

“Is there a difference?”

Iconic Images of Suffering in Buddhism and Christianity

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This article explores the different ways in which suffering is represented iconographically in Christianity and in Buddhism. The disparate images of Christ nailed to a cross and Buddha sitting serenely under a tree suggest diametrically opposed attitudes toward the role of suffering in religion. In line with the suggestion posed by a Tibetan lama to the author, this article seeks to demonstrate that these various approaches to suffering—seeking redemption through suffering versus transcendence of suffering—are at a deeper level not in actuality different. This rapprochement is achieved through appealing to Jungian and post-Jungian theories in situating Christ and Buddha within a singular process of psychospiritual transformation.

Framing the Question

Several years ago, while on Buddhist pilgrimage in Bodhgaya, India, I was granted an interview with a lama in the Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism. This lama's manner was so relaxed and welcoming that I felt no compunction about asking him a question that had concerned me for some time. I said, “I have long been troubled by the difference between a Western-style redemption through suffering and a Buddhist-style transcendence of suffering.” The lama's response issued from his whole Being, and I will never forget the delivery, intonation, and physical and energetic presence with which he gently asked, “Is there a difference?” With that response I felt something align immediately in me and I spontaneously uttered back, “No, of course not.” What before had seemed so paradoxical to me, now did not. I felt as if Manjushri, the Lord of Wisdom, had wielded the sword that cuts through illusion to heal my philosophical fissure.

My concern over the difference between redemption through suffering and transcendence of suffering had arisen in the early 90s when I started studying existential phenomenological psychology. I had earlier adopted a Tibetan Buddhist practice, and I found that Buddhist philosophy provided me a comprehensive map within which I could situate all of the various western philosophical and psychological concepts I was learning. Later, a three-year Jungian training analysis led me to question how my own neurotic patterns had participated in my decision to take up a foreign spiritual practice, and in the ways I was interpreting its teachings and relating them

to my life. In particular, I fell sway to James Hillman's suggestion that, in its westernized appropriation, Buddhism promotes a transcendence of suffering without giving proper attention to the work of soul, to the need to tend our shadow.¹ I thought about Christ on the cross, crucified for our sins, the central image of Christianity, and an image, most decidedly, of redemption through suffering. In contrast, the peaceful, smiling Buddha sits with his hand outstretched in the earth touching gesture, an image of complete serenity, the transcendence of all suffering. "Is there a difference?" The lama's question-as-answer, if applied to these representative images themselves, suggests not. Aided by Jungian and post-Jungian thought, this paper seeks to situate these disparate images within a singular understanding so as to find rapprochement between them.

Distinguishing Soul from Spirit

At one level, the striking difference between these two iconic images can be traced to opposing philosophical assumptions and their soteriological solutions. In Christianity, an external God creates man, while in Buddhism there is no external god—all that exists is spontaneous arising, in the same way that a flower grows organically from a seed, given the right causes and conditions. In line with this distinction, Christianity espouses the existence of an eternal, individual soul that will go either to Heaven or Hell; Buddhism makes explicit the illusory nature of soul (*anatta*) and the illusory nature of an inherently existing individual self.² When possessed of an individual soul, we must suffer to refine it as a means of seeking redemption. When we have neither an individual soul nor a personal god, we need only come to recognize our own lack of substantiality to transcend all suffering. Jesus, the external god made flesh, suffers to save our souls, and thereby dies nailed to a wooden cross. Siddhartha, sensing the vast interconnectedness of all beings, finds the solution to suffering within himself. Thus we find Siddhartha, scientist of the mind, sitting peacefully under a tree.

If we take these differing perspectives toward soul and spirit literally, we are left without any commonality within which we might draw connections between Christ on the cross and Buddha under the tree. Suppose, however, we take soul and spirit less literally, as psychologist James Hillman has suggested.^{3,4} For Hillman, soul and spirit are not entities or energies; rather, they are psychological perspectives. According to this view, soul is the province of the underworld, the chthonic depths of heavy emotionality and

pathologizing. It is embodied, dark, and chaotic. In opposition to soul, spirit is light and ephemeral, logical, reasonable, and well ordered. These alterative perspectives, soul and spirit, constitute alterative orientations through which we can view the world and approach it. In particular, soul is the perspective through which we catch sight of our suffering; by entering into soul, we seek and gain redemption. Spirit is the perspective through which we enter mental abstraction, removing ourselves from the impermanence of our bodies to seek transcendence in an ephemeral realm. If we focus on one of these human capacities at the expense of the other, failing to integrate them in our approach to ourselves and the world, something is lost.

