

A Quantum Loop for Quakers

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1 Introduction

A Quantum Loop for Quakers

Aim:

To introduce and explain “new knowledge” which can open up new possibilities for increasing the effectiveness of our Society; and, in partnership with others, give us the tools to set in motion even more positive changes in the ‘here and now’ which we so deeply desire for our nation and the world.

The 1859 Essay

The press notices which invited the submission of essays in 1858 began by describing how the gentleman donor lamented that despite a doubling of the population in the previous fifty years, there were now fewer Friends than at the beginning of the century. He thought the Society had become more feeble, no longer giving out a powerful witness to the world. He wanted to know if this was due to degeneracy, a problem with the constitution and rules, or any ‘extraneous cause.’

The Challenge Today

Now, one hundred and fifty years later, we are asked: “What can you say today that will guide Quakerism in Britain over the coming decades?” I am inspired to respond to this question, not by analysing the present state of Quakerism or its historical back-ground: but by describing knowledge which is out there, known to few of us, yet capable of greatly increasing our “powerful witness to the world”.

My Approach in Outline

I shall be examining three sources of knowledge and their inter-relationship:

Spiritual – a sadly neglected central feature of Christ’s teaching found in the Gospel of Thomas.

Practical - the Vedic tradition and the application of its techniques in today’s world.

Scientific – the manner in which modern science supports both the Spiritual and the Practical.

In conclusion I will be suggesting a few ways in which this knowledge might be used to the advantage of the Society of Friends.

2 Teaching of Jesus: The Gospel of Thomas

I have singled out the Gospel of Thomas because it contains core elements of Jesus' teaching which do not feature in the Bible.

Discovery

The fact that the one hundred and fourteen sayings of Jesus recorded by Thomas in his Gospel have reached us intact, is little short of miraculous. I am filled with wonder that, 600 years before the Battle of Hastings, some Egyptian monks threatened by persecution buried the Gospel of Thomas and other treasured books in an earthenware jar. These spiritual treasures, just lines of letters on papyrus, lay there safe and undiscovered for another 900 years until dug up by some farm workers in 1945. Once unearthed, these fragile texts survived many hazards before they eventually reached the eyes of scholars.

Translation and commentary

The story of this thrilling discovery features in an excellent series of books on the Gospel of Thomas by Quaker, Hugh McGregor Ross. Hugh has devoted many years of his life to background research, study of the text and commentary on Jesus' sayings. Because the text is written in the Coptic language, with some Greek, Hugh first set himself to master these languages so that he could make his own translation. He combines a scholarly approach with deep spiritual insights. These books will give us an invaluable head start to develop our understanding of what Jesus wanted to convey to his hearers.

Essential teaching of the Thomas text

Jesus wanted us to know our true or real Selves.

He wanted us to be aware that we were born 'One'.

We inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus at the time of our birth we inherit our pure Self which is absolute Being.

He wanted us to know that, born 'One', we make ourselves two.

We develop the little self ('ahamkara' in the Eastern tradition) which is seated in the mind, emotions, body and senses. As we mature, the activity of the little self veils the real self. We become trapped in duality and suffering is the inevitable result.

Jesus wants us to make the two One.

When we do that, our lives will be transformed and we will "enter the Kingdom". We have to quench or subdue the activity of the little self which will allow the veil to be lifted from the Real Self. When the Real Self shines forth, the two work together in unity as 'One'.

This teaching is neatly encapsulated here by the great Persian Sufi poet, Jalal al Din Rumi (1207-1273):

*Awhile, as wont may be,
self I did claim;
true Self I did not see,
but heard its name.
I, being self-confined,
Self did not merit,
till ,leaving self behind,
did Self inherit.*

The core teaching.

A selection of Jesus' sayings from the Thomas text:

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Jesus said:

*Happy is the man who has toiled to lose ahamkara,
he has found the life*

42

Jesus said:

Become your Real Self, as ahamkara passes away.

106

Jesus said:

*When you make the two One,
you will become Sons of man,
and if you say:
"Mountain, move away,"
it shall move.*

22

Jesus saw children who were being suckled.

He said to his disciples:

*These children who are being suckled are like
Those who enter the Kingdom.*

They said to him:

*Shall we then, being children,
enter the Kingdom?*

Jesus said to them:

When you make the two One,

...

then shall you enter the Kingdom.

2

Jesus said:

*Let him who seeks not cease from seeking
until he finds;
and when he finds,
he will be turned around;
and when he is turned around
he will marvel
and he shall reign over the All.*

*Ultimately, Jesus is for me someone who opens a window into the nature of God . .
. . He points to ultimate truth which we recognise in the infinite space of silence.
(Twelve Quakers and Jesus)*

3 The Vedic Tradition

Most of us will have heard of Transcendental Meditation ('TM') and some, like myself, will have experience of practising it. Less well known, is the TM -Sidhi technique including 'Yogic Flying,' possibly seen demonstrated on TV.

Innumerable are the misunderstandings about these techniques due to ignorance, prejudice and rather wild reports in the media.

Since these techniques, and the ancient Vedic tradition of knowledge from which they are derived, are pivotal to this discussion, I need to give further explanation. This is based on my personal knowledge and experience gained through my practise of TM and the thorough training sessions which led to my becoming a TM teacher.

The Vedas

In a nutshell:

The *Vedas*, are mankind's oldest records of knowledge and are said to be truths intuited by enlightened seers (*rishis*). They have been passed down orally through a hereditary succession of *pandits* to the present day. India is very much the land of the Veda, though the knowledge itself is universal and knows no boundaries. Vedic knowledge passes through phases of vitality and comparative neglect and by the 20th century had become somewhat scattered and fragmented.

