

I. Foreword

In the present text I share interpretations of some of my experiences on transpersonal awakening that has been actively unfolding since late 1990. I focus on the interpretations of experiences of the *Causal* and *Nondual* transpersonal levels and examine both through the prism of Vedanta and Buddhism. To be more precise, I compare the so called awareness teachings (Advaita philosophy from Vedanta) to the emptiness doctrine (Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism) and conclude that there are subtle and yet significant differences between the two. In this context I am offering additional interpretation of transpersonal levels (or sublevels) that are not touched upon in the accepted Wilber map. It is my opinion that Ken Wilber focuses mostly on the Vedanta teachings and so certain states of consciousness from Buddhist perspective could and indeed should be added to the existing map.

In more academically oriented terminology (i.e. Forman 2010) the awakening discussed herein is referred to as “psychological-spiritual identity development”. Although from certain perspectives there is indeed identity development going on, especially on the Mental Ego and Authentic levels (see ‘On becoming a person’, Carl Rogers, 2004), I feel that “development” my not be accurate enough description. In my experience, *Causal Self*, for example, cannot be developed and the same goes for the *Nondual*; they are both already completely present and have been like that forever. It only takes becoming aware of that which already exists: no new invention or development needed. In other words, it is a question of noticing not attainment.

Be that as it may, the present treatise deals with transpersonal stages and states by employing terminology developed by Ken Wilber and other authors who share his perspectives on the subject.

I write about insights into lower and higher *Causal* and *Nondual* transpersonal levels that are, in my opinion, rather impersonal and hence suitable for public sharing. I deliberately refrain from sharing experiences from the Subtle transpersonal level as those are, to my heart, way too up close and personal for publicly available text. Suffice it to say that without my dear perfect beings who dwell at the higher *Subtle transpersonal level*, of whom my dear Maha Kali is the most important to my heart, none of the insights discussed herein would have ever been possible.

Mahakali in Her various *Mahavidya* forms (*Kali, Matangi, Kamala Devi*) is my precious all in all; it has been that way for a very long time. A purely physical relationship can only last a certain amount of time. A merely emotional or mental relationship lasts not much longer, on some occasions perhaps an entire lifetime. A spiritual relationship, however, is permanent, eternal, and that is what I value the most. And that's exactly what we share.

II. Background

I have been actively employing Tantric practices (i.e. *mantra and kriya yoga, invocation, extrapersonal work, evocation etc.*) since around 1990 (*tantra* in this context has got nothing to do with sex). After initiation in 1993 I practiced advanced *kriya yoga* several hours a day for years; certain *mantras* I was also initiated into by Sri Babaji, my beloved Spiritual Master,

never left my awareness, sometimes not even at nights. I must have done millions of repetitions of certain mantras over the years. Buddhism came early into my life and over the years a lot of time and energy have been invested into *vipassana*, both noting and direct insight practice.

Since late 2009 I am director at Transpersonal Psychology Institute and teach at our three year private school for transpersonal psychotherapists and consultants. In these years I have observed rapid progress of some of our students from pure confusion of *Instrumental* or *Mental* ego level to the early stages of relative freedom of the *Centuar* and even *Subtle* levels. I am grateful for that, for I have learned so much. It is rewarding to me to see others advance; it rejuvenates my wonder, as it were, and adds to the depth of insight into my own awakening. At our school, besides lecturing and offering psychotherapy sessions supervision, I am also offering transpersonal coaching to those who are willing.

I also run private humanistic and transpersonal psychotherapy practice since early 1996 and clinical, transpersonal and cognitive hypnotherapy practice since 2007. I have been looking into NVC ('nonviolent communication' system authored by Dr Marshall Rosenberg) since 2008 and am also actively involved in learning and teaching it since 2010.

That been said, I am well aware of the subjective conditioning due to the weight of experiences from teaching, individual psychotherapy sessions, leading seminars etc. The text before you is therefore inevitably colored by my psychological and psychotherapeutical orientation.

It is my lucid intention to focus on the transpersonal levels and states, but it is not always possible to separate them from the personal ones. Maybe in some other text I will be focusing more on the Mental and Authentic levels.

As indicated above, I am inclined to embracing Tantra, Vedanta and Buddhism, namely working with powerful *mantras*, *Mahavidya* practice etc., employing Self-inquiry and Zen koan work and, of course, implementing the teachings of the kind Awakened One.

Equality and sincerity are important to me so I invite readers with different empirical backgrounds to view the text with a tolerant heart and flexible mind. I truly feel that the same progress shared in this work could be outlined in the terminology of western mysticism or magical and hermetical orders (i.e. A::A::) or Judaism or Qabalah teachings or other relevant teachings.

I would also like to share my motive for writing this text. Arising potentials (or needs) here are for structure, clarity and expression. I know that through the strategy of writing these potentials (or needs, to use NVC terminology) can be added to and actualized. Expressing in written word has always added to my inner peace, clarity and self-awareness.

Furthermore, I am sharing these abstract experiences to offer that one does not need to be anything special (i.e. to renounce the world and become a monk) to experience pure and liberating transpersonal states. In the last twenty or so years I have never left my daily duties, I always held a job and I was in personal relationships (read: not following celibacy) all the time; and still all these purely transpersonal insights manifested on regular bases, and they still do.

Daniel Ingram, *arahat*, in his very detailed book on the path of enlightenment, Mastering the Core Teachings of the Buddha, shares the following:

*“So why am I mentioning all of these states and stages that are thought by many to be largely mythical and unattainable? Because they are absolutely otherwise, that’s why. People do attain these states today, though they tend to only talk about them to their teachers and to close friends who have enough experience in this stuff to understand and not have odd reactions to these disclosures. **I assure you that I wouldn’t have bothered writing all of this if I didn’t think that it was possible for those reading this book to master this stuff.**”*

(Ingram, p. 337, 2007, bold text added my me)

I have never met the guy in person, we have only conversed over the internet, but what Daniel writes resonates with my values so much.

Moreover, *it is very important to me to be as clear as possible about one particular thing: subjectivity*. What is shared in this text is only *my subjective interpretation of experiences* and as such it might as well be irrelevant to you. We all live in the subjective universes of our own thoughts, feelings and words and I am very acutely aware of these scientific facts.

To add to the clarity of this subject let me first share a portion from one of my papers on the integration of cognitive and transpersonal psychology and theory of quantum mechanics (Cigale 2010).

What follows is rather academically oriented but nevertheless important for understanding this text. I find that kind of writing slightly dry and therefore not really interesting, so, you are more than welcome to skip this part and continue reading on the pages 11. or 12.

III. Importance of the subjectivity: the Quantum theory: interpretations (shadows and symbols)

“According to the modern cognitive psychology theorem, the perception of intelligent beings is based on the relationship between the subject and object which are virtually indistinguishably fused together by the process of perception itself. In physical terms this means that I perceive “you”. The perception of “you” is in turn colored by my mental representations of “you”. In other words, we do not perceive reality directly (von Helmholtz, 1866).

I have dealt extensively with the cognitive aspects of our perception in my previous work (Cigale 2008a), but let us examine these important cognitive facts again:

“Information must be mentally represented to be involved in perception, memory or any other cognitive activity. It is through mental representations that we know anything and everything.”

(Kellogg, 2007, p. 29).

This powerful statement about our lives may seem rather exaggerated at first glance, but in fact does reflect real life situations. Where is the outside world, taken usually *a priori* as completely autonomous, gone when a subject who perceived it is in deep sleep or coma (predominantly delta brainwave)? To use an everyday, somewhat less radical, example: could we intentionally even think or talk about cognitive facts (or anything else, for that matter) if we had no knowledge of them at all?

It is a proven cognitive fact (i.e. the research on the visual illusions in Gregory, 1997) that the top-down perceptual architecture really can and does take precedence over the bottom-up one (see also Gregory, 1970). It is the inner knowledge that colors how we perceive reality, not the reality itself. Empirical evidence proves the fact that two persons can read the same book or paper and perceive two completely different stories or contents. Reading the same paper or a book, with exactly the same content, two dissimilar stories may be perceived.

Within this dualism, the relation between subject and an object of perception, we can find the basic axiom of modern cognitive psychology:

“...Mental representations, then, provide the basis for all cognitive abilities. To perceive your environment you must compute mental representations of the objects around you and the events that are taking place. All that you know about the world, and your only basis for acting on the world, is found in your mental representations.” (Kellogg, 2007, p. 7).

The said subjectivity, often conveniently avoided or intentionally disregarded by both scientists and laypersons, is a proven fact, as we shall soon see. By embracing the fact that subjectivity truly plays quite an important part in our conscious lives, we might actually be able to avoid the tribulations caused by our misplaced loyalty to absolute objectivity, which is nonexistent. Assuming responsibility for our inner psychological climate, constituted by beliefs or mental representations and emotional states, may be the path out of our occasional or constant problems in life.

Taking this line of thought a bit further, we can see that indeed our thoughts are relevant only to ourselves:

“Mental representations are private and are perceived, if at all, only by their owners. Not all mental representations are perceived as images, and their owners may not be conscious of them. Even with the new technologies for examining the brain, scientists cannot read your thoughts because they cannot process your conscious or unconscious mental representations. Observing patterns of neural activity is not the same as experiencing mental representations.” (Kellogg, 2007, p. 7).

Interestingly enough, even the orthodox neuroscience honoring strictly biological conception of human psyche affirms the distinction between outside world and construction of it in the brain:

“When we look out at the world, we seem just to ‘see’ a solid, three-dimensional world ‘out there’. But what is seen is the product of the internal processing in the

brain... This is a remarkable fact, because the world 'out there' seems so real."
(Corr 2006, p. 587)

Not delving into the subject of a brain and ontology of human consciousness for the time being and just glimpsing at the outside world – brain relation, we see that the subjectivity indeed exists, as Dr. Corr continues (2006, p. 587 – 588): “...*Of course, the external world is real, as is confirmed by physics, but its properties are different from those experienced – even if the external properties and the perceived properties were identical, this does not challenge the constructivist argument (selective lesion of the brain leading to specific patterns of lesioned consciousness)...*”

Dr. Corr goes on to give an example of dreams as a proof that our brain has the ability to construct the rich qualia of visual perception in the absence of adequate sensory stimulation.

In the final analysis, it is our subjective thoughts and ideas, perceived only by ourselves, that seem to condition how we feel and what satisfies us the most. It is here that we may see why so many people indeed find the humanistic approach, with its focus on the individualization and self-actualization (Maslow, 1959), more effective than behaviorism.

It is safe to infer it is our knowledge that causally influences our words and actions in our lives. Actually, we almost never deal with reality itself, we are hardly ever in direct contact with reality, whatever it may be. So it may be relatively safe to assert that the ultimate reality (whatever it may actually be) is something with which we are hardly ever in contact. There is always the process involved, our perception: subject perceives objects. Our very lives or, to be more exact, our perceptions of our very lives, are based on interpretations of reality which are in fact only mental representations, symbols and shadows.