Connecting Transcendence to Transformation

One critical element in this discussion is the nature of transcendence itself. *Transcendence* is a function of spirit, signifying a rising above the world and the body in pursuit of immortal, ethereal realms. In contrast to transcendence, *transformation* engages the depths as we sit with our emotions, grieve our losses, and work with the stuff of existence to knead it and fashion something new from it. Transformation, governed by soul, produces change inherent *within* the same level. If we transcend without transformation, we leave behind the bodily, emotional depths of our being, leaving us vulnerable to repression and unconscious acting out. If we attempt to transform without gaining transcendence, we wallow interminably in our pain and suffering. But these two functions come together when we recognize that true transcendence arises in and through transformation, and transformation unfolds most effectively when we contact the transcendental in it. In this view, the images of Christ on the cross and Buddha under the tree reflect different aspects of the same principle of transcendence through transformation.

It is easy to see this principle in the story of Christ, who resurrects and ascends to Heaven following extreme physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering. For Buddha, transformation occurs in the confrontation of his own personal demons through meditation practice. A common misconception of Buddhist meditation is that it entails entering into a trance state far removed from the world, i.e., a state of pure transcendence.² In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Consider, as illustration, Bhante Gunaratana's description of the Buddhist vipassana meditation practice:

Throw a stone into a stream. The running water would smooth the surface, but the inner part remains unchanged. Take that stone and place it in the intense fires of a forge, and the whole stone changes inside and outside. It all melts. Civilization changes man on the outside. Meditation softens him within, through and through.⁶

It is remarkable how closely this description conforms to the alchemical image employed by Carl Jung to describe the processes of psychological transformation.⁷ The alchemists cooked base metals in a pot to convert them to gold. When our own base elements, the ore of our psyche, are provided a container, and heat is applied, they subsequently are transformed in a process Hillman refers to as *soul-making*.⁸ This is the process that psychological analysis offers, with the consulting room being the pot, and the presence of the analyst the heat.

Siddhartha achieves the serene, peaceful state of Buddhahood by directly experiencing his own mind, and its attendant suffering, uncompromisingly. As with analytic psychotherapy, the process of meditation provides a container for whatever might arise. Our attention and awareness act as the heat that cooks our habitual patterns and neuroses, transforming them in the process. Interestingly, a traditional metaphor used in Tibetan Buddhism applies the same image with regard to receiving the dharma teachings. If students are to take in the truth of how things are and process it effectively, they must avoid the “three defects of the pot.”⁹ If the pot is turned over, the teachings don’t enter, signifying that the student is not listening. If the pot is cracked, the teachings are heard but forgotten. If the pot is poisoned, the student’s previous attitudes or preconceived ideas distort the truth in what is said. Our pot must be upright, sound, and empty to provide the proper containment that we might cook the *prima materia* of the mind and transform our suffering into peace.

Therefore, even in Buddhism, it is through the process of transformation that transcendence is achieved. This reality is amusingly reinforced in the story of a lecture given by Tibetan meditation master Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche after he came to Boulder in the late 1960s.¹⁰ A large number of spiritual seekers had paid a sizable sum to enter the lecture hall. As the crowd settled down, Trungpa asked how many of them were new to the spiritual path. When a large number of hands went up, he advised them to leave and get their money back, noting how difficult, painful, and harrowing the spiritual path is. However, he advised, for those who have already started, it

is best to finish. While technically there is no soul in Buddhist philosophy, when we understand soul as a perspective, we see that clearly there is *soul-making* in Buddhist practice.

Religious Allegory and Psychopathologizing

We have seen that the central iconic images of Buddhism and Christianity both imply soul and spirit when these dimensions are understood as perspectives rather than substantially existing things. For Hillman, the narrative structure of religious allegory (and its icons) always provides a container for psychopathology, which he glosses etymologically as meaning “the suffering of the soul,” or “the soul’s suffering of meaning.”¹¹ But, similar to his treatment of soul and spirit, Hillman rejects the notion that psychopathology exists in a solidly existing way, choosing instead to refer to a process of pathologizing. As Hillman describes it,

I am introducing the term *pathologizing* to mean the psyche’s autonomous ability to create illness, morbidity, disorder, abnormality, and suffering in any aspect of its behavior and to experience and imagine life through this deformed and afflicted perspective.¹²

