied by Craig, Chris's three-legged dog, carrying a mysterious box around town. The video was shot just prior to a show I had at Gallery One with Don O'Connor and Bruce McNaughty. If you go to the gallery at my dPress website, you can see photos of this show by Julie Prather.

Bouvard: Jampa, what is the source of your inspiration? What makes you create?

Jampa: Oh, that's harder to describe than how I make my art. You know that I am also a writer. I go back and forth and sometimes combine both mediums. When the poetic muse takes a vacation, I do visual art. They're related activities. In collage, you cut and paste images; in poetry, you take an image from your mind and put it, in the form of a word, on the page. The brain might be different but the impulse to make art is the same. Both are means of expression, like giving birth to something that wasn't there beforehand, an urge to procreate. There's a time for flirtatious-like curiosity with an idea or image, and then of conception, gestation and delivery—even before I begin to work—then, you have to nurture this baby. The actual making of the poem or collage involves all the trials and hopes and disappointments of getting this baby to grow into a being, but I don't like this analogy much. Maybe the drive to create is something more transcendental, like communing with the Absolute. Or it might be totally mundane, like wanting fame. If you think too much about this, you'd never do it.

Bouvard: What might set you off, be a catalyst?

Jampa: Anything. As Borges points out, everything has its poetry, its beauty, even if you can't see it. A blank page is a formidable thing, perfect in its blankness, but once you make a mark on it, you are committed. The work moves, changes, and you can find yourself lost, weary and confused. Stop. Leave it. Sleep on it. It's easy to botch things. Or, go on. It's your call. Sometimes, from a mess, a masterpiece emerges. I recall Henry Miller's

short story, “The Angel Is My Watermark,” where an image of an angel appears in his ruined watercolor. After he had tried several ways to save it, he tried scrubbing it in the bathtub; and presto!

Bouvard: There’s a question I’ve wanted to ask someone who is both a creative artist and a meditator. Do you find there to be a conflict between these two activities?

Jampa: I didn’t quite finish answering your last question, but I think what I have to say will lead to that, ok?

Bouvard: Of course, go ahead.

Jampa: William Blake said a work of art consisted of three parts: one part came from myth, a part from the art tradition, and a part from your own genius. It is my view, a work of art also has its source in three locations: in an outside place, an inside place, and a secret place. By the “outside,” I mean the context for the work to be done, perhaps a commission or an upcoming show, and this imposes a deadline. This pressure acts as a stimulant. The “inside” is your own personal standards and the methods, the skillful means, you have developed to make art.

For example, my way of writing is described in *My Process* (dPress, 2002, see Vol. 8 of *The Collected Works of Richard Denner*). I explain how I write into the book. I use linked text boxes in a computer program to create a book format. The open pages “call out” to be filled; and from here, it is out of my hands. The book becomes an editing process. I print out a copy, sew it up, edit, and print it again, until I am satisfied. There are usually pieces left over, and these start the next book in a series. The “book” is never done. It is done when you put a frame around it and call it done. With my assemblages, I may begin with a frame and fill it. Or, a wall seemingly calls me. I make a few strokes, and the composition begins to expand and take on a life of its own. This is why it’s hard for most people to dedicate themselves to art, to live in the moment and give up their structured lifestyle.

Then, there is the “secret” place that is a source for the work of art. I may be inspired by a beautiful woman, or I may find I am writing or making a picture to please a friend. I discovered recently that I wrote many poems to Allen Ginsberg and Jack Spicer. I want to be in that Circle of Hell where Dante put the poets. As Jack once said, “Poetry is a conversation among the dead, and the poets get it second hand.” It is in this secret place that strange knowledge comes to the artist, and it is here that meditation is helpful.

Is there a conflict between making art and meditation? My experience is that there is room for both, that they are compatible and enhance each other. Aspects of the creative process are meditative: there is the focus of shamatha, of maintaining a mindful presence in your work; and there is a kind of seeing, or insight, that arises from the vipashyana aspect. It is impossible for the mind to reach complete stillness when making art, especially with writing, where logic and the law of contradictions are in play, yet the mind stream is channeled, directing the flow of energy toward realization of what is really real.

After a session of meditation, where the discursive mind is given rest, I find my creativity enhanced, my hand steadier. The continual search for bliss in visionary fantasy, the god-like power of creativity, the revelatory ecstasy of epiphany are a mistaken direction to pursue, if you want lasting transcendental wisdom. Finally, there is no meditation; all dualistic notions are subsumed under equanimity, in a simple state of awareness.

