

# Recovering the Eye of the Heart

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Our whole business ... in this life is to restore to health the eye of the heart whereby God may be seen. — St. Augustine<sup>1</sup>

For it is the wish of *Wakan-Tanka* [the Great Spirit] that the Light enters into the darkness, that we may see not only with our two eyes, but with the one eye which is of the heart [*Chante Ishta*], and with which we see and know all that is true and good.

— Black Elk<sup>2</sup>

The eye of the heart (the spiritual eye), which is seventy-fold and of which these two sensible eyes are (only) the gleaners. — Rūmī<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, Sermon 88.5.5, quoted in *An Augustine Synthesis*, ed. Erich Przywara (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958), p. 494.

<sup>2</sup> Black Elk, quoted in Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Rūmī, “335—Book IV,” in *The Mathnawī of Jalālu'ddīn Rūmī*, Vol. IV, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (London, UK: Luzac and Company, 1930), p. 291.

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God gives one divine eyes; and only then can one behold Him.  
– Rāmakrishna<sup>4</sup>

The eye with which I see Amida [Buddha] is the same with which  
Amida [Buddha] sees me. – Kenryo Kanamatsu<sup>5</sup>

**A**t the centre of the human being is the heart, the intersection of the macrocosm and the microcosm, where the whole of Reality meets. Among the spiritual traditions of the world, we find unanimous agreement that the tripartite constitution of human beings and that of the cosmos – of which we are but a mirror – consists of Spirit, soul, and body; or the spiritual, psychic, and corporeal states, remembering that the seat of consciousness is in the heart rather than the mind. The ‘heart’ to which the diverse traditional cultures refer is not the physical heart that can be felt in our breast, but a transpersonal faculty where the Divine meets the human, which is often regarded as the seat of consciousness itself. When opened, this organ of spiritual knowing becomes a threshold or gateway between our world and the unseen. It illuminates our spiritual intelligence to disclose the nature of reality and our place in it. The universal recognition of this subtle and supra-individual faculty has been known since time immemorial.

All the religions are in unanimous agreement that the hardening or corrosion of this faculty is the source of all spiritual malaise. With the eclipse of the heart, all the other faculties become fragmented and myopic. Due to our *samsāric* or fallen consciousness, we have lost our capacity for spiritual vision: “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Our condition is such that “Though seeing, they do not see” (Matthew 13:13) or “ever seeing but never perceiving” (Isaiah 6:9).

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<sup>4</sup> Rāmakrishna, ‘The Master’s Birthday Celebration at Dakshineswar’, in *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*: Originally recorded in Bengali by M., a disciple of the Master, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (New York, NY: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1977), p. 183.

<sup>5</sup> Kenryo Kanamatsu, *Naturalness: A Classic of Shin Buddhism* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2002), pp. 12-13.

In the Hindu tradition, it is said that we live like “blind people ... without seeing through the eye[s].”<sup>6</sup> According to a renowned *hadīth*, “Hearts rust like iron, and their polishing is through remembrance of God (*dhikr Allāh*)” and the Qur’ān states: “For indeed it is not the eyes that grow blind but it is the hearts, which are within the bosoms, that grow blind” (22:46). It is through spiritual cleansing that the “eye of the heart” can truly see so that our spiritual illness is able to be healed and our primordial nature restored.

Due to modern Western psychology’s rejection of its sacred and metaphysical roots, the “eye of the heart” has become eclipsed, causing a myriad of mental health challenges to ensue; maladies that cannot be treated by the crippling reductionism of its methods. As American psychologist James J. Gibson (1904–1979), one of the most important contributors to the field of visual perception, has noted:

The conclusions that can be reached from a century of research on perception are insignificant. The knowledge gained ... is incoherent. We have no adequate theory of perception, and what we have found in the search for sensations is a mixed batch of illusions, physiological curiosities, and bodily feelings. The implications are discouraging. A fresh start has to be made.<sup>7</sup>

Wolfgang Smith attests that visual perception pertains to the vertical or spiritual dimension and that “all attempts to understand the phenomenon of visual perception by way of a physics-based science are bound to fail.”<sup>8</sup> For this reason, it is paramount to undergo a cross-cultural analysis of how distinct traditions understand this organ of direct transpersonal knowledge – also known as the *Intellect*. By doing so, we will be able to facilitate an integral psychology or ‘science of the soul’ that honours the full plenitude of what it means to be human.

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<sup>6</sup> *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, quoted in *The Principal Upanishads*, trans. and ed. Swami Nikhilananda (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), p. 246.

<sup>7</sup> James J. Gibson, ‘Conclusions from a Century of Research on Sense Perception’, in *A Century of Psychology as Science*, eds. Sigmund Koch and David E. Leary (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1985), pp. 229-230.