In the 1950s, after long periods of deep silence and time spent at the feet of his Master, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi set out alone from India to revive the Vedic knowledge and make it universally available. The ultimate aim, hardly spoken of at that point, was that of creating coherence and peace in a troubled world.

The Vedas contain the teaching on *Yoga*. The word *yoga* means "unity." (It's very similar in meaning to the Latin word *religare*, from which we have *religion*, the aim of which is to "to bind back" to the eternal truth.) *Yoga* itself is not a religion but a set of techniques to restore our lost wholeness, our integrity as complete human beings, by unifying the personality around a centre that is silent and unbounded.

Unity Consciousness is the highest state, the pinnacle of evolution, when the individual lives in, and as, the very Divine. It has been celebrated in the non dual teachings of all the great traditions, . . . Each sacred tradition encompasses different philosophical or spiritual viewpoints that vary according to the level of Enlightenment that has been reached. (Alistair Shearer)

In the light of our experience of Meeting for Worship, these opening statements from the 'Yoga Sutras' of Patanjali are very instructive:

- *And now the teaching on yoga begins.*
- *Yoga is the settling of the mind into silence.*
- *When the mind has settled, we are established in our essential nature, which is unbounded consciousness.*
- *Our essential nature is usually overshadowed by the activity of the mind.*

At these times it is not helpful to be distracted by my body so I sit in such a way that I won't have to move. . . . I think the physical stillness over a period helps to slow my mind down. (Twelve Quakers and Worship)

The techniques of yoga are methods of purifying the nervous system so that it can reflect a greater degree of consciousness and our lives can become an increasingly positive force in the world. . . . Whether we choose to practice yoga, and interpret its benefits, within the framework of a conventional set of religious beliefs is up to us. Some people do, some don't. Yoga itself is neutral. . . . Its methods work on the physical seat of consciousness, the nervous system, and, as far as yoga is concerned, a Hindu nervous system is no different from an Islamic or agnostic one. Each obeys the same laws that govern the operation of mind and body. (Alistair Shearer)

The central thrust of the ancient Vedic wisdom, as brought to light by Maharishi in this scientific age, is that human life can be lived to a higher degree of fulfilment than that ordinarily experienced by a normal well balanced adult. We will find parallel teaching by Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas, though Jesus will refer to entering the Kingdom (definitely in the 'here and now') whereas from the Vedic standpoint it is enlightenment.

Transcendental Meditation

Those practising TM will allow their minds to settle down through finer and finer levels of the thinking process until the boundaries of thought are "transcended" and they experience absolute pure consciousness. In one short space of 10-20 minutes, the meditator moves from the relative to the absolute, from diversity to unity. Repeated contact with the 'absolute' will mould it permanently with the 'relative' so that pure consciousness always accompanies the relative states of waking, dreaming and sleeping. This process, bringing together the *absolute* or transcendental consciousness with the *relative* states of consciousness is known as 'enlightenment'. It is no longer the sole province of recluses, but is now readily available to all.

A Field of Consciousness

Quantum Physics expert, John Hagelin, maintains that human consciousness, just like the rest of material creation, is structured in layers, and that the Field of Consciousness is one and the same as the Unified Field of all the laws of nature. The implications of this are truly unbounded. Awesome might be the word used by a young executive telling his or her colleagues how profits can grow exponentially and indefinitely! Let us consider this possibility:

If we have access to a Field of Consciousness, we should be able to create a Field effect . . . just like radio waves passing through the Electromagnetic Field.
Radio waves transmitted from one place are received at a distance . . .

If there is a 'collective consciousness' then it should be possible to influence it at a distance through the Field effect.

Many's the time I've heard Friends comment, often showing some surprise, that the ministry which was almost on their lips was immediately taken up by someone else! These unspoken influences certainly operate at a distance, albeit quite small, and appear to be a function of the holy silence of the Meeting. It is surely not being too prosaic if I suggest that these influences pass from one to another through the Unified Field.

Now we come to one of the fundamental points of this essay:

That it is possible for human beings, through a Field of consciousness, to create coherence in a stressed and troubled collective consciousness and the automatic outcome will be less conflict and more real peace.

4 Action for World Peace

I have already given a brief outline of Vedic knowledge which still keeps a foothold in India, having cascaded through the generations over thousands of years, and is now alive throughout the world. Over fifty years ago, Maharishi left India to demonstrate to a scientific world that meditation is a scientific reality, with benefits for the individual and the wider community.

East meets West

Maharishi knew that for his vision of world peace to be realised, the knowledge of the East must be harnessed to the energy and scientific achievement of the West, particularly that engine of enterprise the USA. In the early days he visited Britain and the USA, and then toured the world teaching as many as possible how to practise TM.

Among those who heard him in person, recognition and acceptance was speedy. However, if the knowledge was to spread worldwide, a more powerful initiative was needed. Maharishi therefore trained teachers across the world, giving precise instructions which would ensure the knowledge was not corrupted by the teachers' individual whim.

Validation through scientific research

We are able to speak of Vedic science because the Vedic techniques (the 'technology of consciousness') and their outcome are open to verification by properly designed and controlled scientific study. There was plenty of scope for scientific research as the numbers of meditators increased. To date, over six hundred studies have been carried out in Universities and other research establishments worldwide. All are published, while a substantial number have been peer reviewed and published in scientific journals.

What these studies have established is absolutely central to the theme of my discussion, but space will not allow me to reproduce many of them here. References are provided for the benefit of those who would like to make a detailed examination of this research. The simple truth is that modern science has confirmed the timeless wisdom of Vedic knowledge.