Blah, blah, blah!

If you have brought your art onto the path, then it is a form of practice, and your view, your practice, and how you carry this out in your life are unified, were always a unity. You need to develop confidence in this. It doesn't mean having a Big Ego. You develop what the Tibetans call Vajra Pride, which also requires you to maintain humility and compassion for others. You don't need to be acknowledged by others. You acknowledge yourself. I could go on, but I think this is a good place to stop.

Bouvard: Thank you, Jampa.

Jampa: You are entirely welcome. Blessings. May the two-fold accomplishments of mine and others be of benefit—no, that's not it—through the two accumulations, may the two-fold benefit of mine and others be accomplished.

Now, to write a summation.

Echoing John Keats: *the beautiful is the good, the good, the beautiful; that's all you need to know.*

Outline.

1. Role of beauty in the moral order
2. My misreading of Kant's *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*
 - 2.1 Kant's definition of the beautiful

- 2.2 Kant' definition of taste
- 2.3 Belief that the beautiful is inherent in the object
- 3. Kant and Schiller
 - 3.1 Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*
 - 3.1.1 Redemptive use of art
 - 3.1.2 Play impulse
 - 3.2 Shriner's *The Invention of Art*
 - 3.2.1 Schiller's play impulse
 - 3.2.1.1 Harmony of freedom & necessity
 - 3.2.1.2 Artist as embodiment of play
 - 3.2.2 Aesthetic appreciation
- 4. Role of morality in the aesthetic order
 - 4.1 Morality inherent in the aesthetic order
 - 4.2 Inquiry by Bugbee
 - 4.2.1 Ethical inquiry and action in flow of our lives
 - 4.2.2 Faith and openness in ethical reflection
- 5. Meditation as an aesthetic experience
 - 5.1 Procedures to be followed
 - 5.1.1 Meditation is a subjective experience
 - 5.1.2 Eight-fold path
 - 5.1.3 Yogic practices
 - 5.1.3.1 Guru yoga
 - 5.1.3.2 Inner heat yoga
 - 5.1.3.3 Vase breath yoga
 - 5.2 Aesthetic Morality
 - 5.2.1 Brain research
 - 5.2.1.1 Control of ventilation
 - 5.2.1.2 Biological-ontological foundation of morality

Beauty in the moral order.

It appears to me, now, that my novel idea that there is morality in the aesthetic order evolved from a misreading of *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* by Immanuel Kant.

In this *Critique*, Kant says the beautiful is "what pleases immediately." (Great Books of the Western World, Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago, 2nd edition,

1990, Kant, Volume 39, page 478b.) He says further that “Taste is the faculty of estimating an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion apart from any interest. The object of such a delight is called the beautiful. He goes on to define the beautiful as “that which, apart from concepts, is represented as the Object of a Universal delight” (ibid. 479d). Next, Kant notes that we mistakenly believe that because the beautiful can be appreciated by others as well, the beautiful is deemed to be inherent in the object.

An aesthetic analogy could be drawn between Plato’s “ladder of love” and Kant’s meditation on beautiful objects representing symbol of grander ethical considerations;— the Greek word *kalon* appears in contexts meaning “beautiful” (as in a person’s face) and at other times means “noble,” which is a complement to goodness (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “Plato’s Aesthetics,” online).

From fair objects to fair ideas to fair forms. According to Kant, we receive sensuous pleasure from an object (Kant uses “a rose”), in the second moment, our taste, developed by way of our cultural upbringing, gives us the concept that the beautiful can be validated objectively when we agree with others with similar taste. The logical judgment, based on taste (or a canon of acceptable values of the beautiful), that roses in general are beautiful is founded upon the original subjective, individual evaluation that roses are agreeable, and we are delighted when the inner and outer representations are united, making the beautiful universal. In this, we are mistaken. The only attributes the good and the beautiful have in common, other than the beautiful, in a limited sense, being a symbol of the good (ibid. 546d) is in the delight. The beautiful pleases, whereas the good is esteemed and has objective worth (ibid. 479b).

Kant concludes *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* by an appeal to moral ideas as the basis of taste: “For only when sensibility is brought into harmony with moral feeling can genuine taste assume a definite unchangeable form” (ibid. 549a). This, for Kant, is the role of beauty in the moral order.