For Hillman, pathologizing is a perfectly normal activity. A disturbed existence only arises when we adopt pathologizing as a habitual pattern. The image of the crucifixion most vividly presents pathologizing in the guise of emotional and physical torment. Writing of this image, he states:

The allegory of suffering and its imagery has functioned so successfully to contain the pathologizing that one tends to miss the psychopathology that is actually so blatant in a configuration at once distorted, grotesque, bizarre, and even perverse: Golgotha, place of skulls; betrayal of money, Barabbas the murderer, the thieves and gambling soldiers; the mock purple robes and scorning laughter; the nails, lance, and thorns; the broken legs, bleeding wounds, sour sop; persecutory victimization along the route; women lovingly holding a greening corpse and their post-mortem hallucinatory visions. Quite an extraordinary condensation and overdetermination of psychopathological motifs.¹³

As an archetypal psychologist, Hillman's stated goal is to break up the en-crusted allegory so that other aspects of the Christ image, such as love, and other forms of psychopathologizing, can be expressed.

A vivid, contemporary illustration of Hillman's point is found in the example of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*.¹⁴ This movie takes the arrest and crucifixion of Christ out of their larger context, focusing exclusively on his intense suffering. In an interview with Diane Sawyer, the filmmaker discussed how his own experiences of pathologizing—including extreme addictive tendencies, depression, and suicidal ideation—led him to surrender to Christ.¹⁵ This personal history may provide a clue as to what led Gibson to render the story of Jesus' crucifixion in so gruesome and explicitly violent a manner as to prompt a *New York Times* critic to declare "this film seems to arise less from love than from wrath, and to succeed more in assaulting the spirit than in uplifting it."¹⁶ During the interview, Gibson admits to having issued the following threat to a critic: "I want to kill him, I want his intestines on a stick, I want to kill his dog."¹⁷ In reflecting back on that incident, he expresses no remorse for the threat, flippantly retracting the part about the dog. Is it a coincidence that it is Mel Gibson's own hand in the movie holding the spike that is hammered into Jesus's hand? Is this film—made for 25-30 million dollars out of Gibson's own pocket—the filmmaker's attempt to contain his own pathologizing? Does its extraordinary popularity with evangelical groups convey its efficacy in doing the same for them?

Cooking the Image

When religion breaks down and can no longer contain a culture's pathologizing, Hillman suggests, then "complexes search for new Gods".¹⁸ As the vitality of Christianity has been on the decline in the west, these unleashed complexes have resulted in the rise of various psychotherapies and New Age practices. While either religion or psychotherapy can contain psychopathology, taken up in the right spirit, either can serve to transform it. A genuine encounter with God, or with the nature of mind, can generate a greater sense of wholeness and deepen one's understanding of the underlying spiritual message that is at the core of religious allegory. If we fail to establish an authentic encounter with the living Buddha or living Christ,¹⁹ then we might misconstrue their iconic images in a pathologizing way: Christ becomes a hell realm being, Buddha a denizen of the god realms. We project our own fantasies, perversions, inadequacies, hopes, longings,

and self-hatred onto our deities. Through spiritual practice, however, we are able to recover the authentic experience of Buddha in his self-mastery and Christ in his total surrender to the will of God.

Contemplating the image of Christ on the cross provides an opportunity to connect with our own suffering and awaken in our hearts compassion for ourselves and for others. A problem arises when we keep the divine relegated to the function of an external agency, a realm from which we are granted blessings, while we ourselves remain powerless. If Christ becomes a representation of our *own* divine nature, our own Christ consciousness, then reflecting on this image empowers us. We can connect with the depths of our suffering, touch our grief, and transform it. This process is very similar to the Buddhist contemplation of the hell realm beings, the descriptions of which depict forms of suffering even more intense than what Jesus endures, and for much longer durations.²⁰ These images serve as tools for awakening compassion, as well as motivating our spiritual practice by conveying the intensity of suffering that can arise if we go to the end of our lives without having purified our souls or trained our minds.

The use of iconic images as containers for pathology is an explicit part of the Vajrayana Buddhist path. These images, called yidams, are depictions of deities that represent enlightened aspects of our own minds.²¹ The wrathful yidams—with multiple eyes, garlands of human skulls, all manner of hideous features, and resting in a bed of flames—represent specific enlightened, wrathful energies. By visualizing such an image in meditation, we project our own neurotic energy onto it, amplify that energy, and transform it. This transformation uncovers the originally pure energy that gives rise to all mental states, for it is only when we attach to those energies that they become pathological.²² As such, this form of transformation is a matter of revealing or recovering our true nature.