<sup>8</sup> Wolfgang Smith, ‘The Mystery of Visual Perception’, in *The Vertical Ascent: From Particles to the Tripartite Cosmos and Beyond* (Philos-Sophia Initiative Foundation, 2020), pp. 126-127.

The symbolism of the ‘eye of the heart’ is universal, as it can be identified throughout the world’s religions: it is known in Lakota as *chante ishta*; in Sanskrit as *buddhacakṣus* or *dharmacakṣus*; in Hebrew as ‘*ein ha-lev*’; in Arabic as ‘*ayn al-qalb*’; in Persian as *chishm-i dil*. Plato refers to ‘eye of soul’ and St. Augustine to the *oculus cordis*; not to mention the ‘third eye’ of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Dutch Indologist Jan Gonda (1905–1991) notes that “The heart is the organ with which one is able to see what is denied to the physical eye.”<sup>9</sup>

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islamic philosopher and renowned scholar of comparative religion, writes: “The eye of the heart . . . is none other than the immanent intellect, is the faculty with which we are able to see the Invisible World and ultimately God, but it is also the eye with which God sees us.”<sup>10</sup>

Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998) comments on how wide-spanning the symbolism of the heart is within the world’s spiritual traditions: “The eye, owing to its particularly adequate correspondence with the Intellect, lends itself spontaneously to traditional symbolism, and it is to be found—although varying widely in degree of importance—in the symbolic language of all Revelations.”<sup>11</sup>

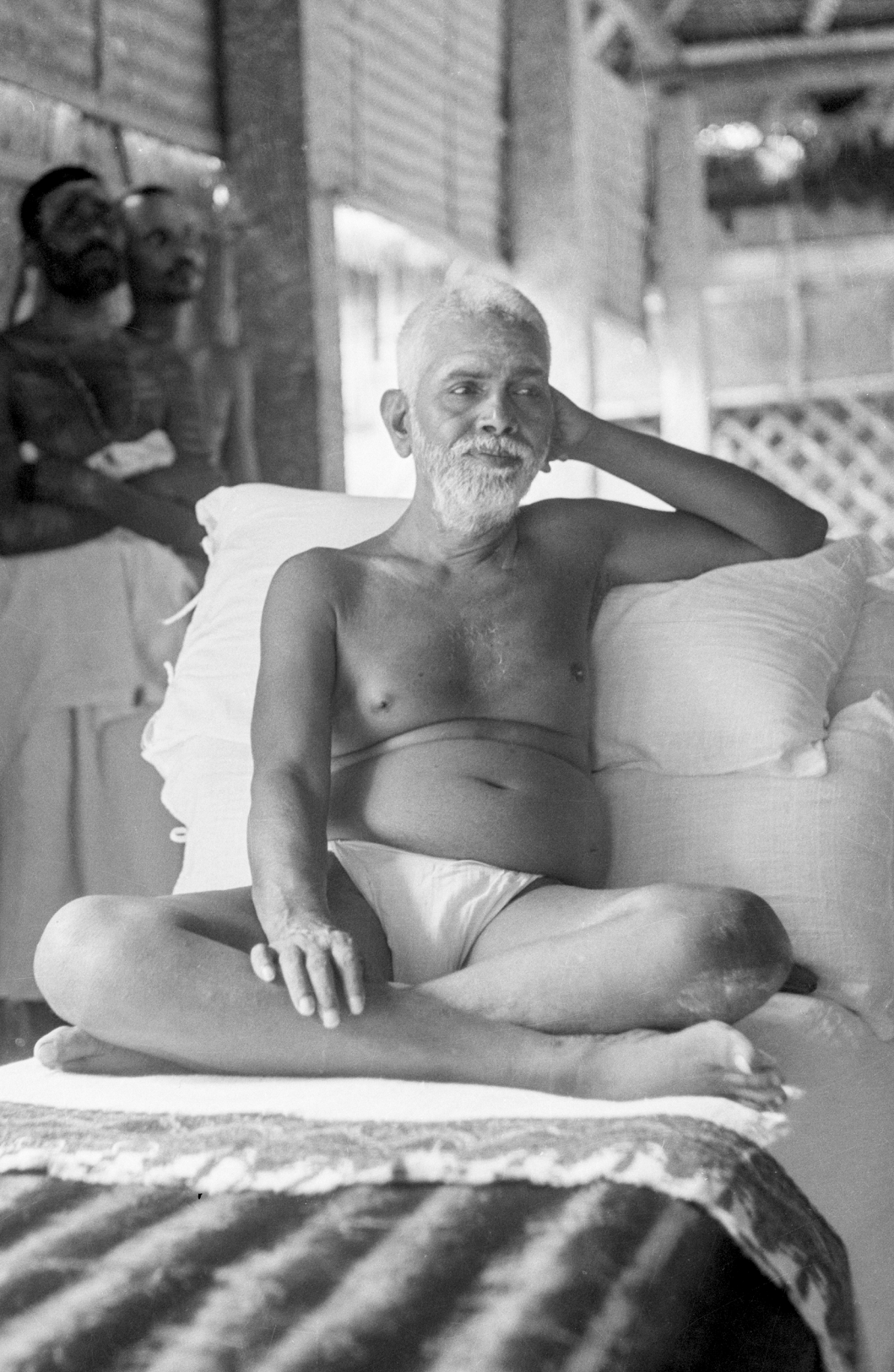
The modern world has categorically ruled out all forms of knowledge that are not derived from rationalism or empirical means, essentially abolishing all ways of knowing that transcend sensory experience and human reason. This does not take into account that such means of knowing are limited to the relative order and can discern nothing of the Absolute. This has fomented the notion that science and religion exist as two incommensurable domains. In earlier eras, whether of the East or West, these domains were understood to be interconnected and mutually influential.

