

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

*Awake in the Cosmos* 2

*PRAXIS: Coordinating Both Worlds* 3

*The Wisdom Tradition of Jesus* 3

*Alchemy—The Science and Substance of Oriental Wisdom* 4

**Special Points Of Interest:**

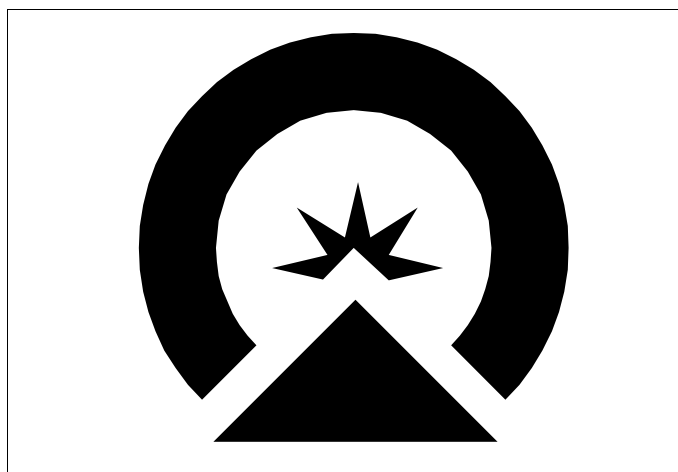
- The spiritual Orient does not lie in the geographic East, but in Transcendence.
- The cosmos for human beings is far greater than space-time.
- We have as our task the coordination of two fundamental axes—the horizontal and the vertical.
- The wisdom of Jesus knew and taught the fundamental oneness of unitive existence.
- Oriental Wisdom is expressed as an inner alchemy through which the human self is transformed.

***ORIENTAL WISDOM:  
THE SEARCH FOR THE  
ORIENT OF LIGHT***

In the world of Spirit, orientation is everything. To be disoriented means confusion and often to be hopelessly lost — until we find a point of reference or reorientation.

Ancient wisdom teaching suggests that human beings are inwardly designed to be vertically oriented to the Source of All Things—called the Light of All. This teaching explains the deeper meaning of the term “Orient of Light” and helps us understand what Oriental Wisdom actually is.

We are used to thinking of the Orient as being in the geographic East, and in the outer world it is. But that geographical Orient serves as external symbolism for a far more important direction in the inner world of humanity turned and tuned to the spiritual East (which is what Orient means). The inner East is the realm of the Infinite and the Eternal as the Source of Light which exists vertically above us as Transcendence. On the outside, the East lies on the horizon at the point of the rising Sun and our outer compass, however, marks that point. Our inner



*Ancient symbolism teaches that our inner orientation is toward a vertical Orient of Light.*

compass is tuned differently, to the high point of the vertical axis the Source from which all Light comes.

Light is, obviously, another term with multiple meanings and with special significance in the wisdom tradition. In the modern world light means the energy of photons expressing one part of the electromagnetic spectrum. Suppose, though, that there are other forms of energy that lie outside this spectrum, that are, in fact “higher” or more finely tuned forms of energy. Consciousness (or mind) can be understood as the highest known form of energy. Consciousness is traditionally

symbolized by light. Suppose, then, that the Source of all things flows down from the divine Mind, as the highest of all energies. Mind precedes matter, and is its Origin and Source, and so every conscious being, whether they know it or not, is tuned to the Source and participates in the Divine Mind.

The teaching of Oriental Wisdom concerns many things: waking up to the Presence of Light, reorienting one’s self to the inner East, learning to stay oriented in the present moment, coordinating both the horizontal axis of external orientation with its vertical grounding.

# AWAKE IN THE COSMOS

## Macrocosmic Awakening

We human beings find ourselves in a universe of immense proportions, currently measured as an expanse of 13.7 billion light years across (the amount of distance light travels in a year going at the speed of 186,000 miles per second).

This is mathematically conceivable, but to the mind practically unimaginable. Yet we are denizens of such a universe, which holds us and gives us life. Ancient wisdom, however, knows something further that this vast physical space is just the tip of the iceberg of existence

The actual cosmos is far more than mere than the immense span of space-time. We live in a multidimensional universe whose numbers and extensions are unknown to us. We are citizens of this greater cosmos as well, and by all sacred accounts designed to know and participate in it.

To be oriented not simply to space-time, but also to the great Macrocosm that spans both the seen and unseen realms (its known and unknown dimensions) is the understanding that is at the heart of Oriental Wisdom.

We have come into physical life in a cosmos of great beauty and complexity and we are to awaken spiritually to its fullness. In our journey to spiritual matur-

ity we grow into the awareness of this magnificent Reality. It is our homeland and it is also the future ground of all our exploration and becoming.