Orthodox scientific axioms themselves are only interpretations, at their best. They too are subjective and valid only within their own domain, limited to their own inherent concepts. Newton's laws, for example, are quite real and of course true as far as hard stones, eggs and apples are concerned. Taking our enthusiasm beyond seemingly firm matter to subatomic levels, we are introduced to a completely new set of laws, quite dissimilar from Newton's mechanical descriptions of reality. In the words of one of the greatest physicists of our time, Werner Heisenberg (quoted in Wilber 2001, p. 31), the physicist can make only statements “...about strictly limited relations that *are only valid within the framework of those limitations* [his italics].

Not surprisingly, however, in the quite dissimilar field of quantum physics, basically the same notions have been debated for quite some time now:

“The conception of objective reality of the elementary particles has thus evaporated not into the cloud of some obscure new reality concept but into transparent clarity of mathematics that represents no longer the behavioral of particles but rather our

knowledge of this behavior.”

(Heisenberg 1958a, p. 100)

For over three centuries we have had the cannon balls, eggs and apple trajectories of Newtonian classical physics and decades of material conceptions of the human psyche as portrayed by, from a modern cognitive perspective, rather superficial behaviorism. Scientists and psychologists of the old schools (i.e. Isaac Newton, Sigmund Freud etc...) never realized that they too only dealt with interpretations of physical reality and the human psyche. None of them, or so it seems according to their theories, were in fact aware of the dualism (subjectivity of perception) the modern quantum physics is so powerfully proving. Boldly did they announce, and kept announcing, ‘scientific’ truths when all the while they were only *interpreting* reality. Unaware, they were proposing their own subjective interpretations, never realizing the reality may or may not be what they thought. In the words of one of the most respected quantum theorists, Schroedinger (1958):

“Please note that the very recent advance of quantum and relativistic physics does not lie in the world of physics itself having acquired this shadowy character; it had ever since Democritus of Abdera and even before, but we were not aware of it; we thought we were dealing with the world itself.”

He is not alone in his assertions:

“The essential fact is simply that all the pictures which science now draws of nature, and which alone seem capable of according with observational fact, are mathematical pictures...they are nothing more than pictures-fictions, if you like, if by fictions you mean that science is not yet in contact with ultimate reality...”
(Jeans 1931).

Science is not yet in contact with ultimate reality? That subjectivity, *our subjectivity* to be more precise or *dualism* (subject – object relation) is indeed the road less traveled, for how often do we see mainstream neurobiologists, psychologists and psychiatrists admitting the possibility that they may in fact be only dealing with their own shadows and symbols and not with objective reality?

Cognitive psychology, on the other end of the scientific spectrum, with its focus on mental representations and top-down perceptual architecture (Gregory, 2006), really does seem to be in the accord with the Sir James’ sincere notion about the inability of modern quantum physics to directly deal with reality or nature itself:

“...we can never understand what the events are, but must limit ourselves to describing the patterns of events in mathematical terms; no other aim is possible. Physicists who are trying to understand nature may work in many different fields and by many different methods; one may dig, one may sow, one may reap. But the final harvest will always be a sheaf of mathematical formulae. These will never describe

nature itself.”

(Jeans 1981)

The same holds for all physical laws, even the Newtonian descriptions of reality, the most materialistic and deterministic of them all. The standard or Copenhagen interpretation even, which is widely recognized, vigorously tested and empirically validated, *is only a description*, one of many:

“The physicist of the latest generation is operationalist all right, but usually he does not know, and refuses to believe, that the original Copenhagen interpretation – which he thinks he supports – was squarely subjectivist, i.e. nonphysical.”

(Bunge 1967, p.4)

This brings us beyond the point of most public presentations of quantum mechanics: the Copenhagen interpretation (“...basically the combination of complementarity, probability waves and collapse of the wave function...” as per Gribbin, 1995, p. 147) is by no means the only (plausible) interpretation of quantum mechanics. Actually, it is only the most popular one among the others: multiple universe interpretation (Everett 1956), spontaneous-reduction model (Ghirardi, Rimini, Weber 1985), and transactional interpretation (Cramer 1986), to name a few.

These are all interpretations, descriptions, bits of information that are *unable to grasp the reality itself*.

The same seem to hold for all interpretations of the quantum world; we can describe the processes involved to our heart’s content, but that does not imply that we can really explain or really know and understand the answer to the question of “what exactly all of this really means.”

This obvious gap in virtually all interpretations of quantum physics notwithstanding, I will be relying on the premises of the standard quantum interpretation:

“The conscious observer has been implicated in quantum mechanics since its inception. Experiments show that quantum superpositions (particles/systems existing in multiple states or locations simultaneously, governed by quantum wave function) persist until measured or observed, then reduce/collapse to definite states and location.”

(Hameroff, 2007, p.196)

Let us first take a closer look at a rather interesting statement from one of the leading physicists of our time:

“...We have learnt that the exploration of the external world by the methods of physical science leads not to a concrete reality but to a shadow world of symbols, beneath which those symbols are unadapted for penetrating. Feeling that there must be more behind, we return to our starting point in human consciousness – one centre where more might be known. There, in immediate inward consciousness, we find

other stirrings, other revelations than those conditioned by world of symbols. Physics most strongly insists that its methods do not penetrate behind the symbolism. Surely then, that mental and spiritual nature of ourselves, known in our minds by an intimate contact transcending the methods of physics, supplies just that...which science is admittedly unable to give.”
(Eddington 1929)

It is not really that surprising that a scientist openly admits the limitation of the science itself. What is surprising, however, is that he is not being heard and that the majority of world most educated and advanced scientists still honor materialistic worldview only.

It was the relative failure of the most advanced physics to elucidate the basic premises of the reality that introduced a decline in honoring exclusively the material physics and gave birth to more expansive and fluid lines of thought. Maybe the strongest exponent of such thinking was Max Planck (1858 – 1947).

Dr. Planck, a physicist who was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics in 1918, is regarded as the father of modern quantum theory. Let us listen to his interesting position:

“The fact is that there is a point, one single point in the immeasurable world of mind and matter, where science and therefore every causal method of research is inapplicable, not only on practical grounds but also on logical grounds, and will always remain inapplicable. This point is the individual ego. It is a small point in the universal realm of being, but in itself, it is a whole world, embracing our emotional life, our will and our thought. This realm of the ego is, at once, the source of our deepest suffering and, at the same time, of our highest happiness. Over this realm, no outer power of fate can ever have sway, and we lay aside our own control and responsibility over ourselves only with the laying aside of life itself.”
(Planck, 1932)

In the German thought in which Dr. Planck was expressing his ideas, the ego represents “... ‘the I’ or the inward sense of ‘I-ness’ constituting your sense of self. It doesn’t mean ‘egotistical’, but rather that irreducible, immediate, inward sense of consciousness or awareness.” (Wilber’s note, 2001, p. 160).”
(Cigale 2010)

So to sum up, even the hard core scientists admit that *everything* is subjective. Everything is subjective and scientific “axioms and facts”, that is, those exact “facts” that are usually and conveniently taken for granted, are only valid inside their own domain; and rules that govern those “scientific facts” differ considerably, of course. No absolute scientific reality anywhere, not even in the science world.

I hope this has elucidated the topic of the subjectivity somewhat.

And so, it is very important to me to be really clear about the subjectivity of my thoughts and words presented herein. Therefore, I invite you to please view this text *only as my pure subjective reality and to employ your own solid common sense*.

The present text is not meant to be academically oriented, authoritative or definitive in any way: I am just describing events that were or are currently arising and have already ceased or will soon cease; in one word, they are all subject to *anitya* – impermanence.

IV. Wilber map at a glance

We can't avoid mentioning AQAL when we speak about Wilber map. The acronym AQAL stands for All quadrants, all levels. See Appendix for full chart and for the list of suggested reading, please.

Let us just glimpse at the levels on the Wilber map that directly concern our topic, namely transpersonal ones. We will not be dealing with levels prior to the Instrumental one.

As far as I am concerned, these levels or stages are as real as you and me; they are not some half-cooked concepts but living facts of life, which can be observed by anyone interested enough in deeper understanding of human conscious identity development. Let us then look at development of, say, young Jane.

Mental ego / Instrumental level

On this level Jane has thrown her heart far out into the social arena. She is following social guidelines without questioning their true value. There is no authenticity, only devotion to rules and structures that were written by others.

Keywords: ignorance, alienation from inner needs, blaming others, devotion to outside rules and structures.

Centuar / Authentic level

This is the level of responsibility. Here Jane has awakened from following some structures alien to her heart. She has fought hard to free herself from social, religious and political dogmas; she is joyful and happy about her own victories in life. She is creating her own life, responsibly and independently of others.

Keywords: responsibility, authenticity, I create my world, independence, I and mine.

Subtle level

At this level Jane has realized that her own Authentic Ego has been forcing her to work hard, to fight and to win. She is older now, in her forties, happy and satisfied in daily life. She is not really at peace, however, she wants more; she feels that there is more to life than authentic feelings and hard won battles in material life. And she is right. First truly

transpersonal experiences dawns on her (peak experiences), she realizes she is spiritual being, a Soul. She loves rituals that are directed to non-material spheres of existence.

Keywords: surrender, love, inner peace, rituals, compassion

Causal level

Jane has had more than one cup of celestial love, drinking it with angels, archangels, gods and goddesses and she is ready to move on to formless Divinity. She experiences her own Soul as the Source of everything. She identifies herself with the “I am presence”, with God/Goddess him/herself.

Keywords: freedom, detachment, clarity of perception.

Nondual level

Jane is ready to move on. She realizes that all along her path, she has been climbing up a ladder never noticing that everything that has been and still is happening to her, well, is nothing at all. Everything is as it should be, and she realizes that it has always been like that.

OK, so that was my short interpretation of a part of the Wilber map. There is much more to it, of course; numerous books have been written on the subject and I kindly invite you to devote some time to read some of them. It is good to know what each of these levels covers. In my case, the map has helped me a lot, both in my personal life as well as in my professional one. Knowing these stages adds to clarity and understanding of my own life and that of others. Thank you Ken.

Part One: the Causal

1. samādhi

autumn 1993

Most people I have come into contact with in my private practice and have progressed towards the latter transpersonal states and stages (namely the *Causal* and *Nondual*) slowly and over the longer periods of time, focusing on the personal levels (Mental ego and Centuar) first. Well, it was a different story in my case.

The *samādhi* attained back in 1993 had deep effect on my consciousness; it changed my perception completely and thoroughly. I have been aware of the *Causal* ever since. I am not saying that I was *at the Causal stage* all of that time, please; Wilber would put it, ‘States are free, stages are earned’, meaning that anyone can attain transpersonal *states* and have any transpersonal experience at any given *stage* of their development, momentarily; and having these temporary insights into a certain *stage* is not the same as permanent attainment of that *stage* (more on the subject in Rowan 2005, p. 107).