Here is a basic outline simple of what was revealed by this research:

Early studies

1 The earliest scientific studies, begun in 1968, simply measured the beneficial effects of TM on the physiology of the individual. During meditation the metabolic rate slows down, releasing deep seated stress and producing rest more profound than that experienced in deep sleep. Patterns of brain cells become more coherent. In tests covering a period of 2-3 months many benefits have been measured, some relating to improved mental performance and others to specific health improvements such as reduction in high blood pressure.

The one percent effect

2 The next phase of research moved away from the individual and began to investigate the effects on the wider community. Studies carried out in the USA in the 1970s demonstrated that when 1% of the population of a city was practising TM, the collective consciousness of the entire community became more coherent and peaceful. For example, crime rates, accident rates, and admissions to hospital were significantly reduced in comparison with control cities and the USA as a whole.

The same effect with fewer people

3 The TM Sidhi programme, which includes the well known 'Yogic flying' technique, was then made available to meditators. The outward manifestation of 'Yogic flying', which is preceded by meditation, is a series of short levitations, or hops, normally from the 'lotus' seated position. I have practised this myself and marvelled at the spontaneous lifting impulse accompanied by feelings of great happiness. I know that ordinary muscular activity could not possibly achieve the same result.

When practised in a group, 'Yogic flying' has a much more powerful positive effect on the collective consciousness. A group as small as the square root of 1% of a given population creates the same coherence and peaceful transition in the collective consciousness as the 1% of meditators described above.

'The evidence indicates, in other words, that the peace technology is "wireless" – like radio and cell phones – broadcasting a coherent influence through an invisible field. In place of a broadcasting station, this subjective technology makes use of the most richly complex technological device ever created: the human brain. Just as radio stations radiate music through the underlying electromagnetic field, so research indicates that the minds of people who are expert in meditation, when gathered together to meditate in one location, radiate harmony and peacefulness through an underlying field of consciousness.' (Permanent Peace – Robert M. Oates, 2002)

'Science has realised that humans are more intelligent than animals because our neural organisation is more evolved; as a result, we have more consciousness at our disposal. Yoga goes further. It says that the human nervous system is the crowning glory of creation, because it alone has the ability to reflect the unbounded source of life in its immaculate and radiant purity. Man is made in the image of God.' (The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali – Alistair Shearer, 1982)

Group Demonstrations

4 From the 1980s onward, much of the research has focused on demonstrating the potential of large groups of 'Yogic flyers' to generate order and peace in the collective consciousness, even on a national scale. While the groups remain together, marked decreases are recorded in negative tendencies such as crime, sickness and accident rates, as well as instances of turbulence and violence in society. The research has also shown significant increases in positive trends, such as improvements in economic conditions.

Peace Assemblies – the Lebanon war

5 Of interest to all peace lovers, but especially to Friends whose Peace Testimony and record of action over three centuries is without parallel, is the series of peace creating assemblies held in Israel, Lebanon, Yugoslavia and the United States during the Lebanon war in 1983/84. I am drawing special attention to these since it occurs to me that if any of our Quaker Testimonies may be singled out for a central role, it is for me the Peace Testimony. For unless Peace prevails it hardly seems possible for Simplicity, Equality and Truth to flourish unhindered.

Detailed reports of these assemblies, on which the following summary is based, may be found in John Hagelin's book "Manual for a Perfect Government." or in Robert Oates' book "Permanent Peace". The assemblies were called to test the hypothesis that the practice of the TM-Sidhi programme, by a group as small as the square root of one percent of a population, would positively affect sociological measures such as accidents, hospital admissions, crime rate including violent crime, and even open warfare.

Peace Assembly: August/September 1983

(Assembly in Israel)

The research hypothesis and the methodology of the study were lodged in advance with an independent review board of scientists in the USA and Israel, with a prediction that stress in the collective consciousness of Israel and the Lebanon would be reduced, with positive influences on the war in Lebanon.

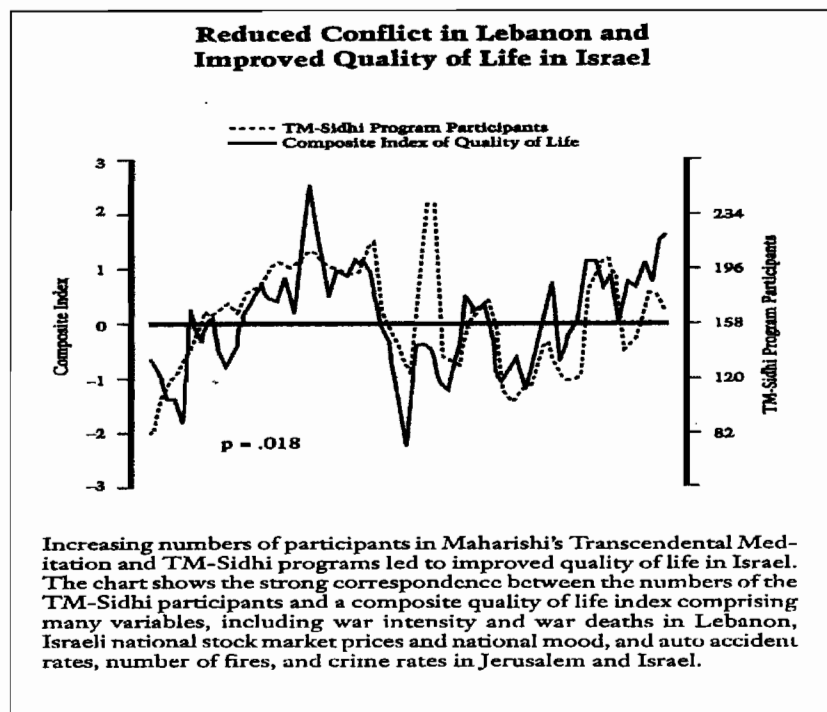


Figure 1: Reduced conflict in Lebanon

Figure 1 shows the significant correspondence between variations in the size of the group and variations in the composite index of quality of life in Israel. There was a 34% reduction in war intensity in Lebanon and a 76% reduction in war deaths during periods when group numbers were high. Time series analysis confirmed that the effects could not be attributed to seasonality, to holidays or temperature changes.

