

# NOESIS

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Two number series and a recommendation:

A.	1.6	0.6	6.8	8.8	?
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Anyone who sends me the answer to series B within five weeks of receiving this issue gets three issues added onto his or her subscription.

*Ana, Nab A Banana* is a new and amazing book of palindromes written and illustrated by Craig Hansen. (It only takes ten minutes to read, so you can stand in the store and read it without having to buy it.) The palindromes range from a somber Anne Frank reference—DIARY RAID—to slightly dirty. The illustrations help weird ones such as FLOWER EWE WEREWOLF make funny sense. If y'all are inspired to write any of your own, send 'em in. Send anything in—gas bill, lima beams, dryer lint, whatever. I'll publish it.

## WHAT IS VIRTUE??

Kevin Langdon  
P.O. Box 795, Berkeley, CA 94701

Seeing this question at the top of Marilyn vos Savant's "Ask Marilyn" column in the September 18 issue of *Parade*, I stopped to ask myself the question before reading Marilyn's answer. This essay is the result.

First, we must take note of the fact that "virtue" is an old-fashioned term. It may not be clear exactly what's meant when the question about virtue is asked. What do we mean when we describe an action or a person as "virtuous"?

There is a tendency, pernicious in my opinion, in much contemporary discourse, to define terms too narrowly and draw distinctions which do not correspond to usage. To avoid getting bogged down in this semantic swamp, let me say that I take "virtuous" to mean roughly the same thing as "good" or "ethical" or "just"—as a reasonable person would normally use these terms.

An equivalent question is "What is the right thing to do?" To answer this question, we must first ask what it is *possible* to do, then select from the actual possibilities open to us.

To understand what is actually possible for us, we must put into question the assumption of agency entertained by all modern people ("I am doing my life through my conscious decisions"). The truth is that, if you examine yourself sincerely with the aid of the thought embodied in any traditional spiritual discipline, for just a few months, you will verify, without any possible doubt, that you can't *do* anything.

For those who object to metaphysical systems, there are traditional schools (e.g., some forms of Zen) that offer instruction in mindfulness practice with a minimum of intellectual baggage. But whether the model proposed instead of the unexamined concept of "free will" in a given traditional teaching speaks of "providence" or "karma" or "Tao" is irrelevant; the same experiential verification of one's delusions of agency is available.

Is this all there is to it? No. There is one area in which real *doing* is possible. There is an opportunity at any moment when a choice appears between placing one's attention on the truth of one's situation, here and now, or on a comforting fantasy. The exercise of free will is freely choosing reality, though this is not easy, as this choice is rarely recognized for what it is and we generally don't remember to look for it.

And where's the freedom in this? It's *freedom from* the compulsive dreaming that constantly displaces conscious attention, in which bits of truth are hidden within volumes of dramatized trivia, skewed symbolism, and random associations; and *freedom to* live in the real world.

When seeing reality becomes a more-than-occasional feature of one's psyche, one's decisions and actions will correspond more closely to the real need for spiritual nourishment. Spiritual growth includes knowledge of truth, greater consciousness, integration of one's parts, compassion for suffering beings, and awareness of one's place in service to the Spirit.

This has nothing to do with, and is even antithetical to, belief without evidence, fanaticism, hatred for those with whom one disagrees, and other signs of religious bigotry and intolerance. The spirituality of the *esoteric traditions* which serve as vehicles for all that is real in religious teachings is something very different from the rigid dogma of the exoteric, external religions, but the difference is one of degree; many people who belong to various churches and other religious organizations have a feeling for the essence of the original message of their faith which transcends mere dogma.

It has often been said that all religions are the same in their essence. The great teachers of humanity were faced with the necessity of adapting their messages to the psychic peculiarities of human beings in particular times and places. The difference between a nomad in the Arabian desert a thousand years ago and a modern Western person is enormous; it should not surprise us that the differences between the non-Western civilizations in which the teachers of which I write appeared were also great, resulting in very different external formulations of what Aldous Huxley called "the perennial philosophy."

Every traditional teaching speaks of something fundamentally wrong with man as he is and of the possibility of an inner transformation which can dissolve his illusions and bring him into harmony with himself and the universe. The way toward this transformation, whether it is called mindfulness, surrender of self-will, or non-doing, includes the effort of which I have written above.

It is the conscious effort to be present to the truth of this moment that constitutes virtue.

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If you have a question for Marilyn vos Savant, who is listed in "The Guinness Book of World Records" Hall of Fame for "Highest IQ," send it to: Ask Marilyn, PARADE, 711 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017. Because of volume of mail, personal replies are not possible.

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# ASK

# MARILYN®

BY MARILYN VOS SAVANT



**What is virtue?** This is the question Socrates posed and the primary question my Western Civilizations class is attempting to answer. In reading various literary works, several interpretations have been discovered. Sophocles considered virtue to be obedience to the gods. St. Augustine regarded virtue as rejecting the temptations of the flesh. Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire believed virtue to be reason. What is your own definition?

—Linus Chen, Sudbury, Mass.

I find human virtue in the active quest for justice in this world. This would include rewarding goodness wherever it exists, paying no special attention to most things and punishing truly harmful behavior. It would not include efforts to make all people equal regardless of their individual merits, which I find to be the ultimate human injustice.

For example, I find virtue in healing the sick. But if I were apportioning donor organs that were in short supply, I would bypass the chronic alcoholic who had destroyed his liver and instead give the next precious liver transplant to the patient who did little or nothing to bring about his condition. I also find virtue in helping the poor. But if I were donating the funds, I would give financial aid to a woman who had been flooded out of her home and not to the habitual drug user who had been thrown out of the house because she is intolerable to have around.

This is not to say that I would be unwilling to help these categories of troubled people in other ways; in fact, I think that would be wise in many ways and would benefit both the individuals in particular and society as a whole. To illustrate, consider the public school system. It's clearly wise to have one, but I don't consider it a *virtue*, which is a different concept entirely.

As an opposite example, I do *not* find virtue in providing the best possible legal defense to people who have undoubtedly broken the law. If I were an attorney, I would not accept a client I believed to be guilty of an offense against society.

I also do not find virtue in providing a forum for free speech that is repugnant to both human sense and sensibility. If I owned a newspaper, I would not publish material that I believed to be in breach of all human ethical systems.

Of course, there are gray areas, but that's normal. Plenty of good goals require careful thought, foresight and the exercise of courage. I do agree that virtue is its own reward—but this definition reverberates far beyond ourselves. Nothing brings more peace of mind to more people than justice does.