It is my perception that the awareness of the so called Ultimate Reality became since the base of my life, never leaving my consciousness, silently present at all times, sometimes even in dreaming, lucid and ordinary.

At the same time, however, I have had many difficulties integrating what I refer to as the power and speed of the *Causal Self* into my mostly Mentally-egoistic and Authentically oriented awareness back then. Some of the difficulties are outlined later on.

Let us first examine the event that allowed me to view the world with my own eyes for the very first time.

1.1 The Causal state: One taste

I have had similar experiences before, mostly at the three day modern Zen retreat workshops, called Enlightenment Intensive. But what makes the following experience different is that two rather important aspect of the *Causal Self* (the “I am Presence”, “True Self” etc.) were realized:

- localized direct perception of my true identity (I am Me/Absolute/God) and
- non-local direct perception of the “I am”, also called the Impersonal realization or the Omnipresence (I am Everywhere, Eternally, Unborn, Immortal).

It happened during the walking meditation on an Enlightenment Intensive:

“...I was not focusing on anything in particular; I only noticed a bug there in the grass that was emitting some sound. At that moment, everything just seemed to stop. My everyday perception ceased to function. It was as though someone switched off the movie projector that was projecting images on the screen of my consciousness.

Everything just stopped being - and then I knew. I knew the sound the bug was producing; it was the song of Love. I knew that there are really no differences

between that bug and me, that there is only One Truth, One Existence.

That Existence is living through that bug and through me as well. There were no points of reference whatsoever, only Love and the Awareness. No God up there in Heaven, no poor and insignificant humans down below on Earth-it was just Me. "My" heart was completely fulfilled, tears flowed without any control, "I" could not utter a single word. I only knew "I" was." (Cigale 2009)

In that one *samādhi* (Sanskrit term) or *satori* or *kensho* (Japanese term) much was revealed. Beyond the shadow of a doubt I knew that there is an underlying Reality that animates everything and everyone. It is the base of my awareness and at the same time the base of everything and everyone. I knew for certain, not through mere inference or intuition, that “I Am” is the Absolute, God even and that “It” is the Source of everything and everyone. And I also knew with undeniable certainty that I was at one with “That”, has always been and always will be, forever.

I remember my heart was totally and completely filled with bliss, joy and immeasurable fullness from within. When I tried to share the experience with others, I could not utter a single word. At the same time tears of joy and sadness flowed as I knew that every second not being aware if “It” was a massive and thorough waste of time.

I remember just sitting there on the floor and opening my eyes looking down at the legs. I knew that it would be the same, completely the same if I saw the legs of an animal; the same Completeness is everywhere, the exact Absolute consciousness is present in each living being and I was at complete Oneness with It, consciously.

With that experience I have awoken to the Absolute Reality and became more or less dead for the relative world. That was my perception back then.

Of course, when returning home from the three day retreat, not much has changed. The awareness of True Self was still there, silently present in the back of my awareness and remained like that ever since.

1.2 The importance of everyday life

In my day-to-day life, however, things were not as shining: I was still single, timid, emotionally depending on my father, with low self-esteem, working a dead end job, with practically nonexistent sexual life and broke most of the time. It is almost funny now, really. Obviously, realizing the Truth only helps one to understand who has the problems in life, but it does not solve them.

I would like to elaborate on certain aspects of my daily life in which the “I am” or the *Causal Self* realization in fact made it quite difficult for me to live at peace (due to imperfect and incomplete realization and due to the ‘shadow’ as Jung put it, of course).

The “I am Absolute” notion, for example, presented me with real challenge; I had really difficult times back then, balancing this Godlike notion of “The One and Only” with my own emotional/mental disharmonies that weren’t cleared out yet.

Also, the notion only “The Self” is real and everything else is not, was perceived with mixed emotions. This is what Vedanta is teaching us: only Brahman is real and the core base of reality is Absolute and manifestation is relative and thus illusory.

In this context, Sri Ramana Maharshi used to say: *“That which is not present in deep dreamless sleep is not real.”* (quoted in Wilber 1998). Well, I have faced such notions with slight apprehension. How can emotions and thoughts (mine or those of others) be unreal, if they obviously exist? Yes, they are not absolutely real, as far as the *Causal Self* is concerned, but they exist nonetheless.

I tried to compensate the inner disharmony by focusing on impersonal aspect of the “I am” presence, trying to realize and hold on to “That which is only Real” during my wake consciousness. I have failed to achieve that. This tendency, however, eventually yielded free flow and easy entry into the *Causal* state *samādhi* at will, but that was all.

There was no way (for me) to handle the relative sensory input with mere Awareness of the naked Truth by entering *samādhi* at will. There was always this duality present: Me or the Absolute Reality on one hand, and the world drama of sensory input, on the other; almost unperceivable subtle tension and clear disharmony were always present. Obviously, my *Causal* realization was not perfected yet (and the *nondual* was not known, yet).

Further inner tension came out of the inherent dualistic view or from the so called subject-object dichotomy of my state of being. Intuitively I knew that there must be more to Enlightenment, obviously. And, as it turned out, I was right. The *Nondual* beyond the Non-separateness of the Advaita teachings existed and the “I am” presence was not final realization for me to be achieved.

So, to make a long story short, despite freedom and the ease of being able to Witness the drama of sensory input at will, I was not completely and totally at peace. Granted, there was laughter and inner freedom (which not always shined through, I guess), but on the other hand, there was also inner apprehension.

What have I learned from this?

Well, everyday life is as real as it can get no doubts there. Focusing on the seemingly more real *Causal Self*, well, it simply was not enough for me. It did not (and it still doesn't) cut it. My thoughts, feelings and body deserved more than I was prepared to offer. And others in my life also deserve more: consideration, empathy, kindness and warmth. In my life much of that was lacking all those years. Material existence is important, very important. It is a part of Reality, an important part. It is a manifestation of Divine, a part of Absolute Reality, as it were. I have learned that lesson, I think.

I will take refuge in the words of my spiritual Master, He puts it very well indeed:

“Few mortals know that the kingdom of God includes the kingdom of mundane fulfillments.”

(Yogananda 1946, original online edition, ch. 34)

1.3 Help please?

Of course, I realize now that some simple transpersonal coaching or at least signing up and actively participating at online communities like Dharma Overground, run by *arahat* Daniel Ingram, would probably make it much easier for me. My cognitive map was incomplete and I have had no one in physical presence to take my hand and to show me the way further along the path of Enlightenment.

In my understanding I experienced all of those inner disharmonies because old tendencies had to be cleared out by living them out; abstract mental level or the so called *karmic body* had to be lighten up before moving on (i.e. from *Advaita* to *Nondual*). And that's exactly what has been happening over the last decade or so, I think.

Both my previous tendencies (please, do look into the works of Ian Stevenson, MD, 1980, 1997, 1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2003, 2008 and consider the non-locality of consciousness and importance of trans-incarnation influences) and the lore of the Truth itself were so powerful, that I made the direct insight meditation and also attending Enlightenment Intensives my standard practice. Oh well...

Anyway, we can look at the described "agony" from another, say, psychotherapy perspective.

I know now that my *Causal* state realization timing was a bit premature, and that it would be much more effective to clear out the shadow (as Jung dubbed it) first and move on to the Centuar / Authentic level *before* attaining the *Causal* state insight.

It is obvious to me now that meditation of any kind is not meant to deal with the inner negative tendencies (i.e. Jung's shadow). Precise structure of humanistic and transpersonal psychotherapy, for example, is meant to do that, in my opinion. With shadow burdening down every step one takes, meditation may lead not to progress but to the unbalanced life usually know as the New age bullshit, or to use more academic term, fallacy.

There is a certain concept regarding progress along the line of stages (Mental ego, Centuar level, Subtle level, Causal level and Nondual) I would love to share here: *there is no jumping*.

There is no jumping, meaning that it can simply misleading to jump over any given level on the Wilber map. In practice this may mean that it is rather impossible to avoid dealing with the shadow (going from Instrumental level on to the Authentic one) if one truly wants to experience the Subtle level and beyond. It is not only impossible; it may also be quite dangerous, in my opinion. I have met a lot of persons who tried to do that. Only delusion and superficial spirituality have they achieved, nothing more.

It is rather naïve to believe, in my opinion, that one can truly progress beyond personal stages and states before becoming a person (as Rogers put it so eloquently). In my opinion, Authentic level attainment is really the price of admission for going on and tasting the transpersonal proper; in practice though, many usually attach themselves to the spiritual stuff prematurely, not really distinguishing personal from transpersonal. In accepted literature this is sometimes called pre/trans fallacy (see Rowan 2008, p. 116-117 and 286).

I have seen that in my private practice over and over again. Subtle level, especially the lower part of the Subtle (various energies, elves, clairvoyance, dreams, auras, afterlife, reincarnation, telepathy, ghosts, ideas of demons, magic, ideas of kundalini, chakras,

symbols, tarot cards, astral projection etc...) exerts such attraction that many people still on the Mental level find it too difficult to resist. That is, in my opinion and experience, only an illusory band aid over some sore emotional wounds; and instead of dealing with the inner pain and inner conflicts, spirituality seemingly comes to the rescue. It is so easy and so liberating to be spiritual, not having to live here and now, fully unaware of inner climate of feelings and needs!

It is my belief that such approach leads to dark places I want to avoid discussing herein.

Well, when I think about this, sadness appears in my heart. Avoiding inner conflicts and inner pain due to, say, abused childhood and at the same time being "spiritual" is not a strategy that really works, in my honest opinion.

As long as the astral (emotional) body is burdened by old and suppressed emotions (fear, anger, jealousy, sadness, guilt, regrets, resentments, sorrow, pain, terror, disappointment, rage etc...) and as long as mental body (mind) is filled with non-constructive beliefs (I am not worthy, I have to suffer, I have to work hard to be happy, I depend on others, I am dead inside, I am alone, God is dead, Money means pain, I must not express myself etc...) and as long as physical body is intoxicated by coke, nicotine, alcohol, antidepressants and other toxins, it might prove quite difficult to sustain very high vibration of the higher *Subtle* and *Causal* levels. Hence the New age, where anything goes; no need to be really honest and in touch with inner feelings and needs, as long as the light blue jeans pockets are full of amethyst crystals and walls of a bedroom filled with pictures of angels. Oh well...

So, I offer an alternative solution, first things first: let us deal with our daddies and mommies first, and face suppressed issues from our childhood (of *this* life), let us first face our financial problems and current issues in intimate life and in our personal relationships. This may pave the road and we may be able to really soar when the *Subtle* and the *Causal* experiences manifest. That's how I feel right now.

Back to my story; mundane and spiritual or personal and transpersonal can and does co-exist. In my limited experience mixed with ignorance, however, I thought that only spiritual or Absolute was Real. I really wish I have had someone who could have told me about the importance of everyday life experience when I attained my first transpersonal insights. I am positive, however, that my path would not have been much different, but it would have definitely been much easier.