## Exploration and Becoming

The curious thing about the spiritual exploration of the cosmos which faces us now and in the future, is that not only do we explore the cosmos objectively, we explore it through the instrument of our very own being, subjectively (as intimate subject). In some fun-



*We are denizens of a multi-dimensional universe.*

damental way we are the cosmos, and the cosmos is inside of us — or we have access to it through our own interior being. Oriental Wisdom teaches us much on this subject.

In addition, any exploration we make changes us completely as we unfold into the Universe. Not only are we inseparable from the rest of the cosmos, but our own evolution or unfolding, both personally (and as a race of beings) is also inseparable from it. The soul's unfolding, then, is part of the spiritual evolution of the entire cosmos.

## Spiritual Unfolding

The term, spiritual unfolding, may not be easily understood. Suppose though we take the illustration of an acorn. In its kernel lies the whole future becoming of the tree. The acorn will unfold into the tree due to the force of the environment around it, and will change its form completely. As it does so it will also change the environment. The two are tied together,.

Suppose that every human being holds in potential as inner treasure a “kernel” of the divine Reality, some Essence, that is unique to itself. Using the illustration of the acorn, at the stage of its seed form, it will not be possible to know the exact shape, size or even species of Oak the acorn will become...but it is there, hidden inside nonetheless.

Though our unfolding will not simply take place in space-time, but along the vertical axis in the direction of eternal Light, such an example can be applied to humans themselves. Just as an acorn is a “heliotropic” entity (attracted by and moving toward the Sun), in the same way humans are “theocentric” beings (holding at their core the divine Essence), and as they unfold and grow toward the Presence of the Light (in a “theotropic” way), they will manifest their own “theomorphic” nature.

*The soul's development and unfoldment is inseparable from the unfoldment of the totality of existence.*

*So no only is the human being inseparable from the rest of creation, but his evolution—both personal and collective—is also inseparable from it.*

*The soul's unfoldment, then, is part of the unfoldment of the totality of the universe.*

—A.H. Almaas  
*Facets of Unity*

## PRAXIS: COORDINATING BOTH WORLDS

In one of his poems (*see sidebar*), Jalaluddin Rumi prays, *Lord, help us see both worlds as one*. If we imagine one of those as the horizontal axis of temporal and physical reality and the other as the axis of transcendent and immanent spiritual Reality, then living at the center point and coordinating “both worlds as one” would be the core praxis of Oriental Wisdom.

Much wisdom teaching concerning spiritual practice involves the wise coordination of both worlds in daily life and, particularly, in the present moment—the Now.

It is hard to over-estimate the importance of this teaching and the learning of this practice. Like learning any complex skill, it takes time, patience and guidance from those who have mastered the art of this balance.

Clearly such coordination cannot be the result of logical or rational analysis. Mental schemes not only do not encompass this complexity, the rational mind cannot “contemplate” vertical reality at all. Only the heart can. It is the heart which sees both worlds, and at the level of the heart

can worlds can be unitively balanced.

What is required is a state of inner wakefulness, what the early desert fathers and mothers called *nepsis*. Most humans are asleep at that level, but the human heart can be aroused by the divine Presence and kept awake by Spirit.

When we make room in our daily life for contemplative awareness at the level of the heart, and learn to carry that awareness into daily life, coordination between the two worlds is possible.

*There are those who accept the law of Moses and not the grace and love of Jesus, like the Jewish king who killed Christians. This is not seeing right. Moses is inside the soul of Jesus as Jesus is in the soul of Moses. One era belonged to one, then it was the other's turn, but they are one being. A teacher said to a slightly cross-eyed student, “Hand me the glass bottle there.” “Which one?”*

*“There are not two.” “Don't scold me, teacher, but I see two.” “Smash one of them.” Of course both were broken. This is how it is when we see through the double vision of lust, anger, or some religious self-interest. A bribed judge cannot distinguish the one who's been cruel from the victim. A good prayer is, Lord, help us see both worlds as one.*

—*The Soul of Rumi*

50

## THE WISDOM TRADITION OF JESUS

Layered over by centuries of history and the slow accretion of dogma, the original wisdom of Jesus often lies buried and unavailable to us. Although the canonical Gospels contain much of his original wisdom, their narrative structure and years of interpretive tradition often make that wisdom sound moralistic, as if what he taught was simply a system of ethics—how to be good.

Though certainly everything Jesus taught and did has moral implications (and should affect human behavior in a profound way), he was not a moral teacher, but a wisdom teacher—a Sage of immense power and insight. His wisdom teaching is certainly part of a larger, longer Hebrew tradition, but it is clear that much of the

wisdom of Jesus is original to himself, and yet also, surprisingly perhaps, universal in nature. Jesus' vision is clearly vertical (or Oriental) in nature. It shares affinity with the deep, unitive under-



*We are given keys to unlock the treasure which lies buried in the heart.*

standing central to all the great religious tradition.