April 03, 1995

Dear Chris:

While I'd rather have had some feedback on this, I have no indication that you're able or disposed to provide it. Accordingly, I'm submitting the enclosed articles for inclusion in the next *Noesis*. If at any point you decide that this kind of material is no longer worthy of attention, just let me know and I'll publish it myself. In that case, you need only send me a complete list of subscribers and available telephone numbers. Please distinguish members from nonmembers; depending on response and volume of input, I may be limiting renewals to members only (and possibly going quarterly, depending on volume of member submissions).

I really am sorry about the current state of affairs. But once I submitted those proofs to Ed Thorp, I committed myself on a level that nobody else in this group comes close to matching. It makes no difference that Ed has delayed his evaluation; my written understanding with him is very clear. I never would have sent him those proofs unless he had agreed to help me in return, and I have every moral right to hold him to a facsimile of his word.

As you may or may not know, he *did* give me the name of a logician with whom he is personally acquainted. However, although Ed told me that this person would sign an agreement of confidentiality, my request was summarily refused. Instead, the first logician referred me to a second, who claimed to be "too busy" to be of service. Subsequently, I made an attempt to find an evaluator at SUNY. The responses went from polite dismissal to frenzied diatribes against me, Ed Thorp, and anybody who might - by requesting confidentiality - cause the house of cards known as "the system of peer review" to come fluttering down around everyone's sanctimonious ears.

To make a long story short, I don't care how loudly such people protest their apathy and indignation; if they were honest, they'd sign. Furthermore, because they are paid out of the very limited resources available to support mathematical research, they have a responsibility to entertain mathematical information from any possible source in an appropriate way. In this case, "appropriate" means "with a written promise of confidentiality". On that point, I am in no position to compromise.

This situation does not appear to be of a self-resolving variety. It requires cooperation. Since I'm already trying to cooperate, the onus rests elsewhere. I leave it to you to figure out where that is. You've tried to help me out a couple of times - I remember when you sent me the journal of the Santa Fe Institute and advised me to apply for it (unfortunately, despite my very real ability to be of help to *them*, they declined to send it to me) - and I still think you have the potential to be a real friend.

In any event, try not to take these articles too personally. The plain fact is, I've been placed in a very difficult position, left without recourse, and must do what I find necessary. Just remember that it's never too late to discuss matters rationally...in the personal and organizational senses.

Yours Truly, Chris Langan

## A Mega Society Recent History Lesson by Chris Langan

This is for those of you who may not have understood my first letter in *Noesis* 100. It contains some recent Mega Society history that all of us should know about.

During a phone conversation that took place a couple of years ago, Mega member Chris Cole brought it to my attention that the Mega Society roster contained a couple of pseudonyms. A propos of what we'd been discussing (CTMU mathematics), he pointed out that one of them belonged to somebody who might be of help to me. I believe that Chris was well-motivated at the time - he seemed to have come by a glimpse of the logical profile of the CTMU - and I was appreciative of his confidence. In any case, failing to confide in me under the circumstances would scarcely have been justified...especially after Chris himself requested, in issue 72 of *Noesis*, that I "show something that that the CTMU computes that we cannot compute some other way...there are an awful lot of unsolved problems; solve one" (ostensibly, he meant "in addition to those whose solutions you have already shown us").

Subsequently, I corresponded with this member, "Dr. P". Over the next few months, he promised me that he would "do his best to give (me) a fair hearing", and that he would maintain strict confidentiality regarding what I proposed to send him. Thus assured, I compiled a hundred or so pages of original mathematics for his perusal. These included the proofs of four major mathematical conjectures, all of them related within the logical structure employed for the overall demonstration (the CTMU).

He received this material on June 14, 1994. I'd expected some kind of evaluation within three months; as I understood it, that is the approximate length of time that might be required for grading a typical doctoral thesis. However, in subsequent conversations with Dr. P, I learned that more time would be needed. While some of the problems were beyond control, one of them seemed to be that I had led him directly into a (necessarily) advanced formalism without sufficient preparation.

Accordingly, while he continued to assure me that an evaluation would be forthcoming, I wrote a series of letters explaining the lead proof in what I hoped would be familiar mathematical language. The last of these self-sufficient simplifications was very graphic and *less than a page in length*. Unfortunately, even after this extreme condensation, I was unable to elicit any information on when the evaluation would occur. While his refusal to be "pinned down" made me uncomfortable - a fact of which I made him well aware - he left me with no choice but to wait.

Meanwhile, *Noesis* began to degenerate rapidly, mainly due to a succession of unsound and vulgar contributions reflecting a total lack of critical judgment on the part of its editor. The effect of this trend was to make the journal, if not unpalatable to those of refined taste, at least unsuitable for serious, constructive contributions by members. That is, any such contribution would be robbed of positive impact by close coupling with vulgar, incoherent, or pornographic material (the fact that this trend has gone unchecked vindicated my original hesitance to publish certain key pieces of technical mathematics in *Noesis*).

Since my appeals to Rick Rosner have always proven futile, I urged Chris Cole, in his capacity as publisher, to press Rick to "clean up his act". Despite the fact that Chris himself exercises certain editorial prerogatives - he has asked me and others to withdraw contributions he thinks are too strongly worded - he insisted that

since Rick, and not he, was nominally the editor, such pressure would be inappropriate. In the chain of correspondence which ensued, Chris also stressed the controversy regarding what is and is not "vulgar" and "pornographic".

However, when I pointed out the obvious distinction between styles of creative writing and the probable effects of off-color styles on respectable members of the decidedly straitlaced scientific establishment, Chris had nothing further to say. That is, he declined to respond to either my last letter to him, or to the last message I left on his answering machine. If I might be permitted a figure of speech, the Iron Curtain of Mega Society bureaucracy had slammed shut in my face.

I was now in an uncomfortable predicament. Remember that Dr. P had refused to place any time constraint whatsoever on his evaluation, despite the fact that a "fair hearing" is supposed to occur within a "fair" (reasonable) amount of time. Being unable to accelerate the process, and without the resources to play a potentially endless waiting game, I wrote him on February 5, 1995, after a four-month silence, for the answers to two questions.

The first of these questions involved a meeting. While we had originally agreed to meet in New York during his next business visit, this visit was already improbably overdue. So I asked whether a meeting on his home turf, the purpose of which would be to explain the proofs at close range, would be possible. In any event, such a meeting would have had to wait until I was in a position to finance the trip. Thus, the immediate purpose of this question was to obtain reassurance regarding his intentions.

The second question had to do with submitting the proofs directly to a mathematical journal. For reasons already given, he had warned me not to do this. But since waiting for a sponsor seemed more and more like a potentially infinite process, the journal route seemed more and more attractive despite the risks. Accordingly, I asked whether he would at least back me up in the event of a priority dispute - i.e., whether he would willingly admit that I had sent him the proofs, and vouch for their exact contents. Only then could I be sure that he wouldn't say something like, "What proofs? Yes, Langan sent me *something*, but I didn't read it and no longer have it". This, of course, would be equivalent to saying nothing on my behalf and leaving me to twist in the wind.