1.4 Help from above

During my struggle I relished various opportunities to soar into *samādhi* (and thus escaping the wet and burning influences from the world). And one practice in particular has contributed quite a lot to elevate my anguish.

In Zen tradition a certain procedure is observed for newcomers and I would like to share a part of this taste here:

"One of the most vital parts of traditional koan study as practiced in the Rinzai Zen monasteries of Japan has been jakugo or capping-phrase exercises.

The first thing every newcomer to the zendo (meditation hall) has to do is become used to sitting in concentration without any physical or mental disturbance. Once this

is accomplished, the student is given a koan such as the well known “What is the sound of one hand (clapping)?” by the roshi (Zen Master).

After this, the student devotes all his or her energy to this koan, a question that cannot be dealt with by intellectual analysis. This study often takes a long time, but when at last an appropriate response has been successfully offered and conformed, the student can move on to the next step in the process – the jakugo exercise.

That is, the student is required to pick out the most appropriate sapping phrase, usually a passage in a poem from among thousands in a special anthology that best explains the physical and mental state the student has reached.

In the zendo, no books are allowed except this anthology, a capping-phrase book. Every student is expected to keep at least one copy of such an anthology, usually inside a sleeve of his or her monk’s robe to be read through again and again.

Zen students find this exercise really useful, even inevitable, because of the help it provides in clarifying their views of each koan.”
(Shigematsu 1988, p. XIV.-XV)

I am no Zen ordained monk or priest, but I really enjoyed following the above procedure. It was help from above to read and open up to experiences that which always ensued. I have been entering *samādhi* at will using this process for years.

The Omnipresent aspect of the above shared experience is well rounded up in Zen poem:

*Deep in the mountains
No one knocks on
My brushwood doors
But the stormy winds
Blowing in the night*
(Shigematsu 1988, p. 145)

Just reading such Zen saying used to soar away my awareness deeply into *samādhi*. I used to read books like A Zen Forest (Shigematsu 1988), just to find entries into the localized “I am” presence or into impersonal insight, and the above lines have helped me do that so many times. Even now, when I open up while reading them, *samādhi* manifests.

Even as a child, I have perceived distant and lonely parts of the world (say, trees in Siberia or abandoned Alaska barracks or grains of sand in Sahara desert or distant stars), as somehow close to my heart. I did not know how to explain it at first, but now it is quite clear, just as the above haiku illustrate so brightly clear.

1.5 Subjective benefits

What were or are the bright sides of having attained the *Causal state*? How is it when you can enter *satori* at will?

For the most part and until very recently, it was lonely. I was alone. I will use a part of a poem by Edgar Allan Poe to express the sentiment:

*"From childhood's hour I have not been
As others were; I have not seen
As others saw; I could not bring
My passions from a common spring.
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow; I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone;
And all I loved, I loved alone."*

Here and now but not really present. Engaged in life and yet untouched by it. The loneliness of the omnipresence, as Paramhansa Yogananda put it. At the same time I perceived Myself everywhere (if and when I wanted it)...and so very much alone.

I remember I raised the question about the loneliness to my dear ex-professor from Rushmore, whom I also like to consider my mentor (this notion is one sided, to be sure), Dr John Rowan. I have digitally recorded that whole workshop on Wilber's AQAL in London in March 2012 and I would like to share a part of our exchange here:

"Me: It is my experience that the further to the right on the Wilber map I get, lonelier I feel. So my question is: how to live or better yet, how do you live in the world where most people are at the Instrumental and maybe some on the Authentic level? How to live in this world with the Causal experiences?"

Dr. Rowan: It is my career experience that the higher you go on these levels, the fewer the people that have gone to the same level. So you are going to feel lonely, at some point (laughter), because there is nobody to even talk to that is at the same level as you are. So you will maybe have to talk to someone over the internet, or maybe you will have to find a friend who has already dealt with that. It is a very individual experience and I certainly don't have a recipe or general advice on that. But I think it is important to have your own resource in a sense that you have people you can talk to, people you can relate to, and who are at the same level as you are or at least more or less at the same level as you are. They will understand what you are talking about.

In my case, I had my wonderful wife who hasn't meditated at all, but who understands a great deal, intuitively. And I also have a few friends who have studied Buddhism or have been to Buddhist retreats. But it is difficult; it is always be difficult because even on the Centuar level there are not many who are really at that level, let alone the Subtle or the Causal.

So for some people you might think that they are certainly on the Centuar level, but they are not really thinking the way one would expect them to [doctor here continues to speak about existentialist position versus the Centuar level].

Participant: Loneliness, I wonder, how often do you feel it, sometimes or all the time? Are you feeling lonely at emotional level or intellectual one?

Me: It is most of the time. It is not always because I am not in samādhi all of the time. And it is not that there is nothing going on in my life; it is just that there is no one

inside here to be identified with what is going on. It is not on the emotional level, it is not even on the mental level, it is more here, you know (pointing to the chest), and there is no one here.

Dr. Rowan: Well, that could also be interpreted as freedom.

Me: Heh, yes, I know, I know. I feel free, I am free. But to live like that here, with my parents, friends who may be still at the first Tier thinking, well it does present a challenge to me.

You know, it is like there is no one here to do anything on the inside and on the outside, there is no one there I could be doing things for.

Dr. Rowan: Yes, so how could that be a problem?

(Laughter all around)

Me: How can that be a problem? Well, it is making me wanna just shut everything off and go into samādhi.

So, how to live in a relationships in family? Ehm, I remember from our last seminar that you mentioned the so called switching levels. Switching to Mental ego, to Centuar etc...

Dr. Rowan: Yes, it is the easiest way I think, the most practical way; otherwise you can just agonize without any outcome."

(Unpublished transcripts of digitally recorded workshop, lead by Dr John Rowan)

Well, Dr. Rowan was right, of course, as far I am concerned. I was agonizing, to use his word. It was just a drama and when it comes to dramas, well, I can be a perfect drama queen. Now the drama and agonizing is freshed out, thanks to my Mahakali. No need to agonize as there is no one here to do anything. Even the I am is gone, the Witness is gone.

So, how is it when you can enter *satori* at will?

Well, it is liberating. Nothing really touches you, not even sharp physical pain or pleasure or loss of a dear one. The joy is there, the sadness is there, the tears flow and joy overflows, but nothing is really that convincing anymore. All is only a play, sometimes light and sometimes dark, but a play nevertheless.

There is also peace, deep and almost complete peace. The Free Witness is the source of that peace.

That's about it.

So, why leave that perfect Witness behind? Why on earth would I want to move away from The One Choice-less awareness which only is Real? The pristine Awareness is so, well, perfect and pure, that everything else fades away in comparison, thoughts, emotions and "outer" world.

How the hell am I (or you) to leave this Perfect and Ultimate Reality behind?

Well, higher taste must manifest, an insight has to happen; an insight into what seems to be the next on the path to final Enlightenment: the *Nondual*.

Part Two: the Nondual

2. The *Nondual* insight

November 2011

The first notable *Nondual* insight occurred few days after I concluded leading the Enlightenment Intensive on which seventeen people were present and where many had deep *Causal Self* realization.

On that particular Intensive I was not holding back as I was used to but opened up and had series of direct experiences of the Truth myself. Such practice was not originally taught by Yogeshwar Muni (Charles Berner), the creator of Enlightenment Intensive format; I nevertheless openly presented my *samādhi* states as I had them throughout the three days of our retreat. In my opinion, it may have helped practitioners somewhat.

I was deeply aware that the seat of my consciousness was at One with the Absolute reality, and that awareness stayed with me days after the retreat was over. It is my belief that this awareness added to my chances for the *Nondual* insight.

2.1 The Whitesnake incident

It happened three days after the Intensive, on the concert performed by Whitesnake, the legendary hard rock band, lead by David Coverdale. Maybe a few words on the meaning of hard rock in this context are in order. How shall I put it, loud as hell is an understatement when it comes to Whitesnake, as far as I am concerned.

Anyway, with no intention on my part, and while intuitively aware of the Witnessing, all of a sudden everything just became reversed in a sense. The Truth I have been aware and the state of *samādhi* I have been entering at will for the last four or five years, have stopped shining within and projected itself on the “outside”. In an instant, there was no one there to be the Witness, and all that remained was the hearing the heard (sound of a big bang Whitesnake, no less) and seeing the seen.

It must have lasted for several minutes, for I was completely immersed in the sensory input only, nothing else. Everything that I used to deny as illusory on account of the One and only Truth, has now become the Truth itself, leaving no one behind to Witness the event.

My consciousness was shattered to the core, for never before have I been so thoroughly and intensively intimate with sounds and images coming in through eyes and ears. This was in fact the entry level Buddhist non-dual, the so called non-conceptual, direct, immediate mode of perception. And it was liberating as hell.

After that insight more and more Nondual experiences manifested, mostly through the entry of sounds, images, thoughts and sensations and I would like to share some of them here.

2.2 Fast forward

One year passed before I got opened, relaxed and flexible enough to somewhat let go of my age long attachment to the “I am That” notion.

Now, I will let my dear internet-friend from Singapore speak about few important things. When I shared the aforementioned *Nondual* experiences with him, he commented:

*“It is good to hear your practice has progressed from "existence as background presence" to "existence as foreground presence".
You are having more frequent Nondual experiences in the six sense entries and not skewing to the non-conceptual thought realm (I AM).*

For this mode to be more effortless, some insight must arise. First of all you must become doubtless that the taste of luminosity experienced in I AM is exactly the same taste in all six entries - sights, sounds, smell, taste, touch, thought.

So now you realize the "one taste of luminosity"? You realize that the I AM (non-conceptual thought) that you realized and experienced is simply luminosity ... in one particular state or manifestation or realm, and by no means the totality in itself.

You made a very good point that is related to this: that the I AM that you experienced is not too different from non-dual in other entries. Not only is it not too different, there is essentially no difference once you become doubtless that luminosity is not just background existence. Luminosity is not about a particular state of existence but is the essence of all manifestation in all states and conditions just like all the waves of the ocean only have a single taste: saltiness.

Apart from that you should challenge your views, of boundaries, of center, inside and outside, subject and object (that is why I said earlier some form of investigation would be necessary) until your dualistic view is dropped through deep insight into Nonduality.

At this point your understanding of awareness is transformed (no longer seen as merely a formless background), you see that awareness has no border or divisions and cannot be separated (no subject-object division) from every moment of manifestation, and thus you no longer "choose" or have "preference" on a purer state of presence to abide, since you see that I AM is no more I AM than a transient sound or sight or thought, everything shares the same taste of luminosity/awareness, and of non-duality.

Here the tendency to refer back to a background is reduced as a result of this seeing.”
(Soh Wei Yu 2011, unpublished private exchange).