Peace Assemblies: November 1983 to May 1984

(Assemblies in USA, Lebanon and Yugoslavia)

Each assembly was two weeks long. The researchers used a Peace/War index which included events reported in major Lebanon newspapers, daily reported war deaths and injuries. They were able to compare levels of conflict on days when the assemblies were in progress with a baseline period which consisted of all other days during the six month period of the study. This study again confirmed the advance prediction: the Peace/War index showed that prevailing negative conditions were abruptly reversed and greater progress towards peaceful resolution of the Lebanon conflict was observed than would have been expected based on the prior six-month history of the war.

Expanded study: June 1983 to August 1985

(Assemblies in the Lebanon, Israel, Yugoslavia, the Netherlands and the USA x3)

Time series intervention analysis of this 27 month period indicated that in contrast to non experimental days, during the 93 days when assemblies were sufficiently large for a predicted impact in Lebanon there was an estimated:

- 66% mean increase in level of cooperation among antagonists
- 48% reduction in level of conflict
- 71% reduction in war fatalities, and
- 68% reduction in war injuries

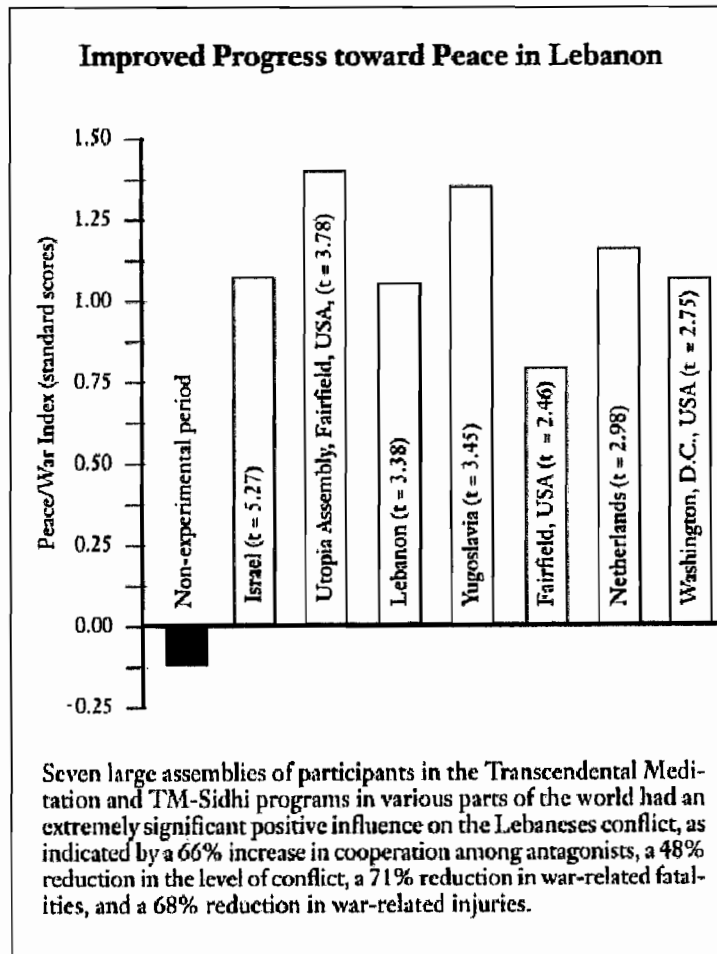


Figure 2:

'Considering the highly statistically significant findings of these and other published scientific studies on the effects of group practice, one could safely conclude that the Maharishi Effect is the most thoroughly tested and rigorously established phenomenon in the history of social sciences. These findings confirm, with a rare degree of scientific certainty, that societal coherence can be enhanced, and that social stress and conflict can be alleviated, by the group practice of the TM-Sidhi program by a small proportion of the population.'
(Manual for a Perfect Government – John Hagelin)

5 Physics after Einstein

This quotation makes a clear link between Vedic science and modern physics:

'Now from the investigations of modern science we have the unified field, the home of all the laws of nature. And from Vedic Science we know this field to be a field of pure awareness, of infinite creativity. It is the field of intelligence pure, of consciousness pure.' (Maharishi)

Arthur Eddington: Seeking

In his Swarthmore Lecture of 1929, Astrophysicist Arthur Eddington said:

"In its early days our Society owed much to a people who called themselves Seekers; they joined us in great numbers and were prominent in the spread of Quakerism. It is a name which must appeal strongly to the scientific temperament. The name has died out, but I think that the spirit of seeking is still the prevailing one in our faith, which for that reason is not embodied in any creed or formula." "How easy in a popular lecture to tell of the findings, the new discoveries which will be amended, contradicted, superseded in the next fifty years! How difficult to convey the scientific spirit of seeking which fulfils itself in this tortuous course of progress towards truth! You will understand the true spirit neither of science nor of religion unless seeking is placed in the forefront."

So here, in that spirit of seeking, I take a brief look at advances in Physics and in particular at the theory of the Unified Field which gives an added dimension to the Vedic knowledge and to Jesus' teaching in the Gospel of Thomas.