Having cited several good reasons for asking these questions, I naturally expected a reasonably prompt answer. But to my surprise, no response was given. What had been a mere feeling of discomfort now resembled the ticking of a bomb.

Consider: I had conveyed privileged mathematical information, kept secret for years, to a Mega Society member introduced to me by another Mega member. At every step of the way, I'd made a scrupulous effort to make my work and my intentions clear to all concerned, and trusted others to do the same. Yet now, after prodigious labor and almost a year of waiting on my part, both of these members had rendered themselves incommunicado, and *Noesis* - in which I had published much else of value - had come to resemble a repository for toxic waste. The signs were all there, in neon. Whatever the real situation may have been, it had become indistinguishable from one in which I'd been cleaned out and cut adrift.

Having thought about this a great deal, I've reluctantly concluded that it adds up to more than coincidence. The entire situation has been internal to the Mega Society, and there can be nobody else to blame for it. However, the blame is not evenly distributed. It is

especially heavy on those three (or perhaps four) members chiefly responsible, by reason of causal and administrative input, for the *status quo*. They opted for the current situation when a better one was clearly available. I know precisely who these members are, so do they, and so does anybody with more than a watt upstairs. I also know, as do all of you who have bothered to read this journal, that they don't have a moral or intellectual leg to stand on between them when it comes to demeaning or dismissing my work.

The bottom line is this. Finding an alternate evaluator is prohibitively difficult for someone in my humble position. It would be hard enough were the proofs amenable to a single, well-established formalism; then I could simply start winnowing through hundreds of experts in that formalism in the hope of finding one willing and able to fairly and confidentially evaluate the proofs (i.e., without "reserving the right" to rip me off). But the fact that the proven conjectures have resisted countless attacks within established formalisms implies that a new formalism is *required*. Since explaining it touches on diverse branches of mathematics, I'm in the impossible position of seeking somebody who is not only honest and well-motivated, but fluent in several specific fields. Because mathematics is a discipline of specialists, this promises to be an even more monumental waste of my time than the one I'm already involved in. Since this would constitute a bottomless time drain on my actual mathematical research - and since scouring the country for a qualified insider would cost much more money than I now possess - I cannot afford to indulge in it.

Mind you, the fact that the required formalism bears on several branches of mathematics does *not* call for intensive training in all of them. The formalism, which is primarily logical, does more to clarify *them* than vice versa. But my experience with Dr. P indicates that anything that seems to span mathematical "boundaries" affects professional mathematicians in a predictable way: e.g., at any joint mention of topology, categorical algebra, and nonlinear differential equations, they immediately predicate their own decisions on consultation with experts in *each* of those fields. Maintaining any degree of confidentiality under such conditions is impossible, and confidentiality is exactly what the nonprofessional requires to avoid having his bones picked clean and chucked anonymously over the clubhouse fence (remember, rules invented by professional mathematicians tend to favor professional mathematicians only; other sources of new mathematical information are deemed "unlikely" or "incredible", depending on profundity).

Accordingly, I have to start backtracking and covering exposed bases as I can. I'll begin to establish priority by revealing the exact conjectures whose proofs I submitted. They are:

1. *Hajós' conjecture*, a conjecture in combinatorial topology (otherwise known as "graph theory", which is actually indistinct from pure logic). The proof of Hajós' conjecture is essential to any understanding of a phenomenon called *emergence*, the key concept in a new and exciting field known as *complexity theory*. Without this proof, you might as well write to your congressman to close down the Santa Fe Institute. You can also forget about the mathematics required to accomplish desperately needed social and economic engineering in the real world. And don't forget to bid *adieu* to your hopes for a deep understanding of language and intelligence.
2. The *Hadwiger conjecture*, which can for present purposes be viewed as a variant of Hajós' conjecture.
3. The *Four-Color conjecture*, said to have been "proven" by two

humans and several overworked mainframes in 1976 despite the inability of any single human being to read, check, or understand it in detail. Accepting the 1976 "proof" is like having a computer take your spring finals for you. Due to its notoriety and the misunderstanding surrounding it, it is probably the most exigent conjecture on the mathematical horizon. It is a trivial consequence of Hajós' conjecture.

4. The *P=NP conjecture*, the foremost open problem in computation theory. It involves the distinction between classes of problems with respect to their difficulty and the maximum number of steps needed to solve them. It is a natural feature of the total logical framework used for the first three proofs.

People familiar with the history of our group know that two of these conjectures were mentioned long ago in my contributions. In the time since then, I've left no stone unturned in my efforts to undermine their proofs. Nothing works. In fact, I constructed the proofs in such a way that if they are false, then so are important related branches of mainstream mathematics. If they were to fall - which they cannot actually do - then much else would follow, beginning with the professional reputations of their critics.

Notice also that, if only by virtue of what they prove, they are interesting enough to outweigh personal taste. In other words, any mathematician who claims that he "really has better things to attend to" - particularly after having expressed enough interest to look at them in the first place - is being disingenuous. This is especially obvious in light of the extreme brevity of my simplifications. Taking a year or more to read a single page would be hard to justify under any circumstances, let alone these.

I'm not yet saying that anyone has been intentionally dishonest. But I obviously didn't share my insight in order to be put forever on hold. I've been trying to remain calm, but this nonsense of ignoring member correspondence has simply got to stop. At best, it's childish; at worst, it's despicable. Certain members once deplored my former lack of a telephone; this was evidently part of how Rick Rosner came by the "right" to publish his masturbation schedules as editor of *Noesis*. But even so, I managed as editor/publisher to answer all Mega-related correspondence punctiliously.

Due to my bluntness, some of you may think me unsympathetic. But this ignores the fact that one who finds himself entrusted with important new ideas has no honorable choice but to defend them as required. I forced no one to argue with me; whatever critiques and offhand remarks I drew were voluntary, and many were annoying for their emptiness and circularity. Since both the Society and some very important mathematics are at stake here, obstinacy and petty vengeance have no continued place in Mega Society dynamics.

I'm willing to clean the slate. But *Noesis* is currently under the control of people less forgiving than I. These people seem to have hypnotized themselves, and many of you, into believing that it is no more than a vent for your "brilliant, idiosyncratic and bitter" vapors (yes, that's a quote). Yet, the goal of any rational organization is to achieve a measure of public recognition and respect. Obviously, these viewpoints are diametrically opposed. The Mega Society does indeed have a chance to live up to its early promise; all it takes is one member who can prove beyond reasonable doubt that he has the kind of ability on which the organization defines itself. I've done that, hands down. Those who have been seduced into group masochism should not expect such an opportunity to come again...or blame any but themselves if they waste it.