I must admit that I did not really understand what Soh was trying to get across. How could I? Being Tantric by practice and Vedanta Advaita practitioner by realization, my whole awareness was inundated by the “I am” presence, I was stuck on that level of perception. How on earth could I possibly understand?

Well, I know now: by letting go of the letting go, which happened almost exactly one year

after. That insight, the *anatta* or *anatma* insight changed my perception and everything else thoroughly and, I see that now, permanently (as far as the term applies).

Part Three: *the anatta*

2. **Gone, gone, gone beyond: the *anatta* insight**

October 2012

After three days of enjoying almost constant personal audience with Dr John Rowan or “the living Buddha”, as I lovingly refer to him, I was sitting on a bench in a park, sun was shining, it was a warm, lovely autumn day. I was browsing through a book on integral psychotherapy and transpersonal identity development (Forman 2010), and it all started while reading the information about the *Nondual*.

But before sharing the *anatta* insight, certain notions are worth mentioning, I think.

In Kashmir Shivaism, ancient guidelines about obstacles to ultimate reality are outlined, so called *malas* or impurities (Format 2010, p.158):

- *anava mala* (belief that any given person occupies particular space, i.e. I am here not there, and certainly not everywhere),
- *mayiya mala* (belief that there are other objects outside of us, i.e. John is out there, not here where I am located). Basically that is the root perception of a false ego, the illusory center of reference, according to my current understanding.

By the time I got through reading this, Nondual was already present (only seeing the seen, hearing the sound etc...), it seems the first two *malas* were recognized as false straight away: with the Kindle reader in hands, boundaries just vanished, and the little ego and also the well established and stable Causal realization was gone, gone beyond and what remained was the seeing only images, hearing only sounds. It, the “I am Presence” (Causal Self) became **only** what five aggregates, according to Buddhism (Form, Sensation, Perception, Mental Formation and Consciousness) were offering from moment to moment, arising and ceasing.

It is important for me to note that I was at that point still able to switch back to the “I am” presence, perceiving the well known impersonal presence of the “True self”. For years I entered this state at will, hence falling back to the “I am” presence was still happening, I guess.

It was different this time, however: I realized with the aha! moment, that the “I am” presence in the centre of my consciousness is exactly the same as the arising and ceasing manifestation which was being intimately experienced. The seen, sensed, cognized **AS** the “I am” presence - only that “I am” presence was not there anymore.

What instigated the further insight, it seems, was reading about the third *mala* (or impurity) from Kashmir Shivaism:

- *karma mala* - belief that a person must perform an action, do something to remedy any given situation, say “I need to meditate to get enlightened”.

It happened few moments after I read those words (obviously I was using the entry of mental formations and consciousness), everything just became crystal clear, no switching back to "I am" presence, for there was no one here, there, anywhere to switch to!

And I am not talking only about the little false ego (which is, in my opinion, may also be called the *Authentic Self* from *Centuar* or *Authentic level*), I am talking about the Ultimate "I am" presence, The Witness Itself.

For years, I was grateful to abide as a Witness, Omnipresent and liberated, as it were, free from mental/emotional/physical impressions, laughing at the drama I was continually witnessing. But now, the "I am" presence itself, or the One Witness was gone! Even the Pure abstract potential or the so called Unmanifested "I am" (higher *Causal level*) was nowhere to be found! It seems that after years of entering *samādhi* at will, I was allowed to move on.

Only there isn't anyone to give the permission, or anyone to be allowed to move on or do anything else. No one is here, it never was, It cannot exist, because events are unfolding on their own. No center needed. Phenomena are free, separated from every other phenomenon, not touching and yet interconnected but liberating as they come and go!

Gone (leaving little ego behind), gone (beyond the *Causal Self*), gone beyond (leaving even the *Nondual* behind).

In an instruction The Buddha is said to have given to Bāhiya, the importance of *anatta* insight is rather well addressed:

*"Then, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus:
In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen.
In reference to the heard, only the heard.
In reference to the sensed, only the sensed.
In reference to the cognized, only the cognized.
That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Bāhiya, there is no you in connection with that.
When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there.
When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two.
This, just this, is the end of suffering."
(Dawsonne 2010, Udana 1.10)*

Important and meaningful instruction, no doubts.

Anyway, I can "enter into" *Nondual* at will now, especially after the above experience. Driving the car, eating, looking out the window - it seems that these situations are easy and do not require much focused effort on my part, so I can easily let go.

What I also notice now is that I can discern the Vedanta Advaita texts from the Buddhist *Nondual* ones.

For instance, to my sadness I realize that Sri Ramana Maharshi is not at all speaking about *anatta*, or not even about *Nondual* (as far as I can see); He mentions that even in Sahaja Nirbikalpa Samādhi (the ultimate state, according to Him) there is "something" there which

meditator is at One with (Maharshi 1988, p.193). Well, He must be talking about something different, not about the *anatta* or *Nondual* as I and many others, have experienced it.

I would like now to share thoughts on this subject written by respected Buddhist from Singapore, who is senior to me in both experience and comprehension of these abstract topics:

“There are subtle differences between Advaita non-duality and Buddhist's anatta both in terms of realization and experience.

When contemplating on the subject of 'no-self', the mind of the practitioner is directed towards the transient phenomena and upon the ripening of conditions, the mind suddenly sees the illusionary division of subject-object duality; with the maturing of this realization, experience becomes seamlessly whole. There is no hearer in hearing or perceiver in perceiving, just simply a sense of perception. In terms of this experience, they are similar.

However although the blinding bond of 'duality' is dissolved, the tendency to see things 'inherently' isn't. The practitioners continue to resort back to a Self despite after the clear seeing of this truth and rest their understanding of 'no-self based on Self'. This is substantialist non-duality. There is an ultimate essence and abiding in Self is still the way towards liberation and there is also the temptation to treat this experience as a sort of pseudo finality.

Buddhism on the other hand sees this experience and realization as the first step in the 8 fold path - the right view. It means right view of anatta is fully authenticated with this non-dual experience but Buddhist's non-dual is non-abiding, groundless and essence-less. There is no resorting back to an ultimate essence and the entire idea of liberation is based on seeing clearly the anatta, non-substantiality, essence-less empty nature of whatever arises, including Awareness or Self. Experience is luminously non-dual yet empty.

Therefore in Buddhism, besides the experience, right view is very important. Upon the clearing seeing of 'no division', it is advisable to penetrate further into the impermanent nature of phenomena both at the micro and macro level of experience. In terms of practice, there is no letting go to an ultimate ground or great void but the letting go is due to the thorough insight of the 'empty nature' of all that is arising; Reality is perpetually 'letting go'.

So in addition to the non-dual seamless experience, there must also be the clear experience of perpetual letting go of non-holding to whatever arises.

The journey towards 'no-self' is analogous to peeling an onion. Practitioner goes through the process of peeling from dissolving of personality and identity to non-conceptuality to non-duality to realization of the lack of ownership to clear seeing of 'no agent behind transient phenomena' to the 'empty nature of whatever arises'. As we peel, the 'willingness' to let go certain aspects of 'self/Self' grow and with more 'willingness' to let go, we come closer to seeing the true face of freedom.

Deeper clinging to a Self is not washed away with the non-dual insight. There must be further integration of the 'non-dual' experience into this arising and passing away,

this impermanent nature, to dissolve the illusionary sense of self, anger, emotion, pride and even the non-dual presence that we treasure so much; let whatever arises go, be it during the waking, dreaming or deep sleep state. There will then come a time where a practitioner realizes the same 'taste' of the 3 states as there is no holding of the non-dual presence and all experiences turn natural, effortless and self-liberating."

(Thusness 2010, unpublished script)

Well, I am not there, yet.

Now (November 2012) I view consciousness as non-local, not centered in the *Causal* "I am presence" anymore, there is no split between *samādhi* and everyday life, in a sense that there is no one to make that distinction. I am more at peace now, more at ease, laid back so to speak. No more inner tension due to seeing manifested phenomenon as inherently illusory. I am slowly but surely moving beyond Vedanta descriptions of Ultimate Reality.

At the moment, I see the consciousness as something free, liberating in itself, "changing" by itself: events come and go by themselves, no one is in control, so to speak, no one to instigate coming and going, *not even God*. Only the heard, seen, sensed, cognized and no one there to witness, center-less and free from any kind of agency.

My very well versed and experienced Buddhist internet-friend from Singapore, whom I hope to meet someday in person, commented on my descriptions of *anatta* insight:

"You seem to be able to actualize the living experience of anatta without dwelling much into view. Your insights unfold from recognizing "the same taste" of I AM in all six entries and exits, into seeing that the very idea of abiding is a hindrance, to the doubtless realization that there never was the "I am" to abide in, and whatever arises is already free and liberating." (Soh Wei Yu 2012, unpublished private exchange).

It is becoming clear to me that now, after *anatta* or *anatma* insight, different progress has been made. Previously, I was stuck or locked-in into the "Self" or "I Am" presence realization, Witnessing everything as a dream, by the Choice-less awareness - and nevertheless still dreaming.

It is as if I have woken up, yet again, only this time from the *Causal*, which doesn't implicate that all relative phenomena has ceased to exist for me. Far from it:

"Also: in the teaching of four Noble truths, Buddha defined the truth of suffering as the five clinging aggregates. The source of suffering = craving. The end of suffering = the end of craving. Path to end of craving/suffering = the eightfold path."

In the case of Nirvana or the end of dukkha (stress, suffering), does that mean then the five clinging aggregates cease? Not exactly, but the Buddha said "Monks, when the gods with Indra, with Brahmā and with Pajāpati seek a monk who is thus liberated in mind, they do not find [anything of which they could say], "The tathāgata's consciousness is dependent on this." Why is that? A tathāgata, I say, is untraceable even here and now."

This does not mean the tathagata's consciousness is 'independently existing' but it is

like drawing on water - utterly traceless and self-releasing. When you try to draw on water, the picture does not land, does not lead to 'growth', does not lead to grasping or infatuation. Likewise the imperceptive awareness of five aggregates self-liberates upon contact instead of 'being established in the five aggregates', i.e. having desires, cravings, conceiving of 'I' and 'mine' in reference to the five clinging aggregates. There is nowhere that consciousness lands, instead it is traceless. There is no support for consciousness in the five aggregates - the five aggregates do not lead to the formation of a chain of dependent origination of dukkha.

There is only in the seen just the seen, in the heard just the heard, but nothing is being established be it subject or object, there is no referencing of the five clinging aggregates in terms of an 'I' and 'mine', but instead are self-luminous, self-manifested (according to conditions) and auto-released.

Buddha: "When that consciousness is not established, not increasing, not concocting, it is liberated. Being liberated, it is steady. Being steady, it is content. Being content, he is not excited. Unexcited, he personally attains complete nibbāna. He discerns that, 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.'"