Kant and Schiller.

Another auspicious error. In the process of developing my idea, I ordered books from amazon, and I found a copy of Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (translated by Reginald Snell, Dover, Mineola, New York, 2004), a book which I had thought was to be by Friedrich Schelling. The title had intrigued me and I had not looked closely at the spelling of the author's name. But Schilling's ideas were in line with my own.

In his introduction to Schiller's book, Snell says (ibid. p. 8), "It was a casual remark of Kant's that art compared to labour may be considered as play, that originally prompted him to develop his own theory of play..." Schilling believes that the aesthetic experience can resolve the conflict between the intellect and the senses, as well as between nature and reason. He believes that art can be a means to educate us and bring us into the realm of moral harmony, and he proposes a union between the spirit and the sensuous through the play impulse. By play, Schiller means "everything that is neither subjectively nor objectively contingent, and yet imposes neither outward nor inward necessity. As our nature finds itself, in the contemplation of the Beautiful, in a happy midway point between law and exigency, so, just because it is divided between the two, it is withdrawn from the constrain of both alike." (Fifteenth Letter, ibid. p.78).

In the eighteenth letter, Schiller writes, "Through Beauty the sensuous man is led to form and to thought; through beauty the spiritual man is brought back to matter and restored to the world of sense" (ibid. p.87), and In the twenty-fourth letter (ibid. p.120), Schiller writes, "Contemplation (reflection) is Man's first free relation to the universe which surrounds him. If desire directly apprehends its object, contemplation thrusts its object into the distance, thereby turning it into its true and inalienable possession and thus securing it from passion."

My daughter Lu Auz, who teaches art history at the Memphis College of Art, brought to my attention a book she uses in her classes, *The Invention of Art: A Culture History* by Larry Shiner (University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 2001). In chapter 7 ("From Taste to the Aesthetic") of part 2 ("Art Divided"), there is a section entitled "Kant and Schiller Sum up the Aesthetic." In discussing Schiller's belief in the redemptive power of fine art, Shiner says:

In the genuine work of fine art there is already a harmony of freedom and necessity, duty and inclination, the “spiritual drive” and the “sensuous drive,” a union that Schiller calls “play.” The artist-genius embodies the transcendent truth about life in the work of art as play, yet this truth is not a specific content but resides only in the form of the work. “In a truly successful work of art the contents should effect nothing, the form everything, for only through form is the whole man affected...only from form is there true aesthetic freedom” (Schiller 1967, 155). True fine art never aims at some particular result like stimulating emotions, teaching beliefs, or improving morals. Only when people renounce all such instrumental aims and exercise “a disinterested and unconditional appreciation of pure semblance” will they have “started to become truly human” (Schiller 1967, 205). [Shriner references the Oxford 1967 Clarendon Press edition of Schiller’s *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*.]

It is this “disinterested and unconditional appreciation of pure semblance” that Schiller speaks of that I plan to equate with the compassion that arises during calm abiding meditation in the Buddhist tradition.

Morality in the aesthetic order.

Leaving Kant and Schiller, it is my contention that morality (using “morality” in its widest sense) is inherent in the aesthetic order and that the need for moral precepts to enable the individual to make right decisions on how to act is unnecessary. It is assumed that having knowledge of moral precepts educate us to act ethically, however when situations demanding moral judgment arise suddenly, there is not time to make moral reflections before we act.

My close friend, Webster Hood, introduced me to a book written by his teacher: *The Inward Morning* by Henry C. Bugbee Jr. (Bald Eagle Press, Pennsylvania State College, 1958). Bugbee is writing a journal, and on Friday, September 26, 1952, he asks, “...can we assume that we may deliberately place ourselves in the vein of the categorically imperative flowing of our lives? Can we credit the possibility of realizing the root meaning of being under obligation, wither in thought or in action, according to methods of inquiry or of action?” He notes that “for purposes of ethical inquiry of the

conditions of justified action can hardly be due to the following of ‘a proper method of inquiry.’ On Saturday, September 27th, Bugbee notes, “It would seem that faith, in the sense of a certain openness and trustingness on our part, is as essential in ethical reflection as in action.”

It is my contention that there are “procedures” that can be followed, but that these procedures are not typical aids to reflection in the Western philosophical tradition. Instead, these procedures are those developed in the Buddhist yogic tradition.

Meditation as an aesthetic experience.