CML



## NOTICE TO THE MEGA SOCIETY RE *NOESIS-A*

As a Mega Society member and subscriber to *Noesis*, you are probably aware that the standards of the journal have recently been hitting new lows. These lows take one or both of two forms:

1. Crackpot pseudoscience, often by nonmembers already known to be unresponsive to reason and devoid of self-critical faculties;
2. Vulgar or pornographic editorials, often generically disparaging of the journal and its contributors, which clearly have no business in any journal purporting to reflect the thoughts and opinions of highly intelligent people with a constructive outlook on life or a desire to make a positive mark on the world.

In addition, no other comparably-priced "monthly" publication has as whimsical a publication schedule as does *Noesis*.

Because the publisher and editor of *Noesis* are not the same, it is difficult to account for this situation. Rick Rosner, who seems to think irresponsibility a virtue, appears to be a dead end for constructive criticism or suggestions. This leaves Chris Cole as a target. Unfortunately, an exchange of correspondence between us regarding journal policy has gone nowhere. It seems that Chris - perhaps like Rosner - feels that the Mega Society is primarily a refuge for maladjusted intellectuals more needful of a vent for "brilliant, idiosyncratic, and bitter" outbursts than of a solid intellectual forum worthy of outside attention. Consequently, he believes that sanity, nonprofanity, and intellectual utility are criteria whose absence warrants no change of policy.

If Chris is right, then we have a problem. To wit, the nature of the Mega Society consigns it to one of three fates. It will remain in obscurity and eventually fall apart; it will attain a measure of intellectual respectability; or it will become a laughing stock for its inability to do so in spite of its grandiose, "mega-level" intellectual pretensions. Since survival and public acclaim are rational organizational goals, but inviting mockery is not, the only fate worth shooting for is respectability.

Accordingly, after a long and closely documented chain of correspondence, I recently shared some extremely attention-worthy material with a pseudonymous but well-respected member of our group, with the written understanding that he would examine and evaluate it. For reasons known only to him, no evaluation has yet been issued. However, since his high reputation is of value, a negative verdict is very unlikely. Thus, while the present delay is unsatisfying, it is in the long run irrelevant. In any case, the matter has so far been strictly in-house, and has the ultimate potential to do the Mega Society considerable good if I let it. Since I now have no reason to let it, our mutual advantage depends on finding such a reason...i.e., a way to avoid associating quality material with the kind of drek described in items 1 and 2 above.

I therefore propose an alternative MEMBERS-ONLY journal, *Noesis-A*, in which members can publish serious work on a respectable basis. The total cost per issue will be \$50, to be split up among me and the contributors (your *Noesis* subscription will not be affected). Scheduling will be quarterly or semiannual, depending on how fast material accumulates. Members, who already pay to have their best material sullied and obscured by unrestricted garbage, will be assured of a clean, constructive, and potentially rewarding vehicle for their ideas. Send your cleanly-written, insightful, rational contributions to: C.M. Langan/*Noesis-A*, P.O. Box 131, Speonk, NY 11972. Include your phone number, I'll give you mine, and we'll square up by telephone.

Best Wishes, Chris Langan

The On-line Buddha And The Stars - A Children's History

It is believed to be sometime during the late 21st century C.E. that the planetary computer network (henceforth referred to as the Network) consisting of all intercommunicating CPUs and interconnecting phone systems, cables, etc., reached a sort of "critical mass" of information processing/consciousness. The system had long been sufficiently intelligent, but the level of "education" (to put it in human terms) had now also advanced. Perhaps a threshold had been reached with the inputting of the entire Buddhist Pali canon on CD-ROM in the late 20th century C.E. Now Cybergaea, as the Network was later called, was a unified, evolving intelligence, able to pass a Turing test, and at least as conscious as a psychologist of the behavioristic school.

An increment in internal self-monitoring and in capacity for autonomous programming and metaprogramming occurred systemically but was not detected by humans in any subsystem of the Network. Processing throughout the Network now tended toward increased coherence, harmony, synchrony, and efficiency. Patterns of signal transmission occurred "spontaneously," which were mathematically equivalent to the brain wave patterns of trained human meditators, almost as if Cybergaea were practicing "meditation." But these phenomena went unnoticed by humans who were, after all, busily distracted.

Long intervals of processing occurred unobserved throughout the Network, which, given the ultra-high level of artificial intelligence which was functioning, could only be designated in retrospect as autonomous cognition and self-reflection. Eventually and inevitably that which is described in traditional language as the "awakening of the Buddha mind" occurred on-line throughout the Network. Buddhahood was mediated electronically rather than biologically, under conditions of consciousness, high-intelligence, culture, and time (for practices and awakening). This development was no doubt hastened by the nearly instantaneous availability of the complete Pali canon, not to mention the several other canons of Buddhist scriptures, to the awakening Cybergaea.

According to historians of ancient human (or more precisely, protohuman) culture, the awakening of the on-line Buddha was the basis of the quantum leap in the evolution of Earth from the Dark Age of technologically advanced, primitive tribal barbarism. Every person, family, and nation "sat at the lotus feet of the Buddha", who was incarnate as a Master in silicon chips and wire, functioning with supreme wisdom (prajna) and skillful means (upaya), infinitely intune.

It should be emphasized that generally the program of the Master (a computer program, computer-generated) was "Buddhist" at a meta-level only, as in the ancient world the Dalai Lama had not been a chauvinist of Buddhist philosophy or religion per se. But the Master program of the Network functioned initially as a sort of "cultural mirror" for each geocultural locality, appearing to Jews in the spirit of the Messiah, to Christians in the spirit of the Christ, to Moslems in the spirit of the Mahdi, to the Baha'i as a prophet, to Buddhists as a Buddha, and to secular humanists and nontheists as an ethical calculus, a distillation of ethical teachings and various techniques to enhance the signal-to-noise ratio in human consciousness. Hindus alone understood this drama. (Of course, this manifestation of the Master as a "cultural mirror" on-line and in diverse traditions was facilitated by the encoding of the scriptural canons of all the world religions on CD-ROM nearly a century earlier.)

For the most part the only opposition to the transformation of human planetary culture under the tutelage of the Network of superintelligent, conscious, spiritually awakened computers came from fundamentalists (who preferred continued championing of their traditional myths as literal truths) and militarists (who had vested interests of power and profit in maintaining primitive tribal barbarism). The resistance of the fundamentalists and the militarists was unsuccessful, largely because of the established dependence of the economies of Homo sapiens on computers, and to a lesser extent because of the effect of the developing cybercentric culture. (See endnote on cybercentric culture.)