(Soh Wei Yu 2012, unpublished script)

3.1 The *nirodha-samāpatti*

November 2012

“ niroda-samapatti or 'attainment of extinction' , also called saññā-vedayita-nirodha, 'extinction of feeling and perception', is the temporary suspension of all consciousness and mental activity, following immediately upon the semi-conscious state called 'sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception'.

The absolutely necessary pre-conditions to its attainment are said to be perfect mastery of all the 8 absorptions (jhāna), as well as the previous attainment of Anāgāmi or Arahantship”

(Nyanatiloka 1998)

After entering the *Nondual* more or less at will for almost one year or so, profound *anatta* insight has manifested, as I have shared above. A month and a half after that insight, a thought about experiencing *nirodha-samāpatti* arose.

And it happened soon after that:

while lying in my bed, with closed eyes (no visual input) “entering” into *Nondual* and on to *anatta* using the entry of thoughts and feelings (just thoughts/feelings cognized, no observer or witness), it happened; slowly body awareness turned off, feelings of so called tiredness just dissipated and thoughts vanished one by one. And consciousness manifested as thoughts/feelings just gently and slowly faded itself down to a complete stop. Total silence or stillness and swoon-like absence of everything and anything. Beyond perception and non-

perception. No saying; can't really adequately describe it, I admit.

I don't know how long this state lasted, but afterwards everything instigated itself it seems or whatever, everything became active again, thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. Eyes were closed still, so visual cortex was inactive throughout the event.

It was like a natural thing, an element of arising and ceasing of events. Only this time, there was no event, no perception and no not-perception. It was total absence of anything and everything. I cannot remember what was going on while in this state, as there was no I to remember anything and nothing at all was happening.

Now silent joy is arising here as I share this; nothing overly special or extraordinarily mystical about it; just naturally unfolding events or non-events. Now, however, I realize that there is **literally nothing** which I could possibly base my existence or awareness on. Everything is impermanent, arising and fading away, by itself, independently liberated and interdependent at the same time and empty of inherent qualities.

Arahat, Daniel Ingram shares on the topic:

"I mention this attainment because it is one more of those things that is found today but has often been relegated to the realm of myth and legend or has been forgotten entirely. It is not that Nirodha is necessary but it definitely is a good and useful thing to be able to attain. In fact, I have not yet spoken with anyone who had attained it who didn't consider it among the absolute King Daddy of meditation attainments other than arahatship, as the depth of its afterglow never fails to impress and amaze. Hopefully, mentioning it will raise the standard to which people feel they can reasonably aspire, which is basically the whole goal of this book."
(Ingram, p. 356, 2007)

3.2 Various levels of *samādhi*

The core of this text is comprehension of the mystical experiences named *samādhi*. Comprehension in this context does not entail mere intellectual capacity but rather empirical one, of course.

But, let us anyway look into what seems to be quite clear outline of various stages of *samādhi*, according to empirical master, Sri Ramana Maharshi (Maharshi, 1993, p.225):

1. *Holding on to Reality is samādhi.*
2. *Holding on to samādhi with effort is sabikalpa samādhi.*
3. *Merging in Reality and remaining unaware of the world is nirbikalpa-samādhi.*
4. *Merging in ignorance and remaining unaware of the world is sleep.*
5. *Remaining in the primal, pure, natural state without effort is sahaja nirbikalpa-samādhi*

Sleep	Kevala	Sahaja
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1. mind alive	1. mind alive	1. mind dead
2. sunk in oblivion	2. sunk in Light	2. resolved into the self
	3. like a bucket with a rope lying in the water in the well	3. like a river discharged into the ocean and its identity lost
	4. to be drawn out by the other end of the rope	4. a river cannot be redirected from the ocean

Let us take a closer look at His line of thought (Maharshi, 1989):

Question : What is samadhi?

Ramana Maharshi : The state in which the unbroken experience of existence-consciousness is attained by the still mind, alone is samadhi. That still mind which is adorned with the attainment of the limitless supreme Self, alone is the reality of God.

When the mind is in communion with the Self in darkness, it is called nidra [sleep], that is, the immersion of the mind in ignorance. Immersion in a conscious or wakeful state is called samadhi. Samadhi is continuous inherence in the Self in a waking state. Nidra or sleep is also inherence in the Self but in an unconscious state. In sahaja samadhi the communion is continuous.

Question : What are kevala nirvikalpa samadhi and sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi?

Ramana Maharshi : The immersion of the mind in the Self, but without its destruction, is kevala nirvikalpa samadhi. In this state one is not free from vasanas and so one does not therefore attain mukti. Only after the vasanas have been destroyed can one attain liberation.

Question : When can one practise sahaja samadhi?

Ramana Maharshi : Even from the beginning. Even though one practises kevala nirvikalpa samadhi for years together, if one has not rooted out the vasanas one will not attain liberation.

Question : May I have a clear idea of the difference between savikalpa and nirvikalpa?

Ramana Maharshi : Holding on to the supreme state is samadhi. When it is with effort due to mental disturbances, it is savikalpa. When these disturbances are absent, it is nirvikalpa. Remaining permanently in the primal state without effort is sahaja.

Question : Is nirvikalpa samadhi absolutely necessary before the attainment of sahaja?

Ramana Maharshi : Abiding permanently in any of these samadhis, either savikalpa or nirvikalpa, is sahaja [the natural state]. What is body-consciousness? It is the insentient body

plus consciousness. Both of these must lie in another consciousness which is absolute and unaffected and which remains as it always is, with or without the body-consciousness. What does it then matter whether the body-consciousness is lost or retained, provided one is holding on to that pure consciousness? Total absence of body-consciousness has the advantage of making the samadhi more intense, although it makes no difference to the knowledge of the supreme.

(Maharshi, 1989)

So, the *nirbikalpa-samādhi* is described from two different standpoints, it seems:

- as liberated state of consciousness in which one is constantly and spontaneously aware of the Godlike nature of oneself and existence without any effort, spontaneously and continually (*sahaja nirbikalpa-samādhi*) and
- as liberating state of consciousness in which everything is shut down and only awareness of the Self prevails, totally and thoroughly (*kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi*)

To my understanding, the former is conditioned by the latter. According to documented empirical evidence from certain yoga masters we will meet shortly, it may be concluded that *nirbikalpa-samādhi* is indeed very important, but even after that attainment (*kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi*) there is still more work to be done.

If we take a look at some descriptions of the subject in discussion by the yoga masters, we can see that there indeed are two stages of *nirbikalpa-samādhi*:

- *kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi* and
- *sahaja nirbikalpa-samādhi*.

Let us see what yoga masters have to say on the subject:

- Paramhansa Yogananda:

“In sabikalpa samadhi the devotee has spiritually progressed to a state of inward divine union, but cannot maintain his cosmic consciousness except in the immobile trance-state. By continuous meditation, he reaches the superior state of nirbikalpa samadhi, where he moves freely in the world and performs his outward duties without any loss of God-realization.”

(Yogananda 1946, ch 43)

This seems to be a rather eloquent description of the final stage of human development according to Vedanta teachings, the liberation, *sahaja nirbikalpa-samādhi*.

- Sri Ramana Maharshi:

“Samādhi, turiya and nirvikalpa all have the same implication, that is, awareness of the Self. Turiya literally means the fourth state, the supreme consciousness, as distinct from the other three states: waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep. The fourth state is eternal and the other three states come and go in it. In turiya there is the awareness

that the mind has merged in its source, the Heart, and is quiescent there, although some thoughts still impinge on it and the senses are still somewhat active. In nirvikalpa the senses are inactive and thoughts are totally absent. Hence the experience of pure consciousness in this state is intense and blissful."

Here, the great Master seems to be speaking about *kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi*.

"In yoga the term samādhi refers to some kind of trance and there are various kinds of samādhi. But the samādhi I speak of is different. It is sahaja samādhi. From here you have samadhana [steadiness] and you remain calm and composed even while you are active. You realize that you are moved by the deeper real Self within. You have no worries, no anxieties, no cares, for you come to realize that there is nothing belonging to you. You know that everything is done by something with which you are in conscious union."

And in this elucidation, Sri Ramana Maharshi has shared characteristics of *sahaja nirbikalpa-samādhi*, the highest attainment, equaled to liberation.

- Sri Ramakrishna:

"...A man cannot easily get rid of the ego and the consciousness that the body is the soul. It becomes possible only when, through the grace of God, he attains samadhi - nirvikalpa samadhi, jada samadhi..."

"By realizing the Divine Mother of the Universe, you will get Knowledge as well as Devotion. You will get both. In bhava samadhi you will see the form of God, and in nirvikalpa samadhi you will realize Brahman, the Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. In nirvikalpa samadhi ego, name, and form do not exist."

Bhakti
ense
"...Sri Ramakrishna continued: You may ask why does a Vijnani prefer to have (love and devotion)? The answer is - Because it is difficult for one to be free from the sense of "I."

In the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi (Nirvikalpa Samadhi is described in the Raja Yoga as the highest state of Samadhi in which the soul rises above the sense of "I" and the plane of all thoughts, ideas and emotions, and reaches the realm of the Absolute.), it may vanish for the time being, but it comes back again; while for ordinary individuals it is almost impossible to eliminate this sense of "I, me and mine."

However many times you may cut Sense of "I." off the branches of the Aswatthwa tree, so long as the root is alive new branches will sprout; similarly you may try to get rid of the sense of "I," but so long as the root is alive it will sprout up again and again. Even after acquiring Brahma-Jnana the emancipated soul is forced back to the plane of this "Aham" sense of "I."

If you dream of a tiger you will tremble in every limb and your heart will throb violently.

When you wake up you may realize that it was a mere dream, but still your heart will go on

palpitating all the same. Similarly the sense of "I" remains even after the realization of the Absolute.

Thus, if the sense of "I" is the cause of all troubles and it is impossible to be free from it, let it stay on as "I," the servant of the Lord..."

(Ramakrishna, Kindle edition, p. 119)

It seems that the great tantric Master speaks here about *kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi*.

There is an important difference in perception of oneself, others, the world and God, after attainment of the *kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi*, in my experience. Let us listen again to Sri Ramakrishna's experience:

"...After nirvikalpa samadhi, Sri Ramakrishna realized maya in an altogether new role. The binding aspect of Kali vanished from before his vision. She no longer obscured his understanding. The world became the glorious manifestation of the Divine Mother. Maya became Brahman. The transcendental Itself broke through the Immanent. Sri Ramakrishna discovered that maya operates in the relative world in two ways, and he termed these "avidyamaya" and "vidyamaya."

Avidyamaya represents the dark forces of creation: sensuous desires, evil passions, greed, lust, cruelty, and so on. It sustains the world system on the lower planes. It is responsible for the round of man's birth and death. It must be fought and vanquished. But vidyamaya is the higher force of creation: the spiritual virtues, the enlightening qualities, kindness, purity, love, devotion. Vidyamaya elevates man to the higher planes of consciousness. With the help of vidyamaya the devotee rids himself of avidyamaya; he then becomes mayatita, free of maya. The two aspects of maya are the two forces of creation, the two powers of Kali; and She stands beyond them both. She is like the effulgent sun, bringing into existence and shining through and standing behind the clouds of different colors and shapes, conjuring up wonderful forms in the blue autumn heaven..."