Psychospiritual Transformation

We have seen that although the two central iconic images of Buddhism and Christianity are outwardly different, they both partake of transformation and transcendence. The more psychological, soul dimension is vividly aroused in the crucifixion image, while spiritual serenity is suggested by the image of Buddha. But we would make a mistake to identify the psychological *only* with soul, for etymologically psychology means the study of soul or *spirit*.²³ Similarly, as we have seen, the spiritual path includes elements of soul-making. Each interpenetrates the other in the manner of yin and

yang. Therefore, I prefer to use the term *psychospiritual* as one that explicitly embraces both psyche (soul) and spirit. What happens when we view the images of Buddha and Christ from the perspective of psychospiritual development, wherein soul and spirit are understood to travel in tandem and braid together in intricate ways? And, in contrast, what happens if we emphasize only one at the exclusion of the other?

It is useful here to invoke Jung's notion of *individuation*, which is a process of developing as an individual, wherein one reintegrates those aspects of the self from which he or she is split off.²⁴ This reintegration extends beyond the narrow confines of ego, pointing to the larger dimensions of the person characterized by the archetype of the Self. Edinger characterizes the Self as "the ordering and unifying center of the total psyche (conscious and unconscious) just as the ego is the center of the conscious personality."²⁵ In his book, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self* (1959),²⁶ Jung goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the figure of Christ is a symbol of the Self.²⁷ Edinger suggests "when the Christian myth is examined carefully in the light of analytic psychology, the conclusion is inescapable that the underlying meaning of Christianity is the quest for individuation."²⁸ In this process, the ego becomes increasingly related to the Self without being identified with it, and in this particular instance, Jesus, as son of God, is both Self and ego. We might say that to individuate is to be crucified along the ego-Self axis.

Because the infant begins life completely identified with the Self, or the divine, a period of alienation is necessary in order for the ego to separate from the Self.²⁹ Otherwise, we prepare the ground for psychological illness in the form of inflation or psychosis. This alienation is depicted in the fall from grace in the Garden of Eden, and can be understood not only in relation to infancy, but also as descriptive of a process we go through with each incremental increase in conscious awareness.³⁰ As with the myth of Prometheus, whose liver was eaten daily as punishment for giving man fire, the acquisition of consciousness, and any step toward individuation, is experienced as a crime against the collective. This theme is related to the hero myth that Joseph Campbell culled as a general pattern among the world's peoples.³¹ The hero, experiencing this alienation, must separate from the collective, go through a period of initiation, then return to the collective to share what he or she has gained.

The Path of the Spiritual Warrior

In applying the hero myth to the stories of Siddhartha and Jesus, the dominant iconic images associated with each depict them at the end of their respective initiation phases. On the cross, Christ endured unimaginable pain and suffering en route to the ultimate surrender. When he asks, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”³² he puts forth the last element of struggle before his complete surrender with the words, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”³³ Buddha, having just endured the mental trials of the armies of Mara, withstanding lust, fear, and pride, makes the earth touching gesture to bear witness to his many lifetimes of embodied commitment to awakening, a gesture of surrender that summons forth the causes and conditions culminating in full liberation.³⁴ It is important to note that in both instances embodiment is an essential aspect of these stories, keeping the spiritual path grounded in the physical, using the body as a vehicle for spiritual realization. This body is ultimately realized to be the flesh of the world: when Jesus dies and when Siddhartha achieves enlightenment, in both instances, the world violently shakes and thunders to signify a liberation that is cosmic, not merely personal.

Problems arise when we attempt to transcend our suffering by leaving our bodies prematurely, reflected in dissociation, inflation, or psychosis. A form of *spiritual bypassing*³⁵ occurs when we attempt to achieve grace or enlightenment without fully entering into initiation, without going through and completing our worldly development. Similarly, if we do not engage the divine or the spiritual, we find ourselves locked in constricted psyches, living as animals, hungry ghosts, or hell realm beings. Clearly, this developmental journey requires that we engage our psychological development while we also maintain connection with a larger spiritual identity. While the ego must be surrendered at one level, the ego-Self axis must be preserved, a psychologically expressed reality that is reflected in the Buddhist understanding of the two truths, relative and absolute, each of which depends upon the other.³⁶ The ego cannot exist independently, but it does exist interdependently, and must retain contact with the All, the Divine, the Self. This is the tantric embrace of form and emptiness.