A human being in the traditional world could fluidly cross the boundaries of empirical modes of knowing to spiritual states of awareness without confusion, as they were not viewed as inimical to

<sup>9</sup> Jan Gonda, ‘Some Notes on the Function of the “Heart”’, in *The Vision of the Vedic Poets* (The Hague: Mouton & Company, 1963), p. 276.

<sup>10</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ‘The Throne of the All-Merciful’, in *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. William C. Chittick (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2007), p. 89.

<sup>11</sup> Frithjof Schuon, ‘The Eye of the Heart’, in *The Eye of the Heart: Metaphysics, Cosmology, Spiritual Life* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Books, 1997), p. 3.



each another. Today's predominantly secular mindset has split these domains, making them antagonistic. Yet it is in the transpersonal domain that the most inclusive modes of knowing and levels of reality reside.

The premise of 'scientism' is that sensory experience and the faculty of human reason are the sole arbiters of truth and that they alone can access the truths of the cosmos on their own terms. This predicament has persisted since the Enlightenment project, or the "Age of Reason," from the 17th–18th centuries onwards. In the traditional world, reason was understood to be a bridge between the two realms of logic and transcendence. Modern science has its place if it does not stray beyond the proper confines of its epistemological competence by claiming a monopoly on knowledge to which it is not entitled. It is worth recalling that "science" comes from the Latin word *scientia*, which literally means "knowledge."

Rationalism has levelled the faculty of the Intellect (*Intellectus*) and, at the same time, elevated reason (*ratio*) as the principal faculty of knowledge. Due to the severance of the faculty of reason from higher levels of reality, its scope is radically limited and it cannot lend itself to a holistic understanding of reality. What is often overlooked is that the faculty of reason is unable to guarantee, within itself, its own truth claims and requires an assurance from a level higher than itself. As Maimonides (1138–1204) confirms: "A boundary is undoubtedly set to the human mind which it cannot pass."<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, there is a Qur'anic passage that affirms this same truth: "He knows all that is beyond the reach of a created being's perception as well as all that can be witnessed by a creature's senses or mind—the Great One, the One far above anything that is or could ever be!" (13:9).

The human psyche, according to the perennial psychology, consists of distinct faculties as noted by Boethius (480–525), who presented four levels of intelligence in descending order: Intellect (*Intellectus*), reason (*ratio*), imagination (*imaginalis*), and sense (*sensus*).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Moses Maimonides, 'On the Limit of Man's Intellect', in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. Michael Friedländer (New York, NY: Dover, 1956), p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Lings, 'Metaphysics and the Perennial Philosophy', in *Enduring Utterance: Collected Lectures* (1993–2001), ed. Trevor Banyard (London, UK: Matheson Trust, 2014), p. 4.

Similar interpretations can be found among the spiritual traditions, remembering that the Intellect is above the soul and that it alone is metaphysical. The human faculties are mind or reason, imagination, sentiment, memory and will;<sup>14</sup> or, alternatively, reason, intuition, imagination and memory; “intuition” here refers to Intellect which is the only faculty that can directly apprehend metaphysical truths.<sup>15</sup> Each human faculty corresponds to an interrelated level or degree of reality. In fact, there are multiple degrees of being or reality in both human beings and the cosmos.