Meditation is a subjective practice, and if compassionate resonance can spontaneously effect our actions without recourse to the logical cognitions of moral imperatives, it must arise within the confines of the meditative experience itself. The training in meditation must make this reflexive, if it is to be any more than a half-hearted attempt at being good. In Tibetan Buddhism, this process is kick-started through Guru Yoga. It requires the student, as Bugbee suggests, to have faith. But not a faith without investigation of the teacher; indeed, the student must observe the teacher to be a 24/7 dharma machine and a master of meditation. Then, and only then, should the student follow the teacher, for there are psychological dangers in the process of deconstructing the encrustation of indoctrinated moral precepts and cosmological concepts through the radical yoga of tantric Buddhism (Vajrayana).

Utilizing peaceful absorption, the meditator experiences well-being, or bliss, as the natural expression of emptiness, and this experience resonates as compassion. *In Secrets of the Vajra World* (Shambhala, Boston & London, 2002) Reginald A. Ray, says that the 8-fold path (the Forth Noble Truth of Gotama Buddha),

...is divided into *shila*, ethical behavior; *samadhi*, meditation; and *prajna*, wisdom or insight into the nature of things. In one sense, these three are progressive: one must first cultivate a life that is marked by kindness and good intentions towards others, a life that is ethically well grounded. On this basis, one may then enter the practice of meditation. And, having developed a sound meditation practice,

insight begins to arise. In another sense, however, shila, samadhi, and prajna may occur in any order and mutually reinforce each other in a variety of ways. For example, from one point of view they unfold in reverse order: it is insight (prajna) into suffering that often motivates people to enter the dharma in the first place. Then they practice a little meditation (samadhi) and realize, perhaps for the first time how self-centered and unkind they are to others. Based on this, they may attempt to be more ethical in their behavior (shila).

After completing the prerequisite trainings to establish the physical side of meditative stability (calm abiding), I practiced Guru Yoga, which involved hours of deep imagining (visualizations) and the repetition of specific sound formulas (mantras). These rewire the neural circuitry of the brain in a dramatic way. Imaginings become understandings. In this sense, there is an analogy with Heidegger's phenomenological scrutiny of the historical ontology of man's Being, but the yogic path is more rigorous and extends beyond an intellectual understanding into a final experiential condition. For example, the yogi or yogini can learn to dry sheets that have been soaked in freezing water while he or she sits in meditative equipoise. Such a practice is not for the faint of heart and must be learned in stages. All tantric teachings require a formal, ritual transmission by the lama (*wang*), along with verbal explanations (*lung*), without which the instructions in the manual are meaningless at best and could well lead the uninformed practitioner into dangerous psychological territory. Here is the bare outline of the yoga of inner heat from *A Treatise on the Stages of Training in the Profound Path of Naropa's Six Dharmas* by Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa, translated by Glenn H. Mullin, Snow Lion, Ithica, NY, 1996, page v. After the preliminary practices are completed, the following systematic teaching is given:

.A. The essence of the basic principles in the guidelines of the path; .1. The essence of the path; .a. Arousing the four blisses by means of drawing the vital energies into the central channel; .i. The inner condition of the meditations on the inner heat doctrine; (.A.) Meditating upon the inner heat in order to draw the vital energies into the central channel; (.1.) How to meditate on the inner heat yoga; (.a.) Meditating by means of visualizing the channels; (.b.) Meditating by means of visualizing mantric syllables; (.c.) Meditating by means of

engaging the vase breathing technique; (.2.) Having meditated in this way, how to cause the vital energies to enter, abide and dissolve with the central channel; (.B.) Having brought in the energies, the methods of arousing the four blisses; (.1.) The nature of the signs that arise, and the blazing of the inner fire; (.2.) How the bodhimind substance are melted and the four blisses induced; (.3.) The manner of meditating upon the innate wisdom.

At each stage, I found myself confused by the recent instructions, but as I progressed with the training, I realized that I could not have advanced without having accomplished the previous stage of training. This understanding gave me confidence in the training and renewed my faith in and devotion to my teacher. Tulku Sang ngag once asked me, “What do you think I want from you?” and I answered, “Devotion.” He shook his head in the negative and said, “Courage.” In my training, I had begun with faith and devotion, moved forward with courage, gaining more confidence because of my accomplishment, and this in turn renewed my faith and devotion. The attentive contemplation pertaining to the attributes of the outer guru, in time, brought about an awareness of the same attributes being a part of myself. Inner guru and outer guru became one.