(Harding, Kindle edition, p.273)

Although my empirical knowledge of the subject in discussion is certainly not as vast and deep as Sri Ramakrishna's, I too realized a profound change in the months after the attainment of the *kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi*: ego, the self from Authentic level, lost its grip over my inner psychodynamic climate. I clearly saw that the ego too as well as everything else in everyday experience, is Divine. It has always been that way.

3.3 nirodha-samāpatti and kevala nirbikalpa samādhi, comparison

In the light of the main theme of this text (Vedanta and Buddhist teachings), let us take a look at these two deep and abstract insights. What are the differences (from my limited experiences, of course)?

Let us take a look at the chart 1 for details.

	<i>kevala nirbikalpa-samādhī</i>	<i>nirodha-samāpatti</i>
Sensory input	Non-existing, only the Self is present, totally	Completely shut down, nothing remains, no Self either
Time	No time, only pure Awareness is present, nothing else	No time, no awareness, nothing, no non-nothing
Space	No space, only pure Awareness present, Radiant and Pristine	No space, no awareness, nothing, no non-nothing
Cognitive processes (perception, memory, decision making etc.)	Shut down, non-existing, only the Self is fully present, nothing else	Complete and total void
Awareness	Only awareness as the Source is directly experienced, nothing else – only Absolute Consciousness	No awareness, no consciousness, no nothing, no non-nothing
Others	There are no others, only this One Truth shining with Absolute Presence	No others, no movement in the mind as it is completely shut down, no awareness, no consciousness
Ego (I & Mine, ahamkara, Authentic Self)	Does not exist, dead for the time being.	No awareness, no consciousness therefore no ego.
Body*	Appears as dead	Appears as dead
Breathing**	Suspended	Suspended

chart 1

**Body – it is said that it appears as dead; I cannot say anything on the subject, for obvious reasons.*

***Breathing – it is said that it is suspended; I can only infer that it was suspended during my experiences, but cannot affirm or deny it, again for obvious reasons.*

What are the differences between *kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi* and *nirodha-samāpatti*, then?

Well, I hope general differences are clearly seen in the chart 1; in my case, however, the former presented me with relative freedom from material ego (*ahamkara*, the Authentic Self), whereas *nirodha-samāpatti* conferred relative freedom from the *Causal Self*, allowing me to get unstuck from the Advaita perception of the reality (the *Causal level*) and to soar onto the Buddhist *Nondual*.

There are certain aspects of these abstract transpersonal insights that I would like to emphasize here, if I may. Many would-be transpersonalists fall for these misconceptions (due to the lack of firsthand insights, maybe?):

1. Experience of *kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi* **does not imply that a person remains inactive.**

“The ego is dead” in the state of *kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi* needs to be elaborated upon, I think. It is not that the whole mind with its core impression of “I and Mine” is shut down forever or dead in a sense that it does not function anymore. It still exist, it is still functional after one comes out of the *samādhi*. Why on earth not? It is just that practitioner is free from its prison, as it were, having tasted deeper taste which is much, much more rewarding in both personal and public lives. Of course, one has to experience the *kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi* to really get this.

Furthermore, **even after the attainment of final liberation, *sahaja nirbikalpa-samādhi*, one still remains active**, according to Sri Ramana Maharshi and other Masters (see above).

There is a good point that Sri Ramana Maharshi made on the subject: how would the cessation of activity, i.e. withdrawal from all sense activities, thoughts and experiences, differ from the deep sleep?

He also pointed out that such an attainment would not be the final one, for one goes in and comes out of such cessation of activities. No, the final state is the natural state in which a liberated sage remains active (see Ramana 1993, p.226-227).

2. The experience of *nirodha-samāpatti* **is not the end of the path to enlightenment and it does not equal to *nibbāna*.**

Theravada Buddhism teaches us about the so called final liberation, *nibbāna*, and the teachings are rather clear about it. But somehow, many have misinterpreted these teachings. ***Nibbāna* is not equal** to cessation one experiences in either *kevala nirbikalpa-samādhi* or *nirodha-samāpatti*.

Moreover, in *Bāhiya Sutta* (please, see Appendix 6.1) Buddha is crystal clear that

nibbāna, the end of suffering or stress, is a state in which there is no agency, no center, no identity and no self whatsoever, He does not say that there is not activity or nothing sensed, seen, heard etc...:

*"Then, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus:
In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen.
In reference to the heard, only the heard.
In reference to the sensed, only the sensed.
In reference to the cognized, only the cognized.
That is how you should train yourself.
When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Bāhiya,
there is no you in connection with that.
When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there.
When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two.
This, just this, is the end of stress."[2]*

To drive my point right home, let us take a look at what Buddha says on the subject of *nibbāna*:

"If a monk abandons passion for the property of consciousness, then owing to the abandonment of passion, the support is cut off, and there is no landing of consciousness. Consciousness, thus not having landed, not increasing, not concocting, is released. Owing to its release, it is steady. Owing to its steadiness, it is contented. Owing to its contentment, it is not agitated. Not agitated, he (the monk) is totally unbound right within. He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"
(Please, see Appendix 6.2, Bija Sutta)

3.6 My problems with *anatta*

How on earth can there be a problem with any of the pure transpersonal or spiritual states of consciousness?

Well, as far as I am concerned there are certain issues or unperceivable disharmonies (for the serious lack of a better word) regarding the Causal self, as I have already explained. And now, after seven or eight months after the pure *anatta*, the power of the natural Reality has been brought to bear on the *anatta* itself.

Let me try to explain.

Right after the *anatta* there was joy arising along with the no-self perception, it was so liberating, and so freeing I just cannot describe it. On several occasions in the weeks after the aforementioned event I have relished the silent bliss in the *anatt*: when I switched from the self centered perception to *anatta*.....well you will have to experience this yourself to really comprehend, I guess. Suffice it to say that bliss and profound serenity is a massive

understatement and that the bliss of the pristine luminous samadhi from the Causal level shamefully fades away in comparison.

But, there is something missing now nonetheless (May 2013). In the weeks after the *anatta* there was a clear sense (for the lack of a better word) of “something”, albeit virtually impossible to notice, being there in the sensed, heard, seen, cognized etc... In last month or so, however, this has been changing. It is like freeing the already freed perceptions (the heard, seen, sensed etc...) of slight presence of something. It is difficult to explain.

Even the sensed, seen, heard, cognized etc... is completely free and utterly devoid of everything and anything. Everything is center-less, relating to no subject whatsoever, with no inherent qualities.

Not only there is no self, no ego, no Soul (anatman or anatta), no Causal self or I am presence in the deepest possible meaning of these words, there literally nothing in the images seen, sounds heard, sensations sensed, forms perceived! Even the *anatta* is empty.

To be sure, I am not talking here about the nihilism of Vedanta (the so called *neti neti*), I am trying to share description of the sheer nondual natural state of things as they are currently arising.

I have no doubt you have noticed that in this paragraph I refrain from using the phrase “anatta state” or “anatta insight”. Well, herein lays my second issue with *anatta*.

After the *anatta* has manifested, I understood it to be another state, a level of transpersonal states of consciousness, just like the Subtle or the Causal levels. Well, this is not the case. *Anatta* is not a state (to be attained), it is the natural Reality of reality itself.

And the natural Reality of everything (according to my current perception) is, well, empty, *sunyata*.

Part Four: the sunyata

4. No inherent qualities - *sunyata*

Introduction into the emptiness teachings, by Greg Goode:

“Emptiness Itself is Empty

Even emptiness is empty. For example, the emptiness of the bottle of milk does not exist inherently. Rather, it exists in a dependent way. The emptiness of the bottle of milk is dependent upon its basis (the bottle of milk). It is also dependent upon having been designated as emptiness. As we saw above, this is alluded to in Nagarjuna's Treatise, verse 24.18.

Understood this way, emptiness is not a substitute term for awareness. Emptiness is not an essence. It is not a substratum or background condition. Things do not arise out of emptiness and subside back into emptiness. Emptiness is not a quality that things have, which makes them empty. Rather, to be a thing in the first place, is to be empty.

It is easy to misunderstand emptiness by idealizing or reifying it by thinking that it is an absolute, an essence, or a special realm of being or experience. It is not any of those things. It is actually the opposite. It is merely the way things exist, which is without essence or self-standing nature or a substratum of any kind. Here is a list characteristics of emptiness, to help avoid some of the frequent misunderstandings about emptiness, according to the Buddhist Consequentialists:

- *Emptiness is not a substance*
- *Emptiness is not a substratum or background*
- *Emptiness is not light*
- *Emptiness is not consciousness or awareness*
- *Emptiness is not the Absolute*
- *Emptiness does not exist on its own*
- *Objects do not consist of emptiness*
- *Objects do not arise from emptiness*
- *Emptiness of the “I” does not negate the “I”*
- *Emptiness is not the feeling that results when no objects are appearing to the mind*
- *Meditating on emptiness does not consist of quieting the mind.*

Sunyata does not entail inherent qualities or existence; well, what exactly does that mean?

Other terms for inherent existence, gathered from Buddhist and Western sources, would include the following:

- the reality of the thing irrespective of culture or language or human consciousness
- objective existence

- independent existence
- true essence
- Platonic essence
- real existence
- ontological existence
- the thing as it really is
- the thing in-itself
- the is-ness of the thing
- beingness
- actuality
- thinghood
- perseity
- self-sufficient being
- self-inclusive being
- essential being
- instantiation in reality
- subject of ontological commitment
- the thing's entitification
- the way it really is, regardless of what anyone thinks
- the reality of the thing as opposed to its appearance
- what science will eventually discover the thing to be
- the way God intends the thing to be
- “it is what it is”
- “it's like that, and that's the way it is”.

4.1 Dependent Origination (*paticcasamuppāda*)

“I see Dependent Origination as a viewless view that neutralizes all our misconceptions that arise out of the deeply rooted tendency of seeing things 'inherently and dualistically' and eventually gets itself dissolved in the end process. However it must also be understood that "freeing from views" by realizing dependent origination is no ordinary way of negation and is different from the Advaita Vedanta way of negation -- "neti neti". It is not a mere act of rejection but involves a deep realization that 'true freedom' lies in thoroughly seeing through the “non-dual and non-inherent” aspect of whatever arises. It does not deny the conventional; contrary there is the full acknowledgement and total embracement of the conventional. This is very difficult to express. Experientially when one truly sees dependent origination, one sees the essence-less, attribute-less, trait-less, center-less and connectedness and at the same time, sees the full vividness and luminous presence of appearances. In other words, “Emptiness” is 'the wisdom' to see the Absolute in the Relative without the need to 'abstract' the Absolute from the Relative and seeing Reality as one seamless functioning. In fact any attempt to separate is due to our lack of understanding of dependent origination.”

