

On Realizing There is Only The Virtual Nature of Consciousness

Vijñapti Matratā Siddhi

成唯識論

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Commentaries on it by Dharmapāla (護法) and others

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Dedicated to An Lạc

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The Three-fold Spiritual Life (tri kāya, 三身) of a **Perfectly Enlightened Being** (buddha, 佛): The spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身) of an enlightened being that descends into this world (tathāgata, 如來) is distinguished by three characteristics:

1. *The existential nature of this spiritual life* (svabhāvika kāya, 自性身) is a reference to the lives of those beings that descend into this world (tathāgataḥ, 諸如來) from the transcendent spiritual realm that is pure of affliction, the sphere of purpose that is both the foundation (āśraya, 所依) for the acceptance and employment (sambhoga, 受用) of its grace as well as its apparent manifestations that have a transformative influence (nirmāṇa, 變化). Being free from any defining characteristics, its serene stillness transcends all sophistry of discursive thought (prapañca, 戲論). It is endowed with virtues that are boundless and everlasting and its transcendental nature is found within all things. Its existential nature (svabhāva, 自性) is also called the spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身) because it is the foundation for the greatness of the virtues found in this purpose (mahā guṇa dharma, 大功德法).
2. *Accepting & employing the grace of this spiritual life* (sambhoga kāya, 受用身). There are two components of this:
 - 2a. *Acceptance & Employment for Its Own Sake* (sva sambhoga kāya, 自受用). This refers to those beings who have descended into this world (tathāgataḥ, 諸如來) and, over a three-fold countless number of lifetimes (trīṇy asaṃkhyeya kalpāni, 三阿僧祇劫), have cultivated and accrued immeasurable provisions (sambhāra, 資糧) of spiritual merit (puṇya, 福) and transcendental knowledge (jñāna, 智). They have brought these boundless real virtues into this world through a physical life (rūpa kāya, 色身) that is ultimately perfect, pure, everlasting and omnipresent. Through the power of grace, they will continue to dwell in a deep and clear stillness until the end of time, ever accepting (through faith) and employing (through practice) the existential nature of this spiritual life for its own sake and spreading the bliss of contentment that is found in this nature of life's greater, transcendent purpose.
 - 2b. *Acceptance & Employment for Others* (para sambhoga kāya, 他受用). This refers to those beings who have descended into this world and revealed the sublime virtues of the spiritual life to others through their knowledge of life's greater purpose with the nature of equanimity (samatā jñāna, 平等性智). Residing in pure lands (kṣetra pariśuddhi, 淨土), through the power of grace they reveal great powers of spiritual penetration (mahā abhijñā, 大神通), turn the wheel of life's true purpose for bodhisattvas who abide in the ten levels of grounding in the transcendental nature of life's purpose to resolve their networks of doubt and make them accept (through faith) & employ (through practice) the meaningful benefits and bliss of contentment found on this greater track of collective spiritual awakening.These two constitute *accepting & employing the grace of this spiritual life*.
3. *The apparent manifestations of this spiritual life that have transformative influence* (nirmāṇa kāya, 變化身): This is a reference to those beings who have descended into this world (tathāgataḥ, 諸如來) and revealed the countless apparent manifestations of this spiritual life and adapted them to all the different aspirations and understandings of sentient beings in order to spiritually transform them. They dwell in both pure (unafflicted) and corrupt (afflicted) lands for bodhisattvas who have not yet attained the levels of grounding in

the transcendental nature of life's purpose, saints on the lesser track who only seek freedom from affliction at the individual level and ordinary sentient beings. They assess the capacities and the opportunities available, reveal powers of spiritual penetration, teach about the true nature of life's purpose and do the work of making each and every sentient being attain meaningful benefits and the bliss of contentment.