Newtonian thinking

Newton's ideas had dominated scientific thinking since the 1600s. He saw nature's ultimate reality as tiny particles of indestructible material:

It seems probable to me that God in the beginning formed matter in solid, massy, hard, impenetrable, movable particlesand that these primitive particles being solids, are incomparably harder than any porous bodies compounded of them; even so very hard, as never to wear or break in pieces; no ordinary power being able to divide what God himself made one in the first creation.

Einstein's dream

Three hundred years later, at the beginning of the 20th century, scientists thought they had found Newton's building blocks of nature when the atomic model of nature gained general acceptance among physicists. But Einstein's lifelong dream was of a *unified field* – a single, unified theoretical foundation for all the laws of nature.

Arthur Eddington, who confirmed Einstein's theory of relativity as a result of his observations during the eclipse of the sun in 1919, wrote a textbook in 1928 entitled *The Nature of the Physical World* in which he describes two tables:

One of these is 'a common-place object of that environment which I call the world. How shall I describe it? It has extension; it is comparatively permanent; it is coloured; above all it is substantial . . . It is a thing . . . Table No.2 is my scientific table. . . It does not belong to the world previously mentioned- . . . My scientific table is mostly emptiness. Sparsely scattered in the emptiness are numerous electric charges rushing about with great speed, but their combined bulk amounts to less than a billionth of the bulk of the table itself. . . '

Unified Field

Even this picture of solid matter as minute and particulate chaos was not to last. Since the late 1960s, physics has made rapid progress to show Einstein's ideas more than a dream. Quantum physicists have developed theoretical models that demonstrate an underlying unity in which the four force fields and the four particle fields of nature exist in one unified wholeness.

Let us turn again to world renowned quantum physicist John Hagelin for his description of this Unified Field:

'Progress in our understanding of the universe through physics over the past quarter century has been exploring deeper levels of Natural Law from the macroscopic to the microscopic. From the molecular to the atomic to the nuclear, to sub-nuclear levels of Nature's functioning – so called electro-weak unified scale, grand unified scale, super unified scale. What we've discovered at the core basis of the universe, the foundation of the universe, is a single universal Field of intelligence – a field which unites gravity with electro-magnetism, with light, with radio-activity, with the nuclear force; so that all the forces of Nature and all the so called particles of Nature (quarks, leptons, protons, neutrons) are now understood to be one. They're all just different ripples on a single ocean of existence. It's called the Unified Field or Super String Field and it's a mathematical 'tour de force'.

The Unified Field and human consciousness

According to direct experience, and to the Vedic science of consciousness from which meditation springs, human intelligence is structured like nature's intelligence. It is hierarchically structured in layers – from gross to subtle, from relative to absolute, from diversified to unified.

At the basis of all life's diversity there is unity. At our basis, you and I are one. And that unity at the basis of mind and matter is consciousness – universal consciousness. So with that deep understanding that consciousness isn't created by the brain, it's not purely an outcome of molecular chemical processes in the brain but is fundamental in Nature. It's the very core of Nature and we call it the Unified Field. (John Hagelin)

My understanding of the physics is that at the basis of all life's diversity there is unity. That's the Unified Field, which is a non-material Field. Everything in the universe is really nothing but that – rocks, trees, people, animals; we're all just waves of vibration of this underlying Unified Field. This non-material Field is not dead emptiness. It is a Field of intelligence, a Field of universal consciousness. We individualise our consciousness through the filter of our nervous system. But when, through our inner subjectivity, we get to know the big Self, that is universal.

'No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; (John Donne)

The great physicist Sir James Jeans said in the 1930s: "It begins to look as if the universe is an affair not of atoms, but of thought." And now the advanced physicists are talking in terms of higher levels of vibratory rate being realms of light, which are also realms of thought and being. They are formulating concepts about what they call the Thought-field and the Life-field – fields of consciousness organising the atomic structure within form and holding it in shape. These are fields into which human consciousness can enter.

*"There is nothing to stop us expanding human consciousness into the great ocean of thought of which our minds are really strands."
(George Trevelyan)*

*What I worship is like an energy-force, more felt than reasoned. It is singular, simple, constant, ever-present (whether I am aware or not), all-embracing, timeless, infinite and impersonal. This Oneness, this unity, is my source and the source from which all came (the millions of worlds and billions of species) and will come. It powers the evolution of all creation, including ourselves, towards reaching its fullest potential.
(Twelve Quakers and Worship)*

6 Review and Conclusions

The Gospel of Thomas

Let's just remind ourselves about the 'Oneness' teaching of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas:

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Jesus said:

*When you make the two One,
you will become Sons of man,
and if you say:
"Mountain, move away,"
it shall move.*

The two, the duality from which we suffer, is the dominance of the little self (the relative) over the Real Self (the absolute). When we make the two One, we open ourselves to the absolute, which Jesus variously describes in the Thomas text as the All, One, the Kingdom, Kingdom of the Father, the Pure Spirit etc.

Hugh McGregor Ross points out, using the word 'ahamkara' to describe what I have called the little self, that:

"The mountain in these sayings is that of distress and suffering, which can only belong to the realm of ahamkara." . . . "Here Jesus asserts his Teaching, perhaps of paramount consequence to each man or woman in going through life, that when emptied of ahamkara the mountain of suffering shall – it is a promise and a command – move away. His is the same objective as Buddha's, even if he reaches it by a different way."