True to the ancient Semitic ideal, Jesus' knew and lived the truth of Oneness (the coordination of both worlds). His teaching concerning the

Oneness of God, and our ultimate union with God is often lost or forgotten in the midst of current theological discussions. It becomes clearer, however, when we listen to his prayer in John 17. There he prays that “we all might become perfect in oneness.”

Later in the Gospel of Thomas Jesus lays claim to the undivided—the unitive existence of all things expressed as the Kingdom. “I am he who has appeared to you out of the Realm of Unity,” he says (61). Unitive life and the treasure it contains lie buried within, in the field of the heart. We are to search and find it. Using the keys of the Kingdom, we are to unlock its treasure, and enter the divine Realm, as the unitive abode.



PRAXIS

*The Christian Contemplative  
Tradition*

737 PR 249

Telephone, TX 75488

Phone: 903 664-4310

Email: [order@praxisofprayer.com](mailto:order@praxisofprayer.com)

Website: [www.praxisofprayer.com](http://www.praxisofprayer.com)



When this box is checked,  
it is time to renew your  
subscription:

\$10.00 US

In Canada add \$5.00  
for mailing.

© copyright  
May 2003

THIS JOURNAL IS A  
RESOURCE FOR ALL  
SPIRITUAL PILGRIMS,  
THOSE IN SPIRITUAL  
DIRECTION, AND  
THOSE GIVING  
GUIDANCE AS  
DIRECTORS AND  
MENTORS.

# ALCHEMY — THE SCIENCE AND SUBSTANCE OF ORIENTAL WISDOM

There is great mystery in the tradition of Oriental Wisdom. The term *alchemy* both describes that mystery and, in the modern world, confuses it as well. For us *alchemy* is a discredited science, an arcane practice that has lost modern credibility. Understood externally, it indeed appears useless — but known from another perspective (as it was by its own best adepts), it represents humanity's inner life, symbolizing not the transmutation of matter, but the science of the transformation of the soul. This precisely describes the meaning of the teachings of Oriental Wisdom and its core practices. As Jose and Miriam Arguelles have said,

*The ancient adepts of alchemy practiced what we might today call science. But theirs was a science of orientation—which literally means facing the Orient, the East, where the sun rises. Orientation has a further meaning which implies being based on a knowledge of the cosmic coordinates, that is, of the whole. Holistic knowledge operates on what Einstein described as the unified field.*

*Mandala (1995)*

The ancient treasury of Oriental Wisdom held in trust, then, a science of the soul that demanded a full reorientation of one's being to the "unified field" of the cosmos. This understanding

is true to all the great sacred traditions of the world as well. They expressed this same inner alchemy—the wisdom of inner transformation—using their own unique sets of symbols. The wisdom of Jesus makes it available in Christian form through his teaching concerning *metanoia* (or reorientation of being and consciousness) and transmitted the Way of Transformation through his parables and aphorisms.

Today that knowledge is strengthened and supplemented by teachings from all the great traditions which express the awareness that, based upon the tradition of ancient archetypes, human beings exist in multiple modes. Oriental Wisdom teaches that humans exist not along both the horizontal and the vertical axis, but humans are also "twinned beings" along both axes. Every individual is expressed in a dual mode in the horizontal dimension as well as in the vertical dimension.

The inner alchemy of Oriental Wisdom is, that moved by Spirit, we are meant to incorporate (or unite or coordinate) our "twinned" natures in both dimensions and along both axes into a single, unified whole as a part of ones complete being. This is one of the most complex teachings of Oriental Wisdom, and it means we must understand not only

the concept, but more importantly the *praxis* (or practice) of this unification.

To express it briefly, the process of inner alchemy is a movement, first, along the horizontal axis from the **peripheral self** to the **central self**. This is the initial journey of Spirit, and it will initiate an arduous transformative process. The second part of the process entails vertical movement in the central self from the mind to the heart. From there the process deepens (or ascends), strengthens and transcends to include the eye of the heart (or the *nous*). Moving through the *nous*, the transformative process (as inner journey) progresses into the world of pure Spirit, the *Pneuma*.

This inner movement along the vertical axis beginning from the central self leads the pilgrim ultimately to the Source of Light—the vertical Orient, passing through the Imaginal or Archetypal World (the Realm of the Kingdom) where the Higher Self of each human being resides as Archetype and is "twin" of the lower self as manifestation in space-time. This complex of changes, transformations and growth patterns is the central focus of Oriental Wisdom symbolized as inner alchemy.

L. Bauman