

Preface and Chapter 1 Introduction, Of the Book, God is No-thing. The Apophatic Assertion, The Salvation for Humankind – revised -. Copyright Rodger Ricketts Psy.D.,2022. All rights reserved. Protected by international copyright conventions. No part of this chapter may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever, or stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, without express permission of the Author publisher, except in case of brief quotations with due acknowledgement. Publisher CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

Preface

After 40 years of active study and practice on the Buddha's teachings and having written four books on what I call 'Buddha-inspired psychology,' I recently found a very insightful perspective that expanded what I had learned before. The perspective is that the Buddha's teachings are a form of Apophatic Theology, thereby; they inherently undercut any easy attempts at codification. The revelation of Emptiness or Sunyata with the Divine is experienced rather than defined and categorized through limited language descriptions. With such an emphasis on first-hand, personal experience, the insight of intrinsic nature through Awakening runs contrary to the abstract, 'positive' Cataphatic theology. This book is a unique and cogent perspective that investigates and promotes the Buddha's teachings as a 'negative', Apophatic theology.

While there are scholarly books and research articles on the topic of Apophatic theology, very few incorporate the Buddha's teachings and scientific thought. In this book, I aspire to show that indeed the Buddha's and science's teachings and insights can be succinctly integrated into the Apophatic spiritual tradition that spans cultures and time. Within the larger scope of the canons of 'via negativa', the Buddha's teachings of Nothingness or Emptiness or Sunyata and recent scientific insights are clearly a part of the Apophatic spiritual tradition.

This revised book goes beyond what was in the first edition and instructs the reader even more deeply about the topic. From a broad, modern perspective, my aim is to make accessible for those who are on their own spiritual path of personal discovery the universal teachings of the Buddha.

I have always appreciated that the Buddha taught universal truths that are applicable everywhere and throughout time. The integration of these truths with other teachers of Apophatic theology has affirmed my belief in this

universality. Even with my forty years of research studies, attendance of temple retreats with monks and lay lectures and meditation practice, I have only now found this instructive link between the Buddha's teachings with other teachers of the Apophatic tradition. I want to share these insights with my fellow spiritual path voyagers. I believe they too will find it as interesting and illuminating as I have.

Chapter One

Introduction

In the past 40 years as a clinical psychologist and student of the Buddha, I became aware of the many similarities between the two studies. This awareness led me to successfully integrate both in my own life and clinical practice the benefits of combining the perspectives. As a result, I have written four books explaining my perspective on the Buddha's psychological benefits for wellness and happiness.

In the past year, I learned Apophatic theology or Apophaticism. This research introduced me to Western and other Apophatic writers resulting in my defining the Buddha's teachings as an example of a mystical or Apophatic perspective.

There are clear similarities between the Buddha's writing and Angelus Silesius and other Apophatic theology writers. While there is some scholarship about this similarity, unfortunately, it is rarely discussed in either mainstream Buddhist or Christian literature. This lack of discussion prompted me to integrate relevant aspects of my previous writings on the Buddha's teachings with the Apophatic perspectives and highlight what I believe are important correspondences.

In the past, I had read some works of Christian Mystics like Meister Eckhart and the book of the Cloud of Unknowing, but I never was specifically introduced to the Apophatic tradition. This past year as I began to read the Apophatic works of Angelus Silesius and Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, I realized that the Buddha's teachings could be rightly considered Apophatic. This realization opened a new dimension of comprehension and

relevance for me about what I had written in my previous books and essays on the Buddha's teachings.

Apophaticism wonders how to speak about the indescribable or immanent Existence or Absolute, instead of the common use of the pronoun or noun, like 'God' or an equivalent - with its language/meaning associations or exaggerations attached to it. The Apophatic writers prefer to use the reference of *Mysterious or No-thing*. Philosopher Mulla Rajab affirmed "*...an unqualifiable and attribute-less nature of 'God'.*"

Also, philosopher Maimonides explained that 'God' must be free of properties and is thus unlike anything else and indescribable. At times in my chapters, I have used the designation of (X) instead of 'God,' etc., to avoid this quandary. As the reader goes through the chapters in this book, they will soon understand further this dilemma of designation, which is a useful lesson in Apophatic theology.

In the following chapters, the reader will notice that I have placed emphasis on the Buddha's teachings throughout because I have found his ancient teachings have the most in-depth and complete analysis of an Apophatic training and perspective. These chapters about the Buddha's teachings and Apophatic writings, while not encyclopedic, are not only for intellectual curiosity but as a living testament of truth with positive consequences not only for the wellness and well-being of the individual but for society and the whole Gaia. When understood and incorporated into one's life, this is enlightening. Clearly, in this book I inform and advocate.

To conclude, with this book's analysis of the Apophatic, the Buddha's teaching and modern scientific insights, one develops a cogent scientific and modern understanding of the inherent restrictions to fully comprehend the mysterious nature of existence or Being. The middle way is an alternative term for the Eightfold Path, and we do not hold extreme positions in any way. When all words collapse into silence, we resist labeling that Wonder with another name; therefore, we realize that we can only say 'it is what it is.'

Everything is impermanent and interacting with all. It is all like a flame feeding from the original source but soon to extinguish. All form is brief and a manifestation of the great mysterious source. Rodger R Ricketts

The student asked the teacher, 'What is the meaning of life?' The teacher replied, 'Life is the meaning. Nurture the gift of life in yourself and other sentient beings. Support the inherent will to survive and thrive within the natural residence of the ecosystems of existence. Be kind and wise.' Rodger R Ricketts