While the myth of the hero fits the stories of both Buddha and Christ, our conventional notions of hero do not fit the subjective, lived nature of their spiritual quests: the image of the hero who exerts great effort to achieve his or her will is at odds with spiritual surrender. Trungpa characterizes the

true spiritual path as at once the *hard way* and the *open way*, contrasting them to the hero's journey, which he calls the *easy way*.³⁷ The hard way is hard because it requires that we open ourselves totally to whatever arises in our experience, and here the surrender does not happen at the end of our story, but rather recurs continually in our moment-to-moment experience. The open way is the way of compassion, of keeping an open heart to the suffering of ourselves and of others. In Mahayana Buddhism this principle is emphasized and concretized in the image of the bodhisattva who vows to return to the sufferings of samsara to liberate all sentient beings. Therefore, the bodhisattva, like Christ, also takes on suffering to redeem others. In the Mahayana practice of tonglen, one breathes in another's pain and suffering, exhaling one's own peace, joy, and wisdom.³⁸ Reversing the ordinary impulses of the ego, this practice invites tremendous peace and stability in its practitioner by clearly separating ego from Self, while maintaining a connection between them. We break through the identifications whereby we habitually avoid or attach to our own pain, freeing us of fixation and opening our hearts to the world. This is authentic heroism.

Is There a Difference?

To the extent that we can position the serene Buddha and the suffering Christ on the same basic psychospiritual path, exemplifying the same processes of transformation and transcendence, we find rapprochement between them. However, at another level, we can't deny that difference does exist, and we must honor that difference. One image is exceedingly peaceful, while the other is exceedingly violent. In a sense, these images represent the two alternative means by which total surrender and awakening are achieved: through deliberate spiritual practice or through involuntary suffering.³⁹ Still, why these different images in these different contexts? Siddhartha's India was—and largely still is—a relatively peaceful country, while Jesus' Middle East was—and largely still is—very violent. Thich Nhat Hanh has said, "If Buddha had been born into the society in which Jesus was born, I think he, too, would have been crucified."⁴⁰ The trajectory of the paths of these two great teachers necessarily differed in accord with the contexts of their respective incarnations. They were bodhisattvas who appeared where needed, and who employed skillful means in total surrender to the requirements of their circumstances.

So *is* there a difference between these two images and what they

represent? Is there a difference in the ways we seek liberation? Such questions themselves are flawed because their very formulations are grounded in duality. Nagarjuna, through his four-cornered negation, demonstrated that any logical proposition can be deconstructed and shown invalid.⁴¹ Therefore, we ultimately cannot say that there is a difference, nor can we say that there is not a difference. Neither can we say there is both a difference and no difference, nor can we say that there is neither a difference nor not a difference. Any logical stance we try to adopt falls away! I suspect that the Tibetan lama's response to my dilemma—"Is there a difference?"—was intended not to imply that there *absolutely* is no difference, but rather to jog me from my own fixation to the idea that there is. He might just as well have asked, "Is there *not* a difference?" had I been attached instead to seeing transcendence from suffering and redemption through suffering as exactly the same.

At this point, one may wonder why we even ask such questions. We ask them, and struggle for answers to them, in order to move to the next level of understanding, which itself is not finished, but requires another question. The braided processes of transformation and transcendence are never completed, but slither through time like a great serpent in search of its home. Home is at once a destination we seek and the place that we already are. When we catch glimpse of the true nature of lived experience as unable to be captured or fixed through concepts, we come to appreciate that transcendence ultimately is not a matter of moving to a higher order; rather, it is a matter of recognizing the fundamental interrelatedness of all phenomena such that higher and lower become illusory distinctions. However we conceive the images of Christ and of Buddha, our concepts ultimately must yield to the pure presence that each embodies, in the hope that they reveal our own Christ-consciousness, or our own Buddha-nature, to each of us. At that point, the need to ask "Is there a difference?" will no doubt fall away.

Notes

¹ James Hillman, *Re-visioning Psychology* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1975), 66 – 67.

² Walpola Sri Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove Press, 1974), 51 – 52.

³ Hillman, *Re-visioning Psychology*, 67 – 70.