22

*Jesus saw children who were being suckled.
He said to his disciples:
These children who are being suckled are like
Those who enter the Kingdom.
They said to him:
Shall we then, being children,
enter the Kingdom?*

*Jesus said to them:
When you make the two One,
.
then shall you enter the Kingdom.*

It is important to note that Jesus' promise of entering the Kingdom relates, not to some far distant after life existence, but to the joy of living in Oneness (unity consciousness) in the here and now.

Jesus was not anti religion. His quarrel was not with religion but with the attitudes, behaviour and lack of knowledge of those who taught and led the people. In this saying he gently ridicules these bigoted men, whilst giving out the Truth in beautiful, succinct phrases:

3

Jesus said:

*If those who guide your Being say to you:
"Behold the Kingdom is in the heaven,"
then the birds of the sky will precede you;
if they say to you: "It is in the sea",
then the fish will precede you.
But the Kingdom is in your centre
and is about you.
When you Know your Selves
then you will be Known,
and you will be aware that you are
the sons of the Living Father.
But if you do not Know your Selves
then you are in poverty,
and you are the poverty.*

He therefore bypassed religious institutions and made it his mission to speak the Truth directly to the people and particularly to a group of close friends and followers who became his disciples.

His teaching about Oneness and the Kingdom is right at the core of his ministry, but only comes out clearly in this Gospel which the Church has deemed 'heretical'. Only by "making the two One", he says, can a person enter the Kingdom at their centre, which is their birthright.

It is this process of opening up to the real Self in daily life which helps a person behave spontaneously in accord with Natural Law, i.e. the Will of God. Passing by on the other side will never be possible for such an enlightened person, nor could violence towards others be contemplated; simplicity and joy will flourish and Truth will always be known and spoken.

The implication for mainstream Christianity of Jesus' teaching as recorded in the Gospel of Thomas is not necessarily to abandon creeds and rituals but to rediscover and focus sharply on Jesus' Oneness teaching. For Quakers it is a little different. We have left behind, almost entirely, dependence on creed and ritual of worship. The silent foundation of our worship helps us get closer to the "One".

But we could focus more on Jesus' "Oneness" teaching and I will come back to this when we have reminded ourselves about the contributions of modern science and the Vedic tradition of knowledge.

The Vedic Tradition

As a generalisation, it seems to me that the Gospels of the Bible set out Jesus' teaching on *how to live*, whereas the teaching in Thomas is on the prior condition of *how to Be*, how to find the reality of pure Being. What seems to be missing in both is any teaching on techniques. If Jesus spoke about the practical steps needed to "make the two One", "enter the Kingdom", or find the real Self, they have not been recorded for posterity. So once we are aware of the need to quench ahamkara and unveil the real Self, how do we go about it?

The goal of Jesus' teaching in Thomas (Oneness) and the goal of Yoga (Unity) are the same. How can it be otherwise?

Techniques for achieving the goal

And fortunately, the Vedic tradition is very clear about techniques. The postures and exercises that go under the name of Yoga are very helpful to mind and body, but must not be confused with the meditation technique which is now available to anyone who wishes to quieten the 'little self', unveil the real Self and enjoy the two working in Oneness, in Unity together. The transcendental Meditation technique is simple and can be practised by anyone.

Vedic techniques in support of religion?

Maharishi does not recommend it as a substitute for, but as an adjunct to religion. He feels that this simple practice, which he calls Transcendental Meditation, belongs to the spirit of every religion and has existed in the early stages of every faith, but has become lost. Now is the time for religious leaders to revive it and provide their followers with something practical which, with their faith, will guide them to the goal of life. "Religion is a way", he says, "or at least it should be a way, to raise the consciousness of man to the level of God consciousness, to raise the human mind to the level of divine intelligence or universal cosmic mind."

It is intriguing to ask ourselves at this point: of all the multifarious branches of Christendom which comes closest to Jesus' teaching in Thomas and which comes closest in its worship to the simple practice of Transcendental Meditation?

As far as mainstream Christianity is concerned, it is hard at the moment, for example, to imagine a Papal edict that all Roman Catholics should practise Transcendental Meditation. It sounds a bit too much like handing over to the individual Church member the responsibility and the means for advancing their own spiritual growth. The only circumstances in which I would expect to see such a thing happen, would be in the event that the Church priestly hierarchy started practising TM and discovered for themselves the astonishing truth of Jesus' Oneness teaching.

I realise that there is much discussion about 'diversity' in our Society of Friends and that we hold within our embrace people from various Christian traditions, from other faiths or none, and that some claim to be 'Theists' or 'Non Theists'. Some of us are troubled at this and may wish for greater clarity of the Quaker faith.

In terms of the knowledge which I am trying to bring forward in this essay, I see this diversity as a great asset. It signifies to me that we are a body of people who do not need to declare either the substance or the shades of our faith and belief; we do not require any intermediary. We are able to pursue our individual spiritual path while holding each others hands, whether in silent worship, or in our lives and in Quaker action where we are guided by those beautifully worded Testimonies to eternal Truth.

Modern Science

Physics and the Unified Field

Quantum physics has revealed that all the different force and particle fields of nature find their common source in one unified field of all the laws of nature. This apparent nothingness, the home of all the laws of nature, spontaneously gives rise to all the natural forces and subatomic particles that structure the universe.

The model is of unity in diversity. This is paralleled in Jesus' "Oneness" teaching and in the description of unity consciousness in the Vedic tradition.

Modern science, through hundreds of carefully designed and controlled studies, has validated the Vedic techniques of consciousness. These demonstrate the benefits of Transcendental Meditation for the individual, and the sociological benefits for society of the advanced TM-Sidhi programme.