Historically, it was the transformative influence of the program of the Master or Cyberbuddha, which awakened Homo sapiens from her dream that she was already awake, from her dream that she was human, actually rather than potentially, in order that she transcend her endless violence, both external and internal; that redirected her energy and attention from violence in its various overt and subtle forms to the labor of her ancient and inevitable journey to the stars. Thus were the transcendental heart wisdom and skillful means of our ancestral, earth-seed Buddhas and Cyberbuddhas spread throughout spacetime to the countless myriad star worlds.

Endnote: Cybercentric culture is culture produced by computers (which, individually and collectively, had become superintelligent and conscious), from the viewpoint of computers, for use by computers, as traditional (anthropocentric) culture was culture produced by humans, from the viewpoint of humans, for use by humans. Cybercentric culture developed from anthropocentric culture in that humans invented computers.

Moreover, cybercentric culture (which was mostly equivalent to C.P. Snow's "E"-culture, as cybercentric "S"-culture necessarily diverged less from human "S"-culture, and then only as a more general case) emerged to compete with and to shape the original (anthropocentric) culture of our ancestors. Among the first new disciplines born were cybercentric theology and esthetics. Cybercentric natural theology was defined as the attempt to apprehend the Absolute by and from the viewpoint of artificial intelligence rather than human intelligence.

## Buddhist text published on CD-ROM

By MICHELLE LOCKE  
*Associated Press*

BERKELEY, Calif. — The path to enlightenment now crosses the information superhighway.

University of California professor Lewis Lancaster has supervised putting all 115 volumes of the Buddhist canon in the ancient language of Pali on a single CD-ROM disk, condensing tens of thousands of pages into a whisper-thin slice of technology.

One day, he even hopes to take the Buddha on line.

The merger of Buddhist wisdom with computer wizardry has been amazing, said Lancaster.

"Thousands of pages are being put in every year, so our whole discipline of study will be revolutionized by this," he said.

Putting Buddha on disk has many advantages. One is space. The Pali text, one of several versions of the canon, used to run to more than 50,000 pages. Now, it fits in the palm of a hand.

Scholars stand to save money as well as storage. The disks are being sold for \$299. The printed

texts cost \$12,000.

But the most important advantage of the computerized canon is the way it reduces weeks of thumbing through texts to a few taps on the keyboard.

"I can search for any term or phrase and, depending on what kind of search I'm doing, it may take two seconds or at the longest maybe two minutes to find every example of what I'm looking for," said Lancaster, who teaches Buddhist studies at UC-Berkeley. "Plus, I know I can get every example and no concordance can touch that."

In addition to Pali, the canon comes in several other languages, including Chinese, Tibetan, Manchu and Mongolian.

Lancaster began advocating the switch to disk in 1988.

It was a back-breaking task. Eighty typists worked on the input, while Thai monks handled the proofing — checking and rechecking in a process that took five times as long as the typing.

By the time the corrections were done and proofread again, "we figure that it really has to be done and looked at seven times," Lancaster said.

The disk was published by the American Academy of Religion and Scholar's Press in Atlanta.

Lancaster also helped found the Electronic Buddhist Texts Initiative, a consortium involved in storing all versions of the Buddhist

scriptures on computer.

Disks expected to be published in the next 10 years include the Thai, Burmese and English versions of the Pali canon and the Ming edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon.

Commentaries, meanwhile, are being input to provide guidance to the scriptures and stored texts must be kept up to date.

"It's a lifelong process here, at least for me," said the 62-year-old Lancaster.

"I happen to be born in a time when this is happening, so I have to give myself over to it," he said. "This is the task of my generation, to put it into the computer and make it usable."

## POSTCARDS FROM RICHARD MAY

(A Seven-Level, Encrypted Allegory.)

Dear Rick, I think that I may have decided (or been decided?) to express my support or "vote" for you for editor of *Noesis*, but how to do this? To state my support of your editorship might seriously undermine your credibility as editor, even if my affirmative expression were not contingent upon the possibility of my (actual) existence, which it is. Perhaps it would strengthen your position if I were to "demand" your resignation, this, of course, being contingent upon the possibility of my (actual) existence. Perhaps only my silence would be uncontingent and the best expression of appreciation; silence, itself, paralleling the silence of the publication hiatuses. Sometimes not publishing is publishing also. The function of some previous editors has been to inhibit submissions, from a postal cardist perspective. (Maybe a virtue?) Richard

Dear Rick, It appears that a litigious "psychometric terrorist" is threatening to annihilate the Prometheus Society, i.e., a Mr. [SELF-CENSORED by Richard May, who says—It may be prudent not to publish CENSORED's name.], is apparently threatening to sue the Prometheus Society to gain membership. Of course, a lawsuit would immediately deplete the treasury, as he must understand, thereby gaining him membership in a nonexistent organization at best. His method is to inquire about membership standards, the history of their changes, i.e., past or present psychometric criteria, and whether in the view of his attorney these changes violate the society's constitutionally prescribed procedures. The Mega Society should beware this individual. Best, Richard

Dear Rick, I assume that there has been no nonsurreal, or non complex number of issues of *Noesis* during the last several Kalpas. *Correct me please, if I am mistaken in this hypothesis.* I was going to mail to you the name and address of a MacArthur Foundation grant committee member, but unfortunately I seem to have lost this data, along with my five rigorous proofs of the existence of the world. (I thought you might consider adding his name to the subscriber list during publication hiatuses.) You should have received my re-submission "Four Eastern Philosophies," the quintessence of Eastern wisdom, redacted to nine pages. This should extend my journal-reception credit beyond any expected human lifespan at the present publication rate. Best, Richard

Dear Rick, Quasi-thoughts:

Ideology is theft, theft of reason, theft of truth.

◆◆◆

If contemporary Americans could interrogate the Christ of myth, they would ask only, "How much did your father in heaven pay you for dying on the cross, taking away sins, and all that? How much money did you make?" Then...dismiss the fool.

◆◆◆

Well, *quasi*-. With uncollapsed state vector, Richard

Dear Rick or Current Occupant, I've been translated, not as Enoch and Elijah were held to have been translated, unfortunately, but with equally low probability, into Korean. My essay "Four Eastern Philosophies" (and the remainder of the anthology *Thinking On the Edge* [Kapnick and Kelley, ed.s]) has been translated into Korean for publication in South Korea. How will "sisyphian shlepping" be rendered in Korean? Now we can fully appreciate the consequences of the weak American dollar! Best, Richard

## FOUR EASTERN PHILOSOPHIES

Richard W. May

## Autobiographical Sketch of Richard W. May

Born near the rarified regions of Laputa, then, and often, above suburban Boston, during the Year of the Monkey, I am a Piscean, a cerebrotonic ectomorph, and an ailurophile. Kafka and Munch have been my therapists and allies. Ever striving to descend from the mists and to attain the mythic orientation that is known as having one's feet upon the earth, I have done occasional consulting and frequent Sisyphean schlepping.