The Intellect, as traditionally understood, is a transpersonal faculty that grasps things in themselves. Accordingly, “the Intellect ... is the ‘eye of the heart’ or the organ of direct [supra-formal] knowledge.”<sup>16</sup>

St. John of the Cross (1542–1591), describes it in this way, “the intellect can see objects spiritually just as the eyes can corporally.”<sup>17</sup> It relies on *unmediated* intuition, not on the senses or rationality, which are much more restricted in their capacity to discern reality as it is. The Platonic doctrine of *anamnesis* or “recollection” is conceivably the clearest example of this notion in the pre-modern West, and corresponds to similar epistemologies in all the religions. *Anamnesis* is the faculty of Intellect synonymous with what is widely understood as Spirit (lesser known as “intellection” or “intellectual intuition”).

It is through such recollection that we can apprehend what is integrally human in the context of our place in the cosmos at large. Beyond the Cartesian bifurcation lies transpersonal knowing. Medieval epistemology defined knowledge as “*adaequatio rei et*

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<sup>14</sup> William Stoddart, ‘Situating the Psyche’, in *Psychology and the Perennial Philosophy: Studies in Comparative Religion*, ed. Samuel Bendeck Sotillos (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2013), p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Frithjof Schuon, ‘Outline of a Spiritual Anthropology’, in *From the Divine to the Human*, trans. Gustavo Polit and Deborah Lambert (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Books, 1982), p. 84.

<sup>16</sup> Frithjof Schuon, ‘Hypostatic and Cosmic Numbers’, in *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*, trans. William Stoddart (Bedfont, Middlesex, UK: Perennial Books, 1990), pp. 68-69.

<sup>17</sup> St. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book 2, Chapter 25, quoted in John of the Cross: Selected Writings, ed. Kieran Kavanaugh (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 136.



*intellectus*—the understanding of the knower must be adequate to the thing to be known.”<sup>18</sup>

The Intellect has been described as ‘naturally supernatural’ and ‘supernaturally natural,’<sup>19</sup> since “the Intellect [can know] everything that is knowable.”<sup>20</sup> That the heart-intellect is the centre of the human psyche is taught by Meister Eckhart (1260–1328): “There is something in the soul that is uncreated and uncreatable ... [and] this is the intellect.”<sup>21</sup>

St. Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022) provides a similar teaching: “Search inside yourself with your intellect so as to find the place of the heart, where all the powers of the soul reside.”<sup>22</sup> Maimonides recognised the noetic faculty of the Intellect when he stated: “God is the *intellectus*.”<sup>23</sup>

Correspondingly, Rūmī (1207–1273) affirms that “the Universal Intellect is the founder of every thing.”<sup>24</sup> We recall the Prophet Muhammad’s words: “The first thing that God created was the Intellect” or “The first thing God created was the Spirit.” This conveys that the Intellect (*al-‘aql*) and the Spirit (*ar-Rūḥ*) refer ultimately to the same reality. In Hinduism and Buddhism, the Spirit or Intellect is known by the Sanskrit term *Buddhi*.

References made to the three-fold constitution of the human being can be found in St Paul’s first epistle to the Thessalonians: “May the

<sup>18</sup> E.F. Schumacher, “‘Adequatio’: I”, in *A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> Frithjof Schuon, ‘Modes of Spiritual Realization’, in *The Eye of the Heart* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Books, 1997), p. 129.

<sup>20</sup> Frithjof Schuon, ‘The Alchemy of the Sentiments’, in *Logic and Transcendence*, trans. Peter N. Townsend (London, UK: Perennial Books, 1984), p. 159.

<sup>21</sup> Meister Eckhart, quoted in *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, trans. and ed. Maurice O’C Walshe (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009), p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> St. Symeon the New Theologian, ‘The Three Methods of Prayer’, in *The Philokalia, Vol. 4: The Complete Text*; Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, trans. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 72-72.

<sup>23</sup> Moses Maimonides, ‘On the Terms: The Intellectus, the Intelligens and the Intelligibile’, in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. Michael Friedländer (New York, NY: Dover, 1956), p. 100.

<sup>24</sup> Rūmī, quoted in A.J. Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi* (London, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 152.



God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may *your spirit and soul and body* be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

This tripartite structure of Spirit/Intellect, soul, and body is known in Latin as *Spiritus/Intellectus, anima, and corpus*; in Greek as *Pneuma/Nous, psyche, and soma*; and in Arabic as *Rūḥ/Aql, nafs, and jism*. The Arabic term ‘*aql*’ is used to denote both reason and intellect, although the distinction and interrelation between them (the first being horizontal and the second vertical) is always recognised. *Rūḥ* and ‘*Aql*’ are found to be synonymous with Spirit and Intellect. The *nafs* (soul, self or ego) is often conflated with *Rūḥ* or Spirit, as is evidenced by these terms being used interchangeably; however, they represent two very different ontological functions of the self. The ‘heart’ and the ‘intellect’, in the traditional context, are also both synonymous with Spirit; for this reason, they are sometimes referred to as the ‘heart-intellect’.