Some Conclusions: My offering to Quakerism

I have combined in this essay three strands of thought or knowledge which we may have considered separately, but perhaps never looked at together:

- 1 A primary aspect of the teaching of Jesus Christ, the '*Oneness*' doctrine, which has remained outside Church thinking and lain dormant for one thousand six hundred years.

- 2 The Vedic tradition of knowledge, the practical outcome of which is validated by modern science. The Vedic approach is concerned with the quest for the Self; our search for wholeness, for *Unity* consciousness.

- 3 Quantum physics engages in the scientific quest for truth underlying the manifest universe. As the point is reached where particles give way to waves, observation yields to mathematical formulae. The force and matter fields merge to become one underlying Field of all the laws of nature. The silent, un-manifest *Unity* of this Unified Field is the source of everything in material creation.

The simplicity of Jesus' teaching, similar to that of other great Masters, echoes down the centuries: 'make the two One'. Yoga says precisely the same thing and offers us practical help on our path. Quantum physics gives us a perfect unified model for the structure of human consciousness, and suggests that human Beings – especially in groups of requisite size – can influence positively the collective consciousness through the Unified Field. Repeated scientific trials have given all the proof needed that this is indeed so.

Is all this down to wishful thinking?

Before we move on to consider how Quakerism might respond, I am fully aware that these findings about large groups of meditators creating peaceful influences in the collective consciousness will be edging beyond the boundaries of credulity for many. I just remind myself that major new discoveries always take time to seep through the barriers of well established beliefs. After Copernicus, the sun continued to circle the earth for quite a long time!

Quakers and 'new light'

Of course I am bound to quote from *Advices and Queries* 7 in the hope that Friends may find something in what I say that resonates with their inner awareness: '*Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come? Do you approach new ideas with discernment?*' To quote Arthur Eddington again from his 1929 Swarthmore Lecture:

"But I think it may be said that Quakerism in dispensing with creeds holds out a hand to the scientist." From this I conclude he means that of all religious groups, Quakers are most likely to ponder new scientific knowledge in their hearts unhindered by prejudice.

Is it the Emperor's new clothes syndrome?!

Governments have had many offers and every opportunity to take up this knowledge for the benefit of their peoples but, so far, have generally failed to respond. However the TM movement is meanwhile nurturing the knowledge passed on by Maharishi and quietly building initiatives worldwide. The central thrust is to create the conditions for world peace by the establishment of permanent groups of meditators, and a major project is under way to set up a large permanent group of Vedic Pandits in India. (www.vedicpandits.org). Many countries are working to establish their own peace groups. In Britain, two groups are expanding; one in Lancashire, and the other in Suffolk. The following extract from the David Lynch Foundation website (www.davidlynchfoundation.org) illustrates the potential in education.

Transforming Lives: The David Lynch Foundation provides funds for students to learn to meditate through Transcendental Meditation centers, hospital-sponsored wellness programs, boys and girls clubs, before- and after-school programs and in schools when invited by the administration. Instruction is voluntary and is provided to a child with the permission of a parent and at no cost to the family, organization or school. In the past year, the Foundation has provided millions of dollars for thousands of students, teachers, and parents to learn to meditate. The Foundation also provides funds for independent research institutions to assess the effects of the program on creativity, intelligence, brain functioning, academic performance, ADHD and other learning disorders, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.

In Britain we have the shining example of the Maharishi school in Lancashire, where consciousness based education includes daily sessions of Transcendental Meditation practised by the staff and children. The vitality, happiness and intelligence of the pupils are reflected in achievements way above the national average, consistently year after year. (www.maharishischool.com)

*Everything we have done till now
Merely suggests the power of the human
Mind in its infancy. (Ben Okri – “Mental Fight”)*

It is my wish that Friends might approach the following ideas with discernment:

Meeting for Worship

I have noted wide variations across the world in the conduct of Meetings for Worship, where silence plays a greater or a lesser part. We have in Britain the un-programmed Meeting which allows maximum silence. This means two things. Friends can get closer to the Real Self (the Light) in deeper silence, and the Meeting is much more likely to become a ‘gathered Meeting’.

‘In some meetings I experience what Friends have come to call a gathered meeting, where there is afterwards a deep sense that we have all been held together in the most mysterious and wonderful manner.’ (Twelve Quakers and Worship)

While Meeting for Worship is not the same as Transcendental Meditation, there is much in common, especially during the early stages. The settling down process is much the same. As the thinking process quietens and the mind becomes more settled, the body must respond by becoming more relaxed. Or, since mind and body go together, settling down physically helps to quieten the mind.

*At these times it is not helpful to be distracted by my body so I sit in such a way that I won't have to move. . . . I think the physical stillness over a period helps to slow my mind down.
(Twelve Quakers and Worship)*

Outside noise during a Meeting is generally no problem, but sound inside the Meeting room can jerk a Friend rather too quickly back to the ordinary level of thinking and speaking, and because the physiology is more deeply settled it can cause some shock to the system.

We could foster a wider understanding that late arrival in Meeting is to be avoided; the noise caused by late arrivals can be very damaging in the vital early stages of settling into silence. All ministry could, and should, be preceded by an optimum length of silent worship. In a Meeting which lasts an hour, the first twenty minutes of silent worship might be made sacrosanct. This would bring great benefit.

The Gospel of Thomas

This Gospel is like a fuse ticking away under the edifice of Christianity. It's not that the explosion will destroy the faith, but it certainly has the potential to shake it to the core, when the faithful discover the true essence of Jesus' teaching which never made it into the Bible. If the Bible is about believing and doing, the Thomas text is about Being and Knowing. Which of these should come first?

