

Concept Affinity in Mystical Traditions

By T.Collins Logan

The primary objective of this chart is to inspire others to come to their own conclusions about commonalities and differences among mystical traditions. The last thing I would want is to encourage syncretism or homogenization. My own conviction is that disparate belief systems naturally appeal to different people and cultures, and that every one of them has something unique and important to offer us – if we keep ourselves open. But is the mystical process universal? Does it share underlying structures across many traditions? Keep in mind that the same terms can have multiple or layered meanings within the same practice, and nearly always have different meanings in different schools or traditions. I have found it invaluable in my own spiritual journey to explore connections and interdependencies in these concepts, intuiting ineffable qualities within concrete language.

This has tended to be a dynamic document, evolving with each new fragment of insight gleaned from my own research, dialogues and mystical practice. Concept headings correspond with the “Four Core Disciplines” of the mystic’s way as described in my book, *Essential Mysticism*. These were derived from observing similarities in themes, overlapping intentions and common experiential qualities and progressions in various mystical systems. At some point, I hope to expand the chart to include more traditions, this being only a glint of an infinite diversity.

As a general rule, our comprehension of language has little to do with absolute meanings, and everything to do with our current state of mind. To fully appreciate what mystical words or phrases represent, we would have to immerse ourselves in the tradition from which they arise, and even then the nuances would undoubtedly morph within new experience. The current chart only reflects my own partial understanding of these concepts, and is by no means intended as conclusive or authoritative. I have also combined terms from different schools of the same tradition and from different writers over hundreds of years. The result is a “bubbling up” of widely used language and common spellings that I feel capture the *spirit* of practice, but probably depart from the formal *letter* considerably. Your feedback on appropriate word choices is invited and welcome.

Please note that although many of these concepts and comparisons are discussed in my other work, this version of the chart is intended as a “standalone” document. If you should cite this chart for any reason, please refer to the version number as well as the title.

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		Zen Buddhism	Christian Mysticism	Kundalini Yoga	Kabbalah	Sufism	Taoism
Mystic Activation	Disciplined Intention	Samma Sankappa	Mimesis	Vairagya	Kavannah	Muraquba	毋为 Wu Wei
	Mystic Activator	Shikantaza	Contemplative Prayer (Theoria/ Contemplatio)	Kriyas (Mudras & Bandhas) ↓ Dharana	Hitbonenut	Dhikr ↓ Mushahada	Microcosmic Orbit (Hsiao Chou Tien)
	Spiritually Receptive Being	Joriki	Kenosis	Dhyana	חכמה Chochmah בינה Binah דעת Da'at (Yichuda Tata'Ah)	Fana'	心斋 Xin Zhai
Spiritual Perception-Cognition (Mystical Awareness)	Transitions Through Gnosis	Kensho ↓ Satori	Illumination & Gnosis Kardias (Gnosis)	Aparoksha Anubhuti		Ma'rifa ↓ 'Irfan	(Kuan) 观 Guān ↓ 神明 Shén Míng
		Nirodha	Cloud of Unknowing (Apophatic)	Shunyata	Ayin (Bitul)	Fana' al-Fana'	毋 Wú
	Gnosis of the Absolute	Nirvana	Unio Mystica (Henosis)	Satchidananda (Savikalpa Samadhi)	Devekut (Yichuda ila'Ah)	'Ayn al-Jam	(Tao) 道 Dào
			Unmanifest Godhead	Nirguna Brahman (Nirvikalpa Samadhi)	Ein Soph	Wara u'l-Wara	
Harmonized Existence	Love Consciousness	Maitri (Metta) & Karuna	Agape	Karuna & Prema	חסד Chesed גבורה Gevurah תפארת Tiferet	'Ishq & Mahabba	(Tsyh) 慈 Ci
	Artifacts of Will	Abhinna	Pneumatika	Siddhi	נצח Netzach הוד Hod	Karamat	Stimulus-Response 感应 Gǎn Yǐng
	Transformed Identity & A New Way of Being	Mujodo No Taigen	Theosis & Fruit of the Spirit	Svadharna	יסוד Yesod	Baqa' bi Allah	毋为 Wu Wei
		Bodhisatva	Sainthood	Purna Yogi	Tzaddik	Awliya' Allah	圣人 Shèng Rén