In the Islamic tradition, the Spirit (*ar-Rūḥ*), while transcendent, is also immanent within the soul (*nafs*) of the human being (*al-insān*), and it is when the faculty of the Intellect (*al-‘aql*) is restored in the heart (*al-qalb*) that our primordial nature (*fiṭrah*) can be fully realised at the highest level.

In the Hindu tradition, the heart (*hridaya*) contains both the individual soul (*jīvātmā*) and the Self (*Ātmā*) or Supreme Self (*Paramātmā*). Spiritual deliverance (*moksha* or *mukti*) requires the reintegration of the individual soul (*jīvātmā*) in the unconditioned Self (*Ātmā*). From the perspective of the Absolute, this distinction only applies at the level of manifestation and individuality, and is ultimately an illusion (*māyā*) because of one’s limited understanding or ignorance (*avidyā*) of the nature of things.

The heart-intellect is the metaphysical centre of the human microcosm. Titus Burckhardt (1908–1984) writes: “Amongst [the human] faculties, the heart (*al-qalb*) is central, for it is the ‘place’ where the Transcendent Realities enter into contact with man; it is the organ of the intuition and Divine revelation (*at-tajallī*).”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Titus Burckhardt, quoted in ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, *Universal Man*, trans. Titus Burckhardt; English trans. Angela Culme-Seymour (Roxburgh, Scotland: Beshara Publications, 1995), p. xxiii.

Likewise, Martin Lings (1909–2005) touches upon the spiritual dimension of this faculty “in attributing vision to the heart and in using this word to indicate not only the bodily organ of that name but also what this corporeal centre gives access to, namely the centre of the soul, which itself is the gateway to a higher ‘heart’, namely the Spirit.”<sup>26</sup>

The saints and sages of sundry spiritual traditions inform us that the heart is the dwelling place of the Divine. This is noted by Angelus Silesius (1624–1677): “My heart the shrine” and “My heart is the high throne.”<sup>27</sup>

Turkish poet and Sufi mystic Yūnus Emre (1238–1320) avows: “The heart is God’s own throne.”<sup>28</sup> In the well-known *ḥadīth qudsī* it is expressed as follows: “The heavens and the earth cannot contain Me, but the heart of my believing servant does contain Me.”

In the Hindu tradition, it is written “I am the Self ... seated in the heart of all beings” (Bhagavad Gītā 10:20). In the *Lotus Sūtra* (Sanskrit: *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka*) of Buddhism there is almost a verbatim correlate: “The abode of the Tathāgata is the great compassionate heart within all living beings.”<sup>29</sup> This is akin to the Christian tradition when it is written: “The Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21).

The inseparable connection between the heart and the realisation of human identity in the Self (*Ātmā*) is underscored by Ramana Maharshi (1879–1950) who said: “The Heart is the only Reality. The mind is only a transient phase. To remain as one’s Self is to enter the Heart.”<sup>30</sup> This idea is elaborated upon in the Chāndogya Upanishad:

This *Ātmā* [the Self], which dwells in the heart, is smaller than a grain of rice, smaller than a grain of barley, smaller than a

<sup>26</sup> Martin Lings, ‘The Heart’, in *What is Sufism?* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Angelus Silesius, ‘Book Three’, in *The Cherubic Wanderer*, trans. Maria Shradý (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 78.

<sup>28</sup> Yūnus Emre, quoted in *The City of the Heart: Yunus Emre’s Verses of Wisdom and Love*, trans. Süha Faiz (Shaftesbury, Dorset, UK: Element Books, 1992), p. 88.

<sup>29</sup> *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, trans. Bunnō Katō, Yoshirō Tamura, and Kōjirō Miyasaka (New York, NY: Weatherhill, 1975), p. 192.

<sup>30</sup> Ramana Maharshi, ‘Talk 252—September 30th, 1936’, in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* (Tiruvannamalai, India: Sri Ramanasramam, 1996), p. 210.

grain of mustard, smaller than a grain of millet, smaller than the germ which is in the grain of millet; this *Ātmā* [the Self], which dwells in the heart, is also greater than the earth [the sphere of gross manifestation], greater than the atmosphere [the sphere of subtle manifestation], greater than the sky [the sphere of formless manifestation], greater than all the worlds together [that is, beyond all manifestation, being the unconditioned].<sup>31</sup>

Myōan Eisai (1141–1215), the founder of the Rinzai sect of Buddhism, instructed us to: “Find Buddha in your own heart, whose essential nature is the Buddha himself.”<sup>32</sup>