The Buddha's three-fold spiritual life in terms of the five levels of its grounding in the nature of life's transcendental purpose (buddha bhūmi, 佛地)

There are two theories about this:

1. *The first thesis:*

- a. The first two, *the existential nature of the sphere of purpose that is pure of affliction* (dharma dhātu svabhāva, 法界體性) and *knowledge of the perfect mirror of life's greater purpose* (mahā ādarśa jñāna, 大圓鏡智) involve the existential nature of the spiritual life (svabhāvika kāya, 自性身) because:
 1. As The Scripture on the Levels of Grounding in Enlightenment (Buddha Bhūmi Sūtra, 佛地經) explains, with there being the spiritual life of the buddha (dharma kāya, 法身), there is the transcendental nature of life's purpose (tathatā, 真如).
 2. As explained in Asaṅga's Discourse on the Summary of the Greater Vehicle Doctrine (Mahāyāna Saṃgraha, 攝大乘論):
 - a. Through the restoration of the spiritual foundation of consciousness (āśraya parāvṛtti, 轉依), the subconscious store of memory (ālaya vijñāna, 阿賴耶識) is converted by being put to rest (vyāvartayati, 轉去) and being replaced with the existential nature of the spiritual life (svabhāvika kāya, 自性身), and:
 - b. Through transcendental knowledge of the perfect mirror of life's greater purpose and its mental states (caitta, 品), there is a realization of this restoration.
- b. The next two, *knowledge of life's greater purpose with the nature of equanimity* (samatā jñāna, 平等性智) and *knowledge of its observation with subtly compassionate discernment* (praty avekṣana jñāna, 妙觀察智), both involve accepting & employing the grace of this spiritual life (sambhoga kāya, 受用身) because, as The Discourse on the Adornment of the Greater Vehicle Scriptures (Mahāyāna Sūtra Alaṃkāra Śāstra, 莊嚴論) explains:
 1. Through knowledge of the transcendental nature of life's purpose with the nature of equanimity, there are the apparent manifestations of a buddha's spiritual life that have a transformative influence (nirmāṇa kāya, 變化身) in pure lands to bodhisattvas who have entered into the various levels of its grounding.
 2. Through knowledge of its observation with subtly compassionate discernment, there are the teachings about the transcendental nature, the severing of doubts about it and revelation of its mastery to all those in the audience of the greater assembly of faith surrounding (mahā saṃghāti pāriyātraka, 大集會) an enlightened being, including bodhisattvas who have not yet attained levels of grounding in it, saints on the lesser track of only seeking freedom from affliction at the individual level and ordinary sentient beings.
 3. Through spiritual restoration of the seven evolving manifestations of consciousness (sapta pravṛtti vijñāna, 七轉識), there is accepting (through faith) and employing (through practice) the grace of a buddha's spiritual life (sambhoga kāya, 受用身).

- c. The last, *knowledge of accomplishing its purpose* (kṛtya anuṣṭhāna jñāna, 成所作智) involves the apparent manifestations of the spiritual life that have transformative influence (nirmāṇa kāya, 變化身) because, as The Discourse on the Adornment of Greater Vehicle Scriptures says, through knowledge of accomplishing the work to be done, there are the apparent manifestations of the spiritual life in the pure lands of the ten directions with transformative influence that are unimaginably countless.

And because knowledge of the nature of life's greater, transcendental purpose is uniquely endowed with this three-fold spiritual life, one understands that this knowledge pervades all things everywhere.

2. *There is another thesis* (deemed correct) that the existential nature of the spiritual life (svabhāvika kāya, 自性身) only involves the existential nature of the spiritual realm (dharma dhātu svabhāva, 法界體性) that is pure of affliction because, as is said in various discourses:
 - a. The existential nature of the spiritual life is its original nature that is everlasting.
 - b. A buddha's spiritual life neither arises nor perishes.
 - c. It is only caused by realization, not through anything that arises or is created.
 - d. The spiritual life is shared in common by all enlightened beings (sarva buddhaḥ, 諸佛) and it is found everywhere in all things, like empty space.
 - e. Being unconditional and without defining characteristics, it transcends matter and mind.

In saying that the subconscious store of memory (ālaya vijñāna, 阿賴耶識) is converted and put to rest (vyāvarta yati, 轉去) through the restoration of its spiritual foundation (āśraya parāvṛtti, 轉依), what is actually meant is that, because of this restoration, the two kinds of obstacles (āvaraṇas, 障) and their unrefined natures (dauṣṭhulya, 麤重) in the subconscious memory are transcended and the true spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身) is revealed.