During the stage of learning vase breathing, where I was required to suspend the breath for increasing longer periods. I had analyzed my resistance to this practice as connected to my fear of drowning. As a boy at summer camp, in northern California, I had nearly drowned in the Guwala River. Connected to this experience, I remembered a 1998 sci-fi film, *Sphere*, (directed by Barry Levinson and starring Dustin Hoffman, Sharon Stone, and Samuel L. Jackson), where the members of a crew of marine biologists, living at the bottom of the ocean, learn to ingest water infused with chemicals into their lungs so that they could withstand the ocean’s pressure and explore an alien spaceship imbedded in the coral. The expression of surprise on Sharon Stone’s face, when she discovered the validity of breathing with her lungs full of water, reinforced my determination to proceed. My ability to develop this yoga would not be accomplished through reasoning (in fact, the process is counter-intuitive), nor through the process of intellectual judgments (or only in so far as I could judge my progress). It had to be done with the basic cognitions of faith and courage.

Overcoming fear, I shifted my understanding of my yogic process of “holding my breath” to one of simply “not breathing.” A subtle meaning, here, but it had a profound effect. The first method required an effort of my muscles, and the second did not. “Not breathing” requires no effort of the body but does require an effort of the mind. Checking Wikipedia (“Control of Ventilation”):

Control of ventilation refers to the physiological mechanisms involved in the control of physiologic ventilation, which refers to the movement of air into and out of the lungs. Ventilation facilitates respiration. Respiration refers to the uptake of oxygen and the removal of carbon dioxide. Under most conditions, the partial pressure of carbon dioxide controls the rate of respiration. The most important function of breathing is gas exchange (of oxygen and carbon dioxide). Thus the control of respiration is centered primarily on how well this is achieved by the lungs. There are four main centers in the reticular formation and other parts of the brainstem that regulate the respiration rate. Inspiratory centre - reticular formation, medulla oblongata. Expiratory center - reticular formation, medulla oblongata. Pneumotaxic center - various nuclei of the pons. Apneustic center - nucleus of the pons. The first two centers are present on the medulla oblongata whereas the last two centers on the pons region of brain... Ventilation is normally controlled by the autonomic nervous system, with only limited voluntary override.

I sat on my meditation mat and did my preparatory practices. My breathing slowed and then ceased. I overcame my fear of “not having enough air” and continued to sit. After twenty minutes, allowing for a few adjustments of returning to the non-breathing state but not considering this a break in the practice, I stabilized the practice and remained in calm abiding. The candle on my altar went out. It was a night without a moon and intensely dark. I was sitting alone in the mountains with no one nearby, and I was feeling well-being in the cosmic void. No angst, no anguish, no agony. Luminous cognizance. My face before I was born. My original face. The face Dante Alighieri speaks of in line 108 of Canto XXXI of *Paradiso*, after peering into the image of the white Rose during his visit to the Tenth Heaven, the face which Jorge Luis Borges mentions in his poem “Of Heaven and Hell” (*Selected Poems*, Penguin, NY, 1999, translated by Alastair Reed, page 157):

and the sheer contemplation of that face—
never-changing, whole beyond corruption—
will be, for the rejected, an Inferno,
and for the elected, Paradise.

Brain research into evolutionary psychology finds that, with the development of the mammalian brain, a kind of cognition with feelings occurs, allowing mammals to have social and nurturing behaviors. Again, Wikipedia (“Triune Brain”):

...the "neocortex" represents that cluster of brain structures involved in advanced cognition, including planning, modeling and simulation; the "limbic brain" refers to those brain structures, wherever located, associated with social and nurturing behaviors, mutual reciprocity, and other behaviors and affects that arose during the age of the mammals; and the "reptilian brain" refers to those brain structures related to territoriality, ritual behavior and other "reptile" behaviors.

It is pointed out that the triune model of the brain is an oversimplification for complex neurological mechanisms, but through my yogic practice, it seemed as though I was beginning to “talk” to my reptilian brain, and my success in accomplishing the yogic vase breath brought useful insights and gave me confidence for the next stage, the practice of yogic heat, which involved yet another subconscious brain function.

We are closer to knowing how we know. If with the development of the mammalian brain, mammals could “think” with their feelings, we have the biological-ontological (if not metaphysical) foundation of aesthetic morality.