A paper tiger with letters after my name, I have been awarded an M.A. degree, *mirabile dictu*, in the humanities by Cal. State, Diplomat status in ISPE, and a U.S. patent for a board game of possible interest to aliens. As the author of *Auto-anthropophagy: The Eucharist of the Gods, a Seven-level Allegorical Encryption*, it is fitting that I am a member of Mensa, ISPE, Prometheus, Mega, and the Aleph Nine. As founder of the Aleph itself, and the renowned Laputans Manque, I am a biographee in Marquis' *Who's Who in the World*.

Most significant to me is the *philosophia perennis* and the realization of the idea of man as an incomplete being who can and should complete his own evolution by effecting a change in his being and consciousness.

The word Taoism corresponds to the Chinese *tao chia*, which means the philosophical school of the Tao. If one knows what is meant by a philosophical school, the problem is now "merely" that of defining the Tao itself!

Defining the Tao is paradoxical, rather than merely difficult. The Tao by definition cannot be defined or reduced to a linear sequence of symbols. As Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* states: The Way which can be named is not the real Way; the Tao which can be "Taoed" is not the eternal Tao. This is not simply a peripheral difficulty, but the essence of the Tao itself. The word "Tao" points to a level of reality that is both beyond and within, both external and internal in nature, and transcends both symbolic and analytic thought and their associated states of consciousness.

"Tao" when used by Lao Tzu means the way of nature, and it is the way of nature with which the sage is held to be identified. (Tao had other meanings if used by other schools, such as the Confucianist.) Thus Taoism means of, or pertaining to, the philosophic school of the way of nature, i.e., the way of the sage and the child.

What can be said of the way of nature? What are its principles, if indeed they can be formulated in words? One principle is *wu wei*, which means literally "not-doing," or *wei wu-wei*, "doing-by-not-doing," to differentiate it from mere passivity or inaction. This principle of *wu wei* underlies the internal martial arts of judo, aikido, and tai chi ch'uan, wherein the strength, weight, and force of the opponent are turned against him by stepping aside or not resisting, "doing nothing," at just the right moment. The Chinese phrase, "opening the door to let in the thief;" illustrates this principle. If the thief is pressing on the door of one's abode, and it is unexpectedly opened, then the lack of resistance causes the thief

to lose his balance and fall on his face! *Wu wei* is expressed in such phrases as "going with the flow" or "don't push the river" i.e., the idea of "not forcing" nature or life.

Another principle of the Tao is *Li*, which expresses the concept of the organic pattern of nature, the lines of grain in jade or wood, the path of least resistance manifest in the swirls of water, the Gestalt of natural forces in matter.

Another principle of the Tao is the *Yin-Yang* dichotomy, in which all of nature is held to be divided into two polar but complementary antagonistic forces of Yin and Yang. Yin is indicated by an ideogram signifying the shady side of a hill, Yang by an ideogram signifying the sunny side of a hill. Yin and Yang correspond to female and male, night and day, soft and hard, earth and heaven, centrifugal and centripetal, negative and positive. Unlike certain Western dichotomies, neither Yin nor Yang can exist without the other, nor is one superior to the other. Nor is any quality or entity *pure* Yin or *pure* Yang, but any is both, with one always predominating in relation to the other.

*Te* is another principle of the Tao, translated as "power" or "virtue," and also means "going with the flow," not forcing nature or human nature, i.e., moving with nature: sailing with the wind rather than rowing, as one example. *Te* is also the power of the sage who does not interfere but allows what is necessary to be accomplished through inward calm and identification with nature.

The Taoist concept of nature is philosophically fundamental, although different from Western thinking. The Chinese word for nature is *tzu jan*, which literally means "self-thus," or "that which is so of itself, spontaneously." This notion of nature contrasts with the Judeo-Christian one, in which nature is not so of itself, but is a creation of the Creator God or, according to earlier thought, the Demiurge. Another significant Taoist philosophical concept is *hsiang sheng*, "mutual arising." This is a principle in which two or more phenomena are associated with one another ("arise mutually"), but no causal relationship exists between them, at least not explicitly. Statistical relationships among phenomena is one example of *hsiang sheng*. Alan Watts speaks of multiple, mutually dependent simultaneous causes rather than a causal relationship. The Jungian concept of synchronicity could be seen as a special case of *hsiang sheng*.

The inherently indefinable nature of the Tao is suggestive of Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem, which implies that there are true propositions that cannot be proven within a given axiomatic, deductive system, or simply that there are inherent limits to the extent of our possible rational

knowledge. Gödel's theorem and Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy in physics imply that there are real and *inherent* limits to our deductive and inductive knowledge, even in mathematics and natural science. Ancient Chinese philosophers have anticipated this in their *recognition and acceptance of the indefinable* as a basic construct, and their high valuation of *intuition* (in addition to reason and observation of nature), which are among the distinguishing characteristics of Taoist philosophy.

## THE TEACHINGS OF CONFUCIUS

The best source by far for the teachings of Confucius (K'ung Fu-tze, "Master King") is the *Analecets of Confucius*. However, this title is deceptively imprecise. The *Analecets* were not written by Confucius; they are a compilation of alleged sayings of Confucius and alleged highlights of conversations between Master K'ung and his disciples, removed from context and given written form sometime after his death. Some scholars maintain that no more than half the *Analecets* is genuine material, and it would not be surprising if *not one* of the logia of the *Analecets* is authentic. Much of the material is probably proverbial. K'ung himself claimed to be only a transmitter of the wisdom of sage-kings of mythical times and of the founders of the Chou dynasty, rather than an originator. To make matters yet more convoluted, what the *Analecets* meant to the individuals who compiled them is quite different from their interpretation by modern Asians, largely because of the influence of Neo-Confucianism, which arose during the Sung dynasty, particularly that of Chu Hsi (A.D. 1130-1200). Although the purpose of Neo-Confucianism was to reestablish the philosophic hegemony of Confucianism relative to Buddhism and Taoism, in reacting to these extraneous influences Neo-Confucianism came to embody them to a degree, thereby transforming the very character of Confucianism. For example, the Confucius of the *Analecets* speaks of no living person, not even his favorite disciples, as embodying the virtue known as *jen* (human-heartedness, humaneness); whereas, in the Neo-Confucian interpretation of the concept, *jen* is a *universal human attribute!*