⁴ James Hillman, "Peaks and Vales," in *Puer Papers*, ed. James Hillman (Dallas, TX:

Spring Publications, 1979), 57 – 65.

⁵ Venerable Henlopa Gunaratana, *Mindfulness in Plain English*, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991), 21 – 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 15 – 16.

⁷ Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, CW 12, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

⁸ Hillman, *Re-visioning Psychology*, 50 – 51.

⁹ Patrul Rinpoche, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, trans. Padmakara Translation Group (San Francisco: Harper Collins), 10 – 11.

¹⁰ The source of this story is unknown.

¹¹ Hillman, *Re-visioning Psychology*, 71.

¹² *Ibid.*, 57.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁴ *The Passion of the Christ*, dir. Mel Gibson (New York: Icon Productions and Newmarket Films, 2004), feature film.

¹⁵ *ABC Primetime*, Interview by Diane Sawyer with Mel Gibson. (New York: ABC News, 2004).

¹⁶ A. O. Scott, “Good and evil locked in a violent showdown” (film review). *New York Times*, available from <http://movies2.nytimes.com/mem/movies/review.html>, accessed May 27, 2005.

¹⁷ *ABC Primetime*, Diane Sawyer with Mel Gibson.

¹⁸ Hillman, *Re-visioning Psychology*, 96.

¹⁹ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995).

²⁰ See, for example, Patrul Rinpoche, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, 63 – 71.

²¹ Reginald Ray, *Secret of the Vajra World: The Tantric Buddhism of Tibet* (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 2001), 91.

²² This understanding comes from Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche, received during formal Dzogchen teachings.

²³ Ken Wilber, *Integral Psychology: Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000), vii.

²⁴ Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, CW 9:1, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 275.

²⁵ Edward Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 1992), 3.

²⁶ Carl Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, CW 9:2, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

²⁷ Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, 226.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16 – 21.

³¹ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (New York: MJF Books, 1949).

³² Matt. 27.46.

³³ Luke 23.46.

³⁴ Sherab Chödzin Kohn, *The Awakened One: The Life of the Buddha* (Boston: Shamb-

hala Publishers, 1994), 33.

³⁵ John Welwood, *Toward a Psychology of Awakening* (Boston: Shambhala Publishers, 1994), 11 – 12.

³⁶ Jay L. Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 88.

³⁷ Chögyam Trungpa, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 1987), 77 – 103.

³⁸ Pema Chödrön, *The Wisdom of No Escape* (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 2001), 56 – 64.

³⁹ Although Jesus consciously chose to submit to his torturers to save all of mankind, his physical suffering is imposed upon him, and in this sense the image of his crucifixion is emblematic of involuntary suffering.

⁴⁰ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, 55.

⁴¹ Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, 105ff.

Sakyamuni Buddha (as the historical Buddha) discovered and shared the teachings/ universal truths with all sentient beings. He is not the creator of such teachings – just the transmitter. The concept of Hell in Buddhism is very different from that of other religions. It is not a place for eternal damnation as viewed by –almighty creator–™ religions. In Buddhism, it is just one of the six realms in Samsara (the worst of three undesirable realms). There is no concept of sin in Buddhism – just karma. All sentient beings have Buddha Nature/ Essence. One can become an enlightened being (Buddha) in d Comparison - Christianity and Buddhism - Buddha gave us his way: The Four Noble Truths and The Eightfold Path. God shows us the way to His presence: Through Jesus alone.Â Buddha could not reconcile the existence of suffering with an all-powerful, loving God and so rejected the teachings of Hinduism. There are Four Noble Truths to Buddhism: Dukkha, Samudaya, Nirodha, and Marga. Dukkha, the first of the Four Noble Truths, says that all human experience is transient and that suffering results from excessive desire and attachment. It is a Pali word which means, "incapable of satisfying." The Buddha taught that suffering is an inescapable reality. We know there are things in this world that will momentarily end suffering. From www.biographyonline.net: Differences Between Buddhism and Christianity Buddhism and Christianity were both founded by great Spiritual Masters who sought to offer a path to salvation. The terminology they used was often quite different. Also g...Â Christianity says that we are made in the image of God; therefore, we love justice. Jesus made it clear that there is a very distinct difference between –œright– and –œwrong–, and that there will be a day when God will make the wrong things right. ~ Cheers. Related Questions. More Answers Below. Which are the differences between buddhism, sikhism and hinduism? And which are their similarities? Can a Christian also believe in Buddhism? Which Christianity is closest to Islam?