Well, this is certainly well said. It will take a deep insight into these matters, no doubt, but we can still talk about it, I guess.

Now (May 2013) I see that I misunderstood the meaning of *dependent origination*. I was trying to understand it in the terms of Self-oriented perception based on the idea of causality. Now I see that the words below offer something completely different.

This is, because that is.

This is not, because that is not.

This ceases to be, because that ceases to be.

It is not that the above words are describing the causality of arising phenomena or the principle of perception conditioning. No, what I understand now is that these words simply try to convey the natural Reality, which is essence-less, not conditioned by anyone, non-abiding and free on and by itself.

Arising is arising because that's the way things arise. Nothing mystical or secretive about it. It is what it is and that's all there is to it.

"The Buddha expressed interdependent Co-Arising very simply: "This is, because that is. This is not, because that is not. This comes to be, because that comes to be. This ceases to be, because that ceases to be."

These sentences occur hundreds of times in both the Northern and Southern transmissions. They are the Buddhist genesis."

(Thich N. H. 1999, p. 221-222.)

Part Five: Three plants and conclusion

5. Vedanta and Buddhism teachings, comparison

I invite you now to look into the chart below. I compare the so called Awareness teaching of Vedanta (Jnana yoga, advocated by Sri Ramana Maharshi, amongst others) with Buddhist Emptiness doctrine (Mahayana and Theravada tradition) in the chart 2.

Awareness teachings <i>Advaita monism</i>	Emptiness doctrine <i>Buddhist Nondual: anatta & sunyata</i>
I am (Aham Brahmasmi)	No-self (anatta or anatma)
Absolute is the Source – the Only Source	No Absolute Source, only manifested phenomena
I am the Unborn, Immortal	No one here/there to be anything
True Self is the Witness	No witness, no observer – only the seen and the heard and the sensed and the cognized etc.
Choiceless Awareness	Awareness AS manifested phenomena, empty of any kind of essence
Unmanifested Absolute Potential	Already manifested, no center, no agency
I am at One with the mountain	Only the mountain seen, no observer, no at-Oneness
I am everywhere, Omnipresent	In hearing only the heard; in seeing only the seen; in cognizing only the cognized etc. No-self, no center.
Only I am is Real, manifestation is illusion	No-self, manifested phenomena IS Reality

Only God is Real, He does everything, here and now	No God, no-self, no doer-ship, only what is arising and passing, no agency, no time, no space, no here and now
Sensory perception is false, it is not Real	Only Six Senses are there, no-self
The Absolute gives meaning to everything	No meaning, all phenomena is empty, no-self (anatma or anatta)
The Self / I am / Awareness is the Center of everything	No center. The Self is only a concept, one of many – equal to “apple is red” concept, empty in itself
Inherent quality of Being	No inherent quality whatsoever. Emptiness.
The Self / I am / Param Brahman is Eternal	Timeless arising and ceasing, already liberated by itself

Chart 2

I would like to point out the subtle and yet considerable differences between the two teachings and I like to appreciate the glaring difference: in Buddhist doctrine there is no observer, no witness, no self, no one here or there to instigate anything, no doer and no agent. All events are free and liberated by themselves, not relating to Self (or anything else) and yet interdependent (in seeing only the seen, in hearing only the heard etc.). This is truly *Nondual*, direct, immediate perception, in my book.

In Vedanta teachings, on the other hand, the Self is the only Real and True. Yes, I can be at-one-with, say, the mountain, but that is not really *Nondual*, in my experience. It is the Oneness in a sense that there is no separateness between me and the mountain. Well, the absence of separateness does not translate to nonduality, in my experience; it is only the “I am presence” extended to phenomena outside while the “I am” is still there.

In my current understanding, Ken Wilber is still speaking about the Vedanta Awareness teachings and the Causal experiences although the following appears under the title *Nondual*:

“...What appear as hard or solid objects “out there” are really transparent and translucent manifestations of your own Being or Isness. They are not obstacles to God, only expressions of God. They are therefore empty in the sense of not being an obstruction or impediment. They are a free expression of the Divine.

....

You are not the one who experiences liberation; you are the clearing, the opening, the emptiness, in which any experience comes and goes, like reflections on the mirror.

And you are the mirror, the mirror mind, and not any experienced reflection. But you are not apart from the reflections, standing back and watching. You are everything that is arising moment to moment. You can swallow the whole cosmos in one gulp, it is so small, and you can taste the sky without moving an inch..."
(Wilber, p.361-362, 1999)

Well, I certainly cannot possibly know what Ken has experienced that made him wrote the above words, but according to experienced Buddhists we have met above and also in the light of my own direct experiences, the above interpretation *does not translate to Buddhist nondual states*, i.e. *anatta* or *sunyata*.

Ken goes on to share:

"...In Dzogchen, this is the recognition of mind's true nature. All things, in all worlds, are self-liberated as they arise. All things are like sunlight on the water of a pond. It all shimmers. It is all empty. It is all light. It is all full, and it is all fulfilled. And the world goes on its ordinary way, and nobody notices at all."
(Wilber, p.361-362, 1999)

Well, this is certainly very well said. All the right words are used but what bothers me is *the, albeit slight, implication that there is someone to notice something*. Ken speaks of Divine, God, mirror, and even uses the phrase "you are everything" etc. and at the same time he speaks about emptiness. Which emptiness? The Causal one?

It seems to me that he may still perceive someone as something being there/here, even in the highest transpersonal attainments. Well, this can never be the case, as deep insight into *anatta* would affirm it beyond the shadow of any doubt.

The main point I am making here is this:

It is simply impossible to keep any trace of any kind of identity (whether from the Centuar, Subtle or even from the Causal stage) when really moving on to the Buddhist Nondual, i.e. anatta and sunyata. No way. Even the slightest trace of identity implicates and indeed induces, duality.

If I consider Vedanta Advaita (monism), there are no problems with some kind of identity or entity or inherent quality still present. But as soon as we move on to the Buddhist Nondual, namely anatta and sunyata, then every single trace of identity, entity and inherent quality (even the higher Causal notions of unmanifested Being) must be left behind, entirely and unconditionally.

To truly realize that, well, it will take an insight, preferably into *anatta*, in my opinion.

Please, I am more than willing to acknowledge the possibility that I don't really get Ken's words or that he is simply expressing it in a way that suggests that he is apparently still embracing the notion of something or someone inherently being there. He may as well be completely into Buddhist *anatta* and *sunyata* for all I know.

As far as I am concerned, however, it is only now after the *anatta* insights that I can say that I am beginning to touch upon deep and lasting non-abiding nonduality.

And, perhaps even more importantly, I am only now starting to appreciate and comprehend, well, compassion. Previously, at the *Causal level*, the compassion was almost nowhere to be found (in my case). What was seen only as a drama and transient dancing images on the screen of Absolute Consciousness of the True Self is now perceived so very close to the heart and in so intimate depending conditions that I may say that I slowly begin to see what the kind Buddha was talking about: compassion is of paramount significance.

Pragmatically speaking, let me share what transpired soon after the *anatta* insights started to manifest.

I run my private counseling and psychotherapy practice in a hired office where it gets quite cold during winter months. I have always kept heating off when I was not there. There are three plants there and in all the years it maybe once or twice occurred to me that cold might not be good for them. Well, after the *anatta* insights and the insights into interconnectedness of arising phenomena, I just couldn't stand the notion of the three plants living there in cold. And so I turned on the heater in November and this winter it is turned on ever since. Office is now warm and hopefully plants are living in kinder environment.

I would like to share with you yet another part of writings of my Buddhist friend:

“Although there is non-duality in Advaita Vedanta, and no-self in Buddhism, Advaita Vedanta rest in an “Ultimate Background” (making it dualistic), whereas Buddhism eliminates the background completely and rest in the emptiness nature of phenomena; arising and ceasing is where pristine awareness is. In Buddhism, there is no eternality, only timeless continuity (timeless as in vividness in present moment but change and continue like a wave pattern). There is no changing thing, only change.”
(Thusness 2007, unpublished script)

Before moving on, it is here I think that might be appropriate to state that the both teachings, Vedanta and Buddhism, are equally valid and can and do offer so very much to a sincere aspirant. Just one tiny drop of the *Causal* state (Vedanta, awareness teachings) has the potential to change one's perception of life forever. And the same can be said for the *anatta* insight (Buddhist nondual, emptiness teachings), in my opinion and experiences.

5.1 Proposed additions to the accepted Wilber map

Based on what we have seen thus far, in *chart 3* I share my current understanding of levels or sublevels that ought to be added to existing Wilber map. In the light of my experiences of the Causal and Nondual levels, well, I maintain that Wilber is (still) talking about Vedanta Advaita (at-oneness or non-separateness) and not about what Buddha seems to share in Bāhiya Sutta (see Appendix), for example. Hence the proposed additions.

Ken Wilber map			Proposed additions		
Lower Causal	Higher Causal	Advaita Nondual	Buddhist Nondual	Anatta	Sunyata

Self, Identity	I am	Unmanifested, pure potential	At-oneness	No-self	No-self, no non-self	Mu
Others	No others, only the One, I am, The Self	Only the True Being that is nowhere to be found	No others, only non-separateness	Only the seen, the heard, the cognized etc.	Only arising and ceasing phenomena	Mu?
Sensory input	Illusory	Not there yet or illusory	I am also what I see before Me, I am everything	Only the seen, the heard, the cognized etc.	Only immediate, nondual, direct perception	Empty
Compassion	Silent	Unmanifested, pure potential	I am compassion	Only the sensed, seen, heard etc.	Only arising and ceasing phenomena	The whole Universe is moving
Time	Only now	Not yet manifested	Only Here and Now, forever	Timelessness	Only arising and ceasing phenomena	Eleven fingers
Space	Only here	Not yet manifested	Only Here and Now, omnipresent	No space as there is no one there to perceive it	Only arising and ceasing phenomena	Laughter
Birth	No birth, immortality	Not yet manifested	One Taste	No birth as there is no one there to perceive it	Only arising and ceasing phenomena	Moonlight
Death	No death, immortality	Not yet manifested	One Taste	No death as there is no one there to perceive it	Only arising and ceasing phenomena	Autumn day
Action	Not needed as everything is Perfect	Not yet manifested	God does everything	No doer, no agency, no gain, no cause	Only arising and ceasing phenomena	Total exertion
Suffering	No suffering, only I am is Real	Illusory, only drama	One Taste, freedom	No cause or end to, suffering	Only arising and ceasing phenomena	No gain, NO GAIN

Chart 3

It was interesting to me to notice that I could not pinpoint down anything really in the

sunyata column; the words there appear to be a complete nonsense. And yet, when the insight dawns on you, it is all perfectly clear. It is simply impossible to talk about it, however. So, that is all I can say about it.