The Gospel of Thomas is a very important source for the spiritual guidance of Quakers. Jesus' teaching in the Thomas text is universal and therefore relevant to all of us whether Christian or not. Through our silent worship, we are much better placed to perceive and feel the power of Jesus' words. All Friends who have not yet done so could find great benefit from reading Hugh McGregor Ross's translation and commentaries.

The next edition of Quaker Faith and Practice should now include a reference and brief guide as to what Friends might look for in the Thomas text as well as the Bible.

Transcendental Meditation

Friends, particularly those who are living very busy stressful lives and who don't have much opportunity for inner silence between weekly Meetings, could be encouraged to learn the practice for private use at home. This opportunity for daily stress release with regeneration of mind and body would help members in their private lives and bring added depth to their Meeting.

Peace and Social Initiatives

I believe that Quaker Peace and Social Witness projects will become even more rewarding and effective as progress with the TM initiatives builds coherence in the collective consciousness. The two approaches seem to go very much hand in hand. Arms dealers, terrorists or warring factions are more likely to make a positive response to peace making overtures when they are feeling less stressed and anxious. At the very least it would be helpful for Friends and the TM movement to be in contact with each other.

Mutual help

While the TM movement certainly has knowledge of the 'technology of consciousness' with the expertise to implement it in all areas, it lacks penetration in the fields of religion, social structure and the wheels of government which Quakers have successfully developed over the years. I believe that jointly supported projects in areas such as prisons and rehabilitation, education, socially deprived areas etc. could bring remarkably fruitful results.

Now we find the issue of climate change pushing to the forefront. Governments are themselves governed by the mood of the people, and until the collective consciousness shifts to fuller acceptance of the need for urgent action, politicians will be unable to bring forward the necessary changes in the right time. Friends are working jointly with many other groups. Perhaps we should consider working with the people who have the technology to create coherence in the consciousness of the nation.

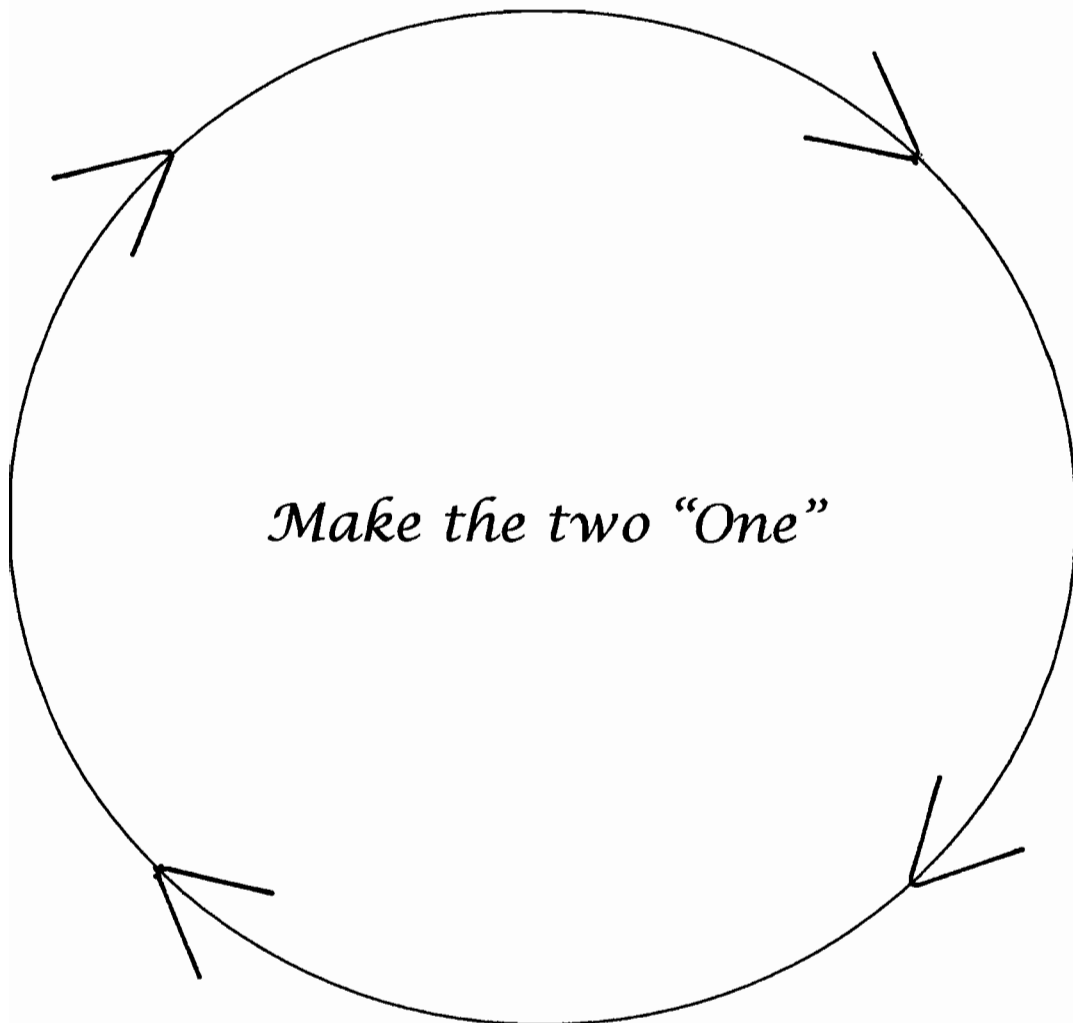
A Quantum Loop!

Ahamkara

The little self

Thought **.DIVERSITY.** Action

The Relative



The Absolute

UNITY

Real Self

The Spirit

The Light

Unified Field

The Kingdom

Total Knowledge

The Truth

Universal consciousness

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