Through the spiritual practice of “remembrance,” we allow the Divine to take a seat upon our own heart, which then becomes God’s throne. St. Makarios of Egypt (c. 300–c. 390) explains:

If you become God’s throne and He Himself takes His seat on it; if your whole soul is a spiritual eye, all light; if you nourish yourself on the sustenance of the Spirit and drink living water and the spiritual wine that rejoices the heart; if you clothe your soul in ineffable light—if inwardly you attain experience and full assurance of all these things, then you will live the truly eternal life, reposing in Christ while still in this present world.<sup>33</sup>

The transformative and healing power of opening the heart-intellect is expressed by St. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359):

He who participates in the divine energy, himself becomes, to some extent, light; he is united to the light, and by that light he sees in full awareness all that remains hidden to those who have not this grace; thus, he transcends not only the bodily senses, but also all that can be known by the intellect ... for the pure in

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<sup>31</sup> Chāndogya Upanishad, 3.14.3, quoted in René Guénon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedānta*, trans. Richard C. Nicholson (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), pp. 33-34.

<sup>32</sup> Myōan Eisai, quoted in *Honen, the Buddhist Saint: His Life and Teaching*, trans. Harper Havelock Coates and Ryugaku Ishizuka (Kyoto: Chionin, 1925), p. vi.

<sup>33</sup> St. Makarios of Egypt, ‘The Raising of the Intellect’, in *The Philokalia, Vol. 3: The Complete Text*; Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, trans. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 317.

heart see God ... who, being Light, dwells in them and reveals Himself to those who love Him, to His beloved.<sup>34</sup>

We are told that “The heart is deep” (Psalm 64:6) or, as St. Makarios states, “the heart is an immeasurable abyss.”<sup>35</sup> The heart is, as St. Philotheos of Sinai (9th or 10th century) states, the “place of God” which, when the Divine dwells within it, becomes “the heaven of the heart.”<sup>36</sup>

In the Jewish tradition, the Divine Intellect will then dwell in its proper abode, within the spiritual heart of the human being, where it becomes the ‘eye of the heart’ (*‘ein ha-lev*): “In the hearts of all that are wise-hearted, I have put wisdom” (Exodus 31:6). The Gospel refers to this “heart-intellect” here: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

The Lakota holy man Hehaka Sapa, more commonly known as Black Elk (1863–1950), provides a stunning passage outlining the “eye of the heart”:

I am blind and do not see the things of this world; but when the Light comes from Above, it enlightens my heart and I can see, for the Eye of my heart (*Chante Ista*) sees everything. The heart is a sanctuary at the centre of which there is a little space, wherein the Great Spirit dwells, and this is the Eye (*Ista*). This is the Eye of the Great Spirit by which He sees all things and through which we see Him. If the heart is not pure, the Great Spirit cannot be seen, and if you should die in this ignorance, your soul cannot return immediately to the Great Spirit, but it must be purified by wandering about in the world. In order to know the centre of the heart where the Great Spirit dwells you must be pure and good,

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<sup>34</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, quoted in Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), p. 224.

<sup>35</sup> St. Makarios of Egypt, ‘The Raising of the Intellect’, in *The Philokalia, Vol. 3: The Complete Text*; Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, trans. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 321.

<sup>36</sup> St. Philotheos of Sinai, ‘Forty Texts on Watchfulness’, in *The Philokalia, Vol. 3: The Complete Text*; Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, trans. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 17.

and live in the manner that the Great Spirit has taught us. The man who is thus pure contains the Universe in the pocket of his heart (*Chante Ognaka*).<sup>37</sup>

Within the Christian tradition, we find the idea of a ‘single eye’ in the Gospel: “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (6:22). Correspondingly, the opposite is also the case: “But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (6:23). It is the Divine that illuminates “the eyes of [one’s] understanding being enlightened” (Ephesians 1:8).

Eckhart writes: “The eye in which I see God is the same eye in which God sees me. My eye and God’s eye are one eye.”<sup>38</sup> Silesius adds that “The heart is like the eye.”<sup>39</sup> The person needs to be pure for the ‘eye of the heart’ to open – “if your eye is simple, the whole body shall be full of light” (Matthew 6:22). Likewise, as St. Hesychios the Priest (d. c. 433) declared: “The Heart sees the God of gods in its own depths.”<sup>40</sup>

Another example is found in the Sufi Maṣūʾ al-Ḥallāj (858–922), when he poetically writes: “I see my Lord with my heart’s eye / And I say to Him ‘Who are You?’ He tells me ‘You!’”<sup>41</sup> Rūmī expressed a similar viewpoint: “I gazed into my own heart; / There I saw Him.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Black Elk, quoted in Frithjof Schuon, *The Feathered Sun: Plains Indians in Art and Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Books, 1990), p. 51.