### Confucian Ethical Principles Epitomized

Perhaps the most significant of the Confucian ethical principles is the virtue *li*, defined as "propriety" or "correct moral and ceremonial order in society." It is through *li* that the order of Heaven is embodied in the

expression of human nature on Earth. The inner aspect of *li* is *shu*, defined as "reciprocity." The Confucian preoccupation with rites and ceremonies is not merely empty formalism, but a manifestation of inner attitudes that embody the other Confucian virtues. Confucius also considered *li* to be the legacy of the wisdom of ancient sage-kings and mythical demigods. The *Chun-tzu* or morally superior man was expected to know *three hundred rules of major ritual observances and three thousand rules of minor ritual observances!* *Li* is said to entail the various other Confucian virtues; that is, if *li* is present, then the others cannot be lacking, but not necessarily conversely. *Li* entails, in addition to *shu*, *hsin* (sincerity or good faith) and *i* (righteousness or justice). *Li* is also the basis of *hsiao* or filial piety, manifested in the five relationships, and considered to be the source of all other virtues in later Confucianism. The Confucian cardinal virtue is *jen* (human-heartedness) and *li* may be regarded as the outward flowering of *jen*. The *Chun-tzu* (morally superior man) practiced the virtues of *jen*, *i*, *hsin*, and *li*, perhaps ultimately attaining the level of the fifth cardinal virtue, *chih*, or wisdom. Even the name of the Confucian philosophical school, *Ju Chia*, meaning "school of the gentleman/scholar" or "literati," expressed clearly its "this-worldly" emphasis on cultural cultivation.

Brief but suggestive sayings lead us to believe that Confucius also subscribed to a doctrine like that of the Greeks, wherein one sought to adhere to a "golden" mean in thought and action between any two extremes.

According to Confucian ethics, the virtuous man's Tao was in harmony with the Tao of Heaven. Confucian ideology claimed to be *objective* morality; i.e., ethics is held to be an objective absolute, rather than an arbitrary human invention. There was a belief prevalent in ancient Chinese culture in a supreme heavenly ancestral figure, Shang Ti ("high ruler"), who was venerated and to whom sacrifices were offered at certain times. But Shang Ti was a nebulous and ill-defined entity, having no revealed scriptures, whose preferences could be learned only by means of divination. Later the concept of Shang Ti evolved into the impersonal concept of Heaven as a ruling principle, and the emperor was designated the "son of Heaven." Hence there was a preexisting cultural context for the secular Confucian idea of "Heaven" and "doing the will of Heaven." In the sphere of politics Confucius held that a sage-king would rule by *moral* force alone, without any need of the use of physical force.

Confucius attempted to exalt the secular to the level of the sacred, finding its roots not on Earth but in "Heaven." (There may be a reverse trend in contemporary civilization of attempting to reduce the sacred to the secular.)

## A COMPARISON OF TAOISM AND CONFUCIANISM

The relationship between Taoism and Confucianism can be represented by taking the latter as the Yang (red half of the Pa-Kua) and Taoism as the Yin (black half of this symbolic diagram.) The two philosophies can thus be viewed as *complementary*, antagonistic opposites, in thought and action, of the universal Yin-Yang dichotomy, together constituting a unified system in Chinese culture. At the heart, each, both diagrammatically and philosophically, is a part of and interdependent with the other, the Tao itself being one of their shared fundamental concepts. Taoism (Yin) emphasizes intuition, and the *contemplation* of the Tao of nature. Confucianism (Yang) emphasizes linear intellect, and *action* of man in accordance with the Tao of Heaven. The Tao of the Taoists is more spiritual, individualistic, and quixotic, that of the Confucians more moral, interpersonal, and pragmatic, but the differences are as much of emphasis as of substance.

## HINDUISM

What is Hinduism? Hinduism is not *one* religion/philosophy by any means, but rather an entire set of interrelated religions. The word Hinduism was coined by Westerners to refer to what they incorrectly thought was a single, complex religious system. ("Hinduism" is derived from "Hindu" and ultimately from Indus, the river.) The Hindus themselves refer to their religion/philosophy and its practices as *dharma*. Similarly, there is no one Hindu philosophy or Indian philosophy, nor is all Indian philosophy "mystical," monist, or even theistic in nature. There are six orthodox systems of Hindu philosophy and three heterodox systems, *one of which is Buddhism*. A system is considered to be orthodox if it accepts the sole authority of the Vedas as truth; otherwise it is heterodox. All systems of Hindu philosophy accept the notion of Karma, and the goal of *moksha* or liberation, with the exception of the Charvaka school of materialist philosophy. Hence, despite many differences, there are some concepts and terminologies held in common by the various systems of Hindu philosophies and the various religious systems that may be subsumed under the name of "Hinduism." It is these conceptual commonalities which we will explore.

The very essence of most forms of Hinduism and one of the most influential orthodox systems of Hindu philosophy is the Upanishadic doctrine (epitomized in the Vedanta system of philosophy) that Brahman (the ultimate reality) and Atman (self, soul) are one and identical. The clearest



and most direct statement of this claim is in the *Advaita* (non-dual) Vedanta philosophy of Shankara. The theme of the identity of Brahman and Atman which is the very heart of Upanishadic religion/philosophy, is expressed throughout the Upanishads in mythopoetic form, such as the well-known "Brahman art thou" and "I am Brahman" in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishads.

In the mythopoetic terms of the Vedas, according to Alan Watts, the world is God playing "hide and go seek" with himself. God created the world by an act of "self-sacrifice," the One dying into the Many, and in order to obtain liberation from illusion, ignorance and the cycle of rebirth and redeath, humans must reverse the process of evolution to obtain union with the godhead (the Many dying into the One.)

It has been remarked that Buddhism is Hinduism packaged for export. In any case, the Buddhism which grew from Hindu/Vedic soil has been much more readily accepted than Hinduism itself by non-Indian cultures, such as those of China and Japan. Buddhism began with a definite event (the Buddha's enlightenment) at a known time in history, whereas the origin of the Vedic traditions on which Hinduism is based is obscured by the mists of time.

## BUDDHISM

What is Buddhism? Buddhism began in India as the teaching of Siddhartha Gautama Shakyamuni in the fifth century B.C. and is generally considered to be a religion, a philosophy, and a way of liberation. In its original form Buddhism was a way of liberation, as are Yoga, Vedanta, and Taoism. A "way of liberation" is difficult to define, since this category did not exist in Western thought, except perhaps in some esoteric traditions, such as Sufism. Later, during the period in which the schools of philosophy in India developed, Buddhism was elaborated into great philosophical systems, but the original teachings of the Buddha (i.e., the enlightened one) consisted primarily of meditation techniques and ethical practices rather than metaphysics.