 - a. In the unique excellence (viśiṣṭatā, 殊勝) of transcendental knowledge there is said to be the spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身) of a buddha. This is said because this spiritual life is the foundation that supports knowledge of the transcendental nature of reality.
 - b. The existential nature of this spiritual life (svabhāvika kāya, 自性法身) has real virtues that are boundless but, because it is unconditional (asamskrta, 無為), it cannot really be said to be of matter or mind.
 - c. Accepting and employing the grace of this spiritual life for its own sake (sva sambhoga kāya, 自受用身) involves the real virtues found in the mental states associated with the four kinds of transcendental knowledge. It arises from *knowledge of the perfect mirror of life's greater purpose* (mahā ādarśa jñāna, 大圓鏡智) and its physical life (rūpa kāya, 色身) that is everlasting and omnipresent.
 - d. Accepting and employing the grace of this spiritual life for the sake of others (para sambhoga kāya, 他受用身) involves the mental states associated with *knowledge of this purpose with the nature of equanimity* (samatā jñāna, 平等性智). This reveals the buddha's spiritual life.
 - e. The apparent manifestations of this spiritual life that have a transformative influence (nirmāṇa kāya, 變化身) involve mental states associated with *knowledge of the work of accomplishing this purpose* (kṛtya anuṣṭhāna jñāna, 成所作智) and it is manifested in accordance with the various different characteristics and signs (lakṣaṇa 相) of this spiritual life.

Kuīji added: Accepting and employing the grace of this spiritual life for the sake of others and apparent manifestations of this spiritual life that have a transformative influence both involve mental states associated with knowledge of observation with subtly compassionate discernment (praty avekṣana jñāna, 妙觀察智) when there are teachings about the transcendental nature of life's purpose and the bringing about of manifestations of this spiritual life that benefit sentient beings.

The Discourse on the Adornment of Greater Vehicle Scriptures (Mahāyāna Sūtra Alaṃkāra Śāstra, 莊嚴論) explains that, with knowledge of the perfect mirror of life's greater purpose (mahā ādarśa jñāna, 大圓鏡智), there is accepting and employing the grace of the buddha's spiritual life (sambhoga kāya, 受用身) while The Summary of the Greater Vehicle Doctrine (Mahāyāna Saṃgraha, 攝大乘論) says that through its acceptance and employment there is restoration of the seven evolving manifestations of consciousness (pravṛtti vijñāna, 轉識). Although there is also acceptance and employment of this grace through restoration of the eighth with its the subconscious store of memory (ālaya vijñāna, 阿賴耶識), on this The Summary of the Greater Vehicle Doctrine only says that its restoration reveals the spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身). For the sake of brevity, it does not also mention that its restoration also leads to this accepting and employing of the grace of the buddha's spiritual life (through faith and practice). It is further said that:

1. The spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身) of the buddha neither arises nor perishes and is beyond matter and mind. There is no cause that produces it, only causes that reveal it. The mental states associated with knowledge of the perfect mirror of life's greater purpose (mahā ādarśa jñāna, 大圓鏡智) are therefore in contradiction with the spiritual life because they involve the mind. If this mirror knowledge and its mental states did not belong to accepting and employing it, how could they be involved with it?
2. Accepting and employing the grace of this spiritual life for its own sake (sva sambhoga kāya, 受用身) involves the buddha's real and uniquely distinct conditional virtues because here the mental states associated with the four kinds of transcendental knowledge really exist as matter and mind while accepting and employing it.
3. Accepting and employing the grace of this spiritual life for the sake of others (para sambhoga kāya, 他受用身) and its apparent manifestations that have a transformative influence (nirmāṇa kāya, 變化身) both involve the skillful ways and means used in influencing others because, without them, it would be impossible to express the existential nature of this transcendental knowledge.
4. Although it is said that the apparent manifestations of this spiritual life with a transformative influence (nirmāṇa kāya, 變化身) involve a transcendental knowledge that is uniquely excellent, it is really only an apparition, a manifestation that simulates transcendental knowledge and only arises from it. Its hypothetical designations (prajñapti, 假) of this transcendental knowledge are said to reflect its real existential nature but not really be the knowledge itself.