<sup>38</sup> Meister Eckhart, ‘Sermon Twelve’, in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 270.

<sup>39</sup> Angelus Silesius, ‘Book Six’, in *The Cherubic Wanderer*, trans. Maria Shradly (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 132.

<sup>40</sup> St. Hesychios the Priest, ‘On Watchfulness and Holiness’, in *The Philokalia, Vol. 1: The Complete Text*; Compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, trans. and ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London, UK: Faber and Faber, 1983), p. 185.

<sup>41</sup> Maṣūʾ al-Ḥallāj, quoted in Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, Vol. 3: The Teaching of al-Ḥallāj, trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 301.

<sup>42</sup> Rūmī, quoted in *Selected Poems from the Dīvāni Shamsi Tabrīz*, ed. and trans. Reynolds A. Nicholson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 73.

The eighth-century sage Śaṅkara speaks of this ‘third eye’, the ‘eye of knowledge’ (*jñāna-chakshus*), within the Hindu tradition: “The yogi, whose intellect is perfect, contemplates all things as abiding in himself and thus, by the eye of Knowledge [*jñāna-chakshus*], he perceives that everything is *Ātmā* [the Self]”<sup>43</sup> or “The eye of Knowledge contemplates Brahma as It is in Itself, abounding in Bliss ... but the eye of ignorance discovers It not, discerns It not, even as a blind man perceives not the sensible light.”<sup>44</sup>

The Sage of Arunachala notes this as well: “The seeing Self is the Eye, and that Eye is the Eye of Infinity.”<sup>45</sup>

Marco Pallis (1895–1989) presents this idea from a Buddhist perspective: “Knowledge is only possible inasmuch as the ‘eye of *bodhi*’ (the pure intellect), in the subject, perceives, in the object, the ‘bodhic message.’”<sup>46</sup> The Diamond Sutra (Sanskrit: *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*) relates the notion of “the Buddha’s five eyes”:

What do you think, Subhuti, does the fleshly eye of the Tathagata exist?—Subhuti replied: So it is, O Lord, the fleshly eye of the Tathagata does exist.—The Lord asked: What do you think, Subhuti, does the Tathagata’s heavenly eye exist, his wisdom eye, his Dharma-eye, his Buddha-eye?—Subhuti replied: So it is, O Lord, the heavenly eye of the Tathagata does exist, and so does his wisdom eye, his Dharma-eye, and his Buddha-eye.<sup>47</sup>

According to Zen or Ch’an Buddhism, Buddha Shakyamuni stated: “I have the secret of the right Dharma-Eye, the ineffably subtle insight into Nirvana which opens the door of mystic vision of the Formless

<sup>43</sup> Śaṅkara, quoted in René Guénon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedānta*, trans. Richard C. Nicholson (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), p. 168.

<sup>44</sup> Shankara, quoted in René Guénon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedānta*, trans. Richard C. Nicholson (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), p. 172.

<sup>45</sup> Ramana Maharshi, ‘Forty Verses, Verse 4’, in *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, ed. Arthur Osborne (Boston, MA: Weiser Books, 1997), p. 72.

<sup>46</sup> Marco Pallis, ‘Living One’s Karma’, in *A Buddhist Spectrum: Contributions to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2003), p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, trans. Edward Conze (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 59.

Form, not depending upon words and letters, but transmitted outside of all scriptures.”<sup>48</sup>

This perspective informs a very different understanding of religion, yet it is necessary to recall anew that the etymological root of the English word ‘religion’ is the Latin *religare*, meaning to ‘to re-bind’ or ‘to bind back’ – by implication, to the Divine that is at once transcendent and immanent. This is exemplified by numerous saints and sages, and by what has been termed the “religion of the heart” which Rūmī expresses thus: “The religion of Love is apart from all religions: for lovers, the (only) religion and creed is – God.”<sup>49</sup>

This is also captured in the often-cited passage of Ibn ‘Arabī (1165–1240), also known as ‘the Greatest Master’ (*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*): “My heart has become capable of every form: it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks, and a temple for idols and the pilgrim’s Ka’ba, and the tables of the Tora and the book of the Koran. I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love’s camels take, that is my religion and my faith.”<sup>50</sup>

Our gradual forgetfulness of the Divine, being none other than the loss of the sense of the sacred, has caused the Intellect or the “eye of the heart” to become veiled, leading to a plethora of individual and collective problems for humanity. It is only through the faculty of the heart-intellect, as Plato (429–347) points out, that we can know and identify with the Real: “There is an eye of the soul which ... is far more precious than ten thousand bodily eyes, for by it alone is truth seen.”<sup>51</sup>