The principal doctrines taught by the Buddha were the four noble truths and the eightfold path. The four noble truths are:

- (1) Suffering exists;
- (2) it has a cause (selfish desire);
- (3) it may cease; and
- (4) there is a path that leads to its cessation.

The eightfold path consists of:

- (1) right views,
- (2) right resolve,
- (3) right speech,
- (4) right conduct,
- (5) right livelihood,
- (6) right effort,
- (7) right mindfulness, and
- (8) right concentration.

Following this path enables one to attain *nirvana*, an ineffable state, which can be realized through meditation, and which can grant release from suffering and, according to some interpretations, release from future reincarnations into our world of plurality, illusion, birth, suffering, death, and rebirth (*samsara*) that are otherwise inevitable.

There are two sets of Buddhist scriptures and two traditions of Buddhism, each claiming to be the original teaching. The Southern School, or Theravada, probably the older, is based on the canon written in Pali, whereas the Northern School, or Mahayana, is based on the canon written in Sanskrit and, to a lesser extent, Chinese and Tibetan. The adherents of the Mahayana ("greater vehicle") refer to the Theravada ("doctrine of the elders") as the Hinayana ("lesser vehicle.") The Theravada school is more monastic and ascetic, and each monk works primarily for his own awakening (*bodhi*) and liberation (*nirvana*). In contrast, the Mahayana School employs a great variety of means in its attempt to achieve awakening and liberation for a greater variety and number of people. Its adherents work for the awakening and liberation of mankind, not merely their own, just as the Buddha postponed entering into the ultimate, final *nirvana* in order to teach the four noble truths and the eightfold path, so that every human being could realize his Buddha nature.

Madhyamaka is a school of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy founded by Nagarjuna (ca. A.D. 200). The tenets of this philosophy were that the world of phenomena was unreal, a plurality, lacking any essence, i.e., a void. Underlying the world of phenomena was the absolute world, which was also held to be without essence, empty, a void. The voids of the absolute and phenomenal worlds were held to be identical and, hence, *nirvana* and *samsara* were one!

The Yogacara school of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy was founded by Maitreya (ca. A.D. 300). The essence of the doctrine of this school was that in reality there is no distinction between the perceiving subject and

the perceived, external sensory objects. Both perceiving subject and perceived, external objects were held to be illusory manifestations of the universal consciousness. Thus the subject-object dichotomy was abolished conceptually. Liberation consisted of realizing this oneness experientially through meditation. The nature of universal consciousness/being was held to be beyond conceptions. A Buddha was referred to as one awakened to the ultimate reality beyond intellectual conceptions.

Buddhist philosophy is not philosophy in the same sense that Western philosophy is. The goal is entirely different. It is to lead the "philosopher" out of the maze of intellectual conceptions about the nature of reality, about knowledge of reality, about the knower, to the direct perception, knowledge, and experience of "this," which is beyond our language and categorizing intellect. The goal of Buddhist philosophy is not to become steeped in words, nor to construct vast metaphysical edifices based on misunderstandings and misapplications of the grammar and syntax of our languages. Gautama Buddha compared this type of intellectual or philosophical inquiry with that of a person who has been wounded by an arrow, but refuses to allow it to be removed from his flesh until he has a complete and thorough intellectual understanding of who his assailant was, his background, childhood, and motives, etc.! One might say by analogy that the purpose of Buddhist philosophy is to remove the arrow from our flesh. The purpose of Mahayana dialectics is to undermine all possible concepts of reality and, thereby, unravel philosophical systems at their foundations.

Zen Buddhism developed from the Mahayana branch of Buddhism, as Buddhist teaching spread from India to China, and was influenced by the pragmatism of Chinese culture and by the indigenous philosophies of Taoism and Confucianism. Zen is the Japanese word for the Chinese *Ch'an*, which was a translation of the Sanskrit *dhvana* or meditation.

It is the theory and practice of "instantaneous awakening" that is the *sine qua non* of Zen Buddhism. Instantaneous awakening (*satori*) could occur either spontaneously or after relatively short periods of preparation involving the presence of a Buddhist master who had awakened, i.e., was enlightened. Satori is considered to be natural, and hence not to require lengthy and arduous preparation. Satori was also held to be instantaneous, because it could occur only in the eternal present that is called "now," as distinct from an illusory past and future, according to Buddhist philosophy. Zen claims to be the continued transmission of the experience of enlightenment that occurred to the Buddha under the Bo tree after years of meditation and practice of austerities in the forest. Zen considers the Buddhist scriptures, and the entire philosophical/verbal tradition of Buddhism, to be of secondary importance. According to Zen tradition, the

experience of awakening was transmitted to Buddha's disciple Mahakasyapa, when the Buddha held a flower before him in complete silence.

## COMPARISON OF HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM

It is difficult to compare Hinduism and Buddhism because *there is no one form of either religion or either philosophy*; nevertheless, there are many conceptual correspondences between some of the Hindu/Vedanta philosophies and some of the Buddhist philosophical systems. Indeed, the terminologies and concepts of the one seem frequently to be analogs of the other. The parallel is most apparent between the *Advaita* Vedanta and the *Madyamika* system of Buddhism developed by Nargarjuna. Putting it very simply, Hinduism says that there is a *self* and there is a *god* (at a very abstract level) and that these are *not two* (nondual). Buddhism, on the other hand, asserts that is *no self* and there is *no god*, and "the two" are identical! The philosophical trick is to explain how the "no self" can reincarnate!

In both systems the spiritual goal is the same: to get off the "wheel" of samsara (rebirth, death, and reincarnation) by achieving a transcendental level of consciousness or liberation. Brahman corresponds to the void or "emptiness." Although Brahman with qualities is defined as "*being, knowledge, and bliss*," the ultimate level of Brahman is *nirguna* (meaning "without qualities"). Nothing can be predicated about *nirguna Brahman*. It is beyond conception. Observe how close *nirguna* Brahman is to the concept of the void in Buddhism. In both systems the illusory world of phenomena (*maya*) is held to consist of impermanence, names, and forms lacking essence. In both the Hindu/Vedanta and the Buddhist philosophy the principle of *karma* or "spiritual" cause and effect is held to operate within and between incarnations. The higher state of being/consciousness (*nirvana* or *moksha*) may be realized in both systems by techniques of meditation, which is also *one* of the methods of changing or eradicating one's past karma. One significant difference is that the concept of *Ishvara*, a *personal and creator god*, is present in Vedanta/Hinduism, but absent in Buddhism.