It is said that knowledge of life's greater purpose with the nature of equanimity (samatā jñāna, 平等性智) is able to reveal acceptance and employment of the grace of this spiritual life (sambhoga kāya, 受用身) while knowledge of accomplishing this purpose (kṛtya anuṣṭhāna jñāna, 成所作智) is able to reveal its apparent manifestations with transformative influence (nirmāṇa kāya, 變化身) through thoughts, words and deeds. In reality, although the apparent transformations of the buddha's spiritual life in this world and the acceptance and employment of its grace for others are not really of the mind or its mental states, it is through them that the mind and its mental states are able to reveal them. The powers of the one awakened to the nature of the supreme purpose of life (a buddha) are difficult to imagine because they are able to reveal this spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身) that is without any shape or substance.

Question: If this were not so, why would an enlightened being that descends into this world (tathāgata, 如來) manifest greed, hatred and the like since they were eliminated so long ago, and how could students of life's purpose (śrāvakas, 聲聞), ordinary people (manuṣya, 人) and even brutes (tiragyoni, 傍生) recognize the mind of such an enlightened being when even bodhisattvas who have attained perfect spiritual awakening (saṃbodhi, 等覺) do not truly comprehend it?

Answer: It is because:

- a. As the Scripture on the Ultimately Great Freedom (Mahā Parinirvāṇa Sūtra, 大般涅槃經) says, the countless variations in the apparent manifestations of the spiritual life with transformative influence (nirmāṇa kāya, 變化身) are created for the minds of others.
- b. As the Scripture on the Grounding of Enlightenment (Buddha Bhūmi Sūtra, 佛地經) says, through knowledge of accomplishing life's greater purpose (kṛtya anuṣṭhāna jñāna, 成所作智), an enlightened being that descends into this world is revealed through the making of thoughts, words and deeds.
- c. As the Scripture on Understanding the Deep Mystery (Saṃdhi Nirmocana Sūtra, 解深密經) says, the apparent manifestations of a buddha's spiritual life with transformative influence are dependent on other minds because they really depend on being manifested as mental objects in the imaginations (nimitta bhāga, 相分) of others.
- d. Although it is said that these apparent transformations of the spiritual life transcend the mind and the sense faculties, they really depend on the minds of others, not the mind of the enlightened beings that descend into this world.
- e. And the physical form, the sense faculties, the mind and the mental states (of such a being that descends into this world) are only apparently employed because they are said to not really exist (in these apparent transformations of the spiritual life).

The different attributes of this three-fold spiritual life

Although the three parts of this spiritual life are all perfectly endowed with boundless virtues, each of them is different. This is reference to the fact that:

- a. With there being the existential nature of the spiritual life (svabhāvika kāya, 自性身), there is only the transcendental reality that is everlasting (nitya, 常), endowed with the bliss of contentment (sukha, 樂) as well as an existential identity (ātman, 我) that is pure of affliction (vimala, 淨). Free from any corruption (saṃkleśa, 雜染), it is the foundation for the host of virtues that are unconditional. It transcends matter, mind and all the different distinctions employed in mentally imagined objects.
- b. With there being acceptance and employment of the grace of this spiritual life for its own sake (sva sambhoga kāya, 自受用身), there is endowment with countless subtle kinds of matter and mind that have transcendental virtues.
- c. & d. With there being acceptance and employment of the grace of this spiritual life for the sake of others (para sambhoga kāya, 他受用身) or apparent manifestations of this spiritual life that have transformative influence (nirmāṇa kāya, 變化身), there is only endowment with countless apparitions of matter and mind. These provide meaningful benefits and the bliss of contentment to others and employ apparent mental objects of virtue that are imagined.

The two beneficiaries of this three-fold spiritual life

Furthermore:

- a. The existential nature of the spiritual life (svabhāvika kāya, 自性身) involves its own benefit, because its perfect stillness and bliss of contentment are unshakeable and naturally spontaneous. It simultaneously benefits others because, as a prevailing condition (adhipati pratyaya, 增上緣), it also makes sentient beings attain meaningful benefits and the bliss of contentment. It is also the foundation for acceptance and employment of its grace (sambhoga kāya, 受用身) and its apparent manifestations that have transformative influence (nirmāṇa kāya, 化身) because it is endowed with both self-benefit and benefit for others.
- b. Accepting and employing the grace of this spiritual life for its own sake (sva sambhoga kāya, 實受用身) only refers to self-benefit.
- c. Accepting and employing it for others (para sambhoga kāya, 他受用身) and its apparent manifestations that have a transformative influence (nirmāṇa kāya, 化身) only refer to the benefit for others because they are manifested to others.