As the Prophet of Islam said, “My eyes sleep, but my heart is awake” or as we find in the Song of Solomon, “I sleep, but my heart waketh” (5:2). What is ‘awake’ is the inward eye of the heart, which can see the fullness of reality as it truly is. The human being is called

<sup>48</sup> Buddha Shakyamuni, quoted in John C.H. Wu, *The Golden Age of Zen: Zen Masters of the T’ang Dynasty* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2003), p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> Rūmī, ‘1770—Book II’, in *The Mathnawī of Jalālu’d-dīn Rūmī*, Vol. II, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (London, UK: Luzac and Company, 1926), p. 312.

<sup>50</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, quoted in *The Tarjumān al-Ashwāq: A Collection of Mystical Odes* by Muḥyi’d-dīn ibn al-‘Arabī, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (London, UK: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911), p. 67.

<sup>51</sup> Plato, ‘The Republic, Book Seven, 527’, in *The Republic and Other Works*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1989), p. 219.



to “Lift up your eyes on high and behold who has created these [things]” (Isaiah 40:26); which occurs through what the English poet William Blake (1757–1827) has famously termed the “cleansed doors of perception.”<sup>52</sup>

Unless we have become pure, our spiritual vision is obstructed as Eckhart says: “However small a thing it is which sticks to the soul, we shall not see God.”<sup>53</sup> What is often missing here is the fact that we cannot enact the Psalmist’s injunction to “take off the veil from mine eyes ...” (119:18) without first adhering to an authentic spiritual form. The veil that obscures the heart-intellect exists for the protection of the nescient individual and cannot be lifted prematurely without doing harm, and this is taught in many of the world’s sacred scriptures.

Through the awakening of the ‘eye of the heart’, the human psyche may be able to abide in a state that approximates our primordial nature. The active polishing of the heart and its subsequent healing allows for our faculties to be reintegrated in order restore a sense of the sacred which is to see the Divine or transpersonal Self everywhere.

This is made evident in the Hindu tradition where it refers to one “who sees me everywhere and sees all things in me” (Bhagavad Gītā 6:30) or, in the Islamic tradition, “Wherever you turn, there is the face of God” (Qur’ān 2:115) or “The seven heavens and the earth, and everyone within them, glorify Him. There is nothing that does not glorify Him in praise” (Qur’ān 17:44). To be fully human is to recognise our fundamental relationship with the Divine; which is to say that our true identity *in divinis* is the primordial nature (*fiṭrah*), the “image of God” (*imago Dei*), Buddha-nature (*Buddha-dhātu*), or the Self (*Ātmā*).

A false identification with the empirical ego creates an unstable mind and unpredictable behaviour. As the ego cannot know itself or what lies beyond it, the human soul requires a transpersonal dimension to help raise its vision and to recover its intuition. The perennial psychology includes the categories of Spirit, soul, and body, along

<sup>52</sup> “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.” (William Blake, ‘A Memorable Fancy’, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* [Boston, MA: John W. Luce and Company, 1906], p. 26).

<sup>53</sup> Meister Eckhart, Sermon 69, quoted in *Meister Eckhart, Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 311.

with their corresponding degrees and modes of reality. Although the “eye of the heart” does not require therapy, as it pertains to the metaphysical order, it is the hardening of our heart and the darkening of the human psyche that needs to be reversed so that we can truly see once again. It is through active participation and commitment to one of the religious traditions of the world that wayfarers can awaken the heart-intellect through remedies offered by a ‘science of the soul’.

The mental health benefits of this alchemical process are immeasurable, for we come to be granted “the peace ... which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7) or, as Black Elk stated, “peace ... comes within the souls of men when they realise their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its Powers.” When the “eye of the heart” is recovered, we “realise that at the center of the universe dwells *Wankan-Tanka* [the Great Spirit], and that this centre is really everywhere, it is within each of us.”<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, an authentic sacred psychology must be informed by a traditional understanding of the Intellect; otherwise, we cut off any prospects of “restor[ing] to health the eye of the heart whereby God may be seen.”<sup>55</sup> ▲

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<sup>54</sup> Black Elk, quoted in Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), p. 115.

<sup>55</sup> St. Augustine, Sermon 88.5.5, quoted in *An Augustine Synthesis*, ed. Erich Przywara (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958), p. 494.

## A Few Advaitic And Zen Hi-Coo III

Kevan Myers

No words can convey  
 what I see and touch  
 each moment of each day

Why am I surprised to find  
 the day is new  
 each time I look outside