The three-fold spiritual life and its pure lands

- a. The existential nature of the spiritual life (svabhāvika kāya, 自性身) depends upon *the land that is the very nature of life's purpose* (dharmatā kṣetra, 法性土), a reference to the suchness of the transcendental nature (tathatā, 真如). Although there is really no distinction between the existential nature of spiritual lives and their lands, they belong to enlightened beings (buddhas, 諸佛) and their transcendental purposes (dharma, 法) respectively because of the difference between their characteristics and their natures. Neither a buddha's spiritual life nor its pure land involves physical form. Although they cannot be said to be great or small, in adapting to conditions, their size is said to be without bounds. Like empty space, they are everywhere in all places.
- b. Acceptance and employment of the grace of this spiritual life for its own sake (sva sambhoga kāya, 自受用身) depends upon *its own land* (sva kṣetra, 自土). This is a reference to use of knowledge of the perfect mirror of life's greater purpose (mahā ādarśa jñāna, 大圓鏡智), which corresponds with purity of the eighth projection of consciousness (the store of memory). Because of past cultivation for its own sake, its seeds have ripened into a land of enlightenment that is pure of affliction (anāsrava buddha kṣetra, 淨佛土). From the very first realization of perfect enlightenment and forever into the boundless end of time, there is continuous manifestation of such a pure land. Its domain is perfect, boundless and adorned with a host of treasures. The acceptance and employment of its grace for its own sake depends on the land in which it forever abides. The size of this spiritual life is the same as that of its pure land. Each of its capacities (indriya, 根), its (thirty-two) signs (lakṣaṇā, 相) and its (eighty) refinements (anuvyañjana, 好)¹⁹ are boundless because they all arise from roots of virtue (kuśala mūla, 善根) that are immeasurable. With its earned merits (puṇya guṇa, 功德) and its knowledge and discernment (jñāna prajñā, 智慧) being beyond any physical form, it cannot be said to be great or small. Being based on realization of the existential nature of the spiritual life and its pure land that constitutes the sphere of life's purpose and serves as its foundation, it may also be said to be everywhere in all places.
- c. Its acceptance & employment for the sake of others (para sambhoga kāya, 他受用身) also depends upon *its own land* (sva kṣetra, 自土). This is a reference to its use of the knowledge of life's purpose with the nature of equanimity (samatā jñāna, 平等性智) and the power that arises from the greatness of loving kindness and compassion (mahā maitri karuṇa bala, 大慈悲力). Because of its past cultivation and its benefiting of others, its seeds have ripened into a land

of enlightenment that is pure of any affliction (anāsrava buddha kṣetra, 淨佛土). In adapting to bodhisattvas who abide in the ten levels of grounding (daśa bhūmi, 十地), there are opportunities to spiritually transform them in this pure land. Some of them are great while some of them are small, some of them prevail and are outstanding while others are weak and inconsequential. Over time they are all subject to change and evolution. Those living in this pure land depend on accepting and employing the grace of the buddha's spiritual life for the sake of others. These spiritual lives and pure lands are both without a fixed size.

- d. *The apparent manifestations of the spiritual life that have a transformative influence* (nirmāṇa kāya, 變化身) depend upon a land of apparent manifestations that have transformative influence (nirmāṇa kṣetra, 變化土). This is a reference to use of the knowledge of accomplishing life's greater purpose (kṛtya anuṣṭhāna jñāna, 成所作智) and the power from the greatness of loving kindness and compassion (mahā maitri karuṇa bala, 大慈悲力). Because of past cultivation for the benefit of others, there are seeds that ripen into pure lands with enlightened beings that are pure of affliction (anāsrava buddha kṣetra, 淨佛土). In adapting to sentient beings who have not yet attained any of the levels of grounding (abhūmi praviṣṭa, 地前), there are opportunities to transform them in these lands of enlightenment (buddha kṣetra, 佛土). Some of those in these lands are pure of affliction while others are corrupted. Some of them are small while some of them are great. Over time they are all subject to change and evolution. Those living in these lands depend on the apparent manifestations of the buddhas' spiritual lives that have a transformative influence. These spiritual lives and pure lands are also without a fixed size.

The division and multiplication (kāya vibhakti, 分身) of this three-fold spiritual life

- a. *The existential nature of the spiritual life* (svabhāvika kāya kṣetra, 自性身土) and *the land that is the very nature of life's purpose* (dharmatā kṣetra, 法性土) are similarly realized by all of the enlightened beings that descend into their worlds (sarva tathāgataḥ, 一切如來) because their existential natures are indistinguishable.
- b. In *accepting & employing the grace of this spiritual life for their own sakes* (sva sambhoga kāya, 自受用身) in *their own lands* (sva kṣetra, 自土), although each of the buddhas transform their own lands differently, they all are boundless and without any contradiction.
- c. & d. In *accepting & employing it for the sake of others* (para sambhoga kāya, 他受用身) and *its apparent manifestations that have transformative influence* (nirmāṇa kāya, 變化身) in *their own lands*, the enlightened beings that descend into their worlds adapt to the sentient beings they transform in both unique and shared ways.
1. In *a shared transformation* (sāmānya nirmita, 所化共) there are many transmissions of life's greater purpose that are occurring at the same time and place. The buddhas each manifest spiritual lives and pure lands with shapes and signs that resemble each other and are without any contradiction to each other. These processions of interdependent aspects serve as prevailing conditions (adhipati pratyaya, 增上緣) that are manifested in the minds of those being transformed, with the spiritual life of each of the buddhas manifesting itself into a pure land, revealing powers of spiritual penetration, teaching about the true nature of life's purpose and a providing an abundance of benefits.
 2. In *a unique transformation* (asāmānya nirmita, 所化不共) there is a transmission of life's greater purpose from a single enlightened being to a single sentient being in which there is only a single buddha performing the transformation.

Since the very beginning of time, there have been many different kinds of sentient beings with

lineages (gotra, 種性) that have enabled them to connected with the nature of life's greater purpose (dharmatā, 法爾) through certain enlightened beings. Some have connected to one while others have connected to many. And so the influence of spiritual transformation has had many unique and shared characteristics (sva lakṣaṇa, 自相 & sāmānya lakṣaṇa, 共相). If this were not so, why have there been so many buddhas ever abiding in this world, each toiling in their own way. Would this not all be pointless if just one Buddha would be able to benefit all living beings?

The manifestations of spiritual lives & their pure lands

1. Spiritual lives and the lands they dwell in, whether they are with or without affliction, are manifested as unafflicted consciousness (anāsrava vijñāna, 無漏識) in the same way that consciousness becomes virtuous and unafflicted. Conditions that directly cause the arising of this consciousness (hetu pratyaya, 因緣) are only virtuous and without affliction because they involve the reality of the noble path (ārya mārga satya, 道諦) and the transcendence (nirodha, 滅) of suffering (duḥkha, 苦) and its origination (samudaya, 集). The imagined components of consciousness (nimitta bhāga, 相分) that are induced through projections of purpose (skandha, 蘊), alignments of subject & object (āyatana, 處) and the spheres of consciousness (dhātus, 界) are not always the same because the seeds inducing these three through conditions directly cause the arising of consciousness have different moral natures.
2. Spiritual lives and the lands they dwell in are manifested as afflicted consciousness (sa āsrava vijñāna, 有漏識) in the same way that consciousness becomes afflicted. Conditions that directly cause the arising of consciousness (hetu pratyaya, 因緣) are only afflicted because they involve the reality of suffering and its origination but are without transcendence and the noble path. The imagined components of consciousness that are found in projections of purpose, alignments of subject & object and spheres of consciousness are not always the same because the seeds inducing these three to arise though conditions that directly cause the arising of consciousness may have different moral natures.

One should understand that the virtuous, evil and undefined moral natures that are found in the imagining component of consciousness (darśana bhāga, 見分) are not necessarily the same as those found in its imagined portion (nimitta bhāga, 相分) because their natures are induced differently through the conditions that directly cause the arising of their consciousness. If this were not so, there would never be any distinctions found between it and the five projections of purpose, the twelve-fold alignment of subject & object and the eighteen-fold sphere of consciousness.¹