"Whoever discovers the true meaning of these sayings will never die:
Let the seeker not stop seeking until he finds.
And when he finds, he will be greatly troubled.
And after he has been troubled,
he will be astonished,
and he will reign over the All."

- Jesus of Nazareth (The Gospel of Thomas)

It’s appallingly hard to describe or explain this no-thing, which after all is why it’s called ineffable. Basically either there is seeing or there isn’t, either the veil is dropped or it isn’t. Just being a mystic or a yogi or a shaman of course means little: more dream roles for more dream characters. As long as there is anyone here to understand, there is not understanding. As long as there is anyone here to awaken, there is not awakening. The message of the sutras and the shamans is the same: the person of understanding is the one who dies before she dies, who leaves no footprints, who travels no path, because she knows that as a person, as
an entity, she is not. But who can do this, what self can cease to be? None, as Wei Wu Wei would say, because none is: it can only happen. Then there is no one to know but only the knowing, and all this world is as in a dream or a vision; only Brilliance beyond light, Love beyond love, clear knowing pure beauty streaming through these transparent forms and no one here at all.

After the jungle, there is an intensely odd and very beautiful quality to the experience of life. In one sense I can only describe everything, all experience, as having a certain emptiness. This is the sense in which everything used to matter, to be vital and important, and is now seen as unreal, empty, not important, an illusion. Once it is seen that the beyond-brilliance of Sat Chit Ananda is all that is, the dream continues as a kind of shadow. Yet, at the same moment that all of what appears in the dream is experienced as empty, it is also seen as more deeply beautiful and perfect than ever imagined, precisely because it is not other than Sat Chit Ananda, than all that is. Everything that does not matter, that is empty illusion, is at the same time itself the beyond-brilliance, the perfect beauty. Somehow there is a balance; these two apparently opposite aspects do not cancel each other out but complement each other. This makes no 'sense,' yet it is how it is.

There is one tradition within Advaita which says that maya, the manifestation of the physical universe, is overlaid or superimposed on Sat Chit Ananda. I'm no scholar of these things, and can only attempt to describe what is seen here; and the Understanding here is that there is no question of one thing superimposed on another. Maya, the manifestation, the physical universe, is precisely Sat Chit Ananda, is not other than it, does not exist on its own
as something separate to be overlaid on top of something else. This is the whole point! There is no maya! The only reason it appears to have its own reality and is commonly taken to be real in itself is because of a misperceiving, a mistaken perception which sees the appearance and not What Is. This is the meaning of Huang Po's comment that "no distinction should be made between the Absolute and the sentient world." No distinction! There is only One. There is not ever in any sense two. All perception of distinction and separation, all perception of duality, and all perception of what is known as physical reality, is mind-created illusion. When a teacher points at the physical world and says, "All this is maya," what is being said is that what you are seeing is illusion; what all this is is All That Is, pure Being Consciousness Bliss Outpouring; it is your perception of it as a physical world that is maya, illusion.

Of course in truth there is no gate that opens into All That Is, and no path leads there. There can only be the shift in perception to see maya, the unreal, as unreal. Still, for this dream character the Understanding occurred in the context of indigenous spirituality, and so what is known in the dream as 'shamanism' in this case turns out to have been the pathless path to the gateless gate that swung open to reveal what was never hidden, never on the other side. Like any other form of religion or spiritual practice on the planet, shamanism is mostly nonsense, something for the dream characters to do to try to make sense out of it all and comfort themselves while the dream lasts. All that trying and all the trappings of shamanic practice exploded, dissolved in the light of Presence, of All That Is.

Yet there are a very few even in shamanism who also know and have seen: that it is only a dream, and that nothing
matters, and that all there is is Awareness, and that they are not. And they go through the motions for others, or perhaps with the passage of time in the dream they do so less and less until no more, and are seen as crazy fools. Who cares? For, while it is known beyond doubt that as a person, an individual, an entity, as ‘david,’ even as ‘spirit,’ I am not, do not exist, nor does any other: nevertheless it is equally obvious that as All That Is, I Am.

The seeing that occurred in the jungle was and is self-validating in the sense that it is absolute and needs no confirmation. Everything is seen in its light; it relativizes everything and is itself relativized by nothing. Nevertheless, in the dream, the dream character continues to function as such. And that dream character, that body/mind instrument, will be impacted by the occurrence of the Understanding.

It seems that in most cases the Understanding comes after some period of seeking and of coming to an intellectual understanding of the teachings of the perennial wisdom, and in such cases there would likely be at least something of a recognition when it happened. In this case however there was very little if any preparation in terms of being exposed to the basic concepts. In one way this was a deep and beautiful grace and blessing; I have seen the intellectual comprehension of the concepts involved become itself a tremendous block to many spiritual seekers, and in this case I was spared that, the Understanding happening naturally, spontaneously and innocently.

But in another sense it made the impact greater, and without preparation the body/mind was thrown into a kind of chaos. For this reason I find Suzanne Segal’s account
B. Deliverance

quite poignant; there is a deep appreciation of what she went through. Although in a sense she had more preparation than in my case, having trained in Transcendental Meditation with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, still it did not seem to have provided her with the necessary parameters to comprehend the awakening when it happened. Perhaps even more significantly, she was not provided with any meaningful support after it occurred, and spent the next twelve years with psychotherapists engaged in “an all-out effort to pathologize the emptiness of personal self in an effort to get rid of it.”

In my case, the shamanic context could not itself provide an adequate system of ideas and experience in which to ground and comprehend and express what had happened. I knew that there was “nobody home,” that there was not and never had been a ‘david,’ that what I had always thought of as ‘myself’ was a fiction. I also knew that Brilliant Presence was All, outpouring. This was beautiful and perfect, but at the same time it produced what at the time I called a severe ‘disconnect;’ a sense of discontinuity not only from any sense of personal past or history or beliefs or purpose, but also a total disconnect from what was apparently the experience of every other being on the planet, as far as I knew. Within our social and cultural context, the possibility that there had been some kind of psychotic dissociative break and that the david thing had gone quite insane seemed a very plausible explanation.

And so what followed was once again miraculous, unearned Grace. As a result of the unconventional way in which the Understanding occurred in this case there was not the discovering of the relationship with a guru in the traditional way. Yet there is something, perhaps similar,
as this unfolds: simply being, resting, in this Brilliance, letting this tremendous Grace take hold: clearing, opening into this Peace that passes understanding.

Almost everyone I’ve heard of for whom this nameless thing appears to have been genuine seems to have gone into a long gestation period. Robert Adams, Tony Parsons, Suzanne Segal, Douglas Harding, and others; even Ramana Maharshi: ten, twelve, twenty years before any ‘coming out.’ In the Zen tradition, when a student monk comes to awakening he stays on in the role of student for another ten years of ‘stabilizing.’ Even Hui-Neng, the Sixth Zen Patriarch went and hid in the mountains for fifteen years after it happened.

Makes sense here. Jed McKenna calls it a “damn peculiar ten years” and I’d have to agree. It simply takes a while for the body/mind organism to adjust. Everything that people think is important and makes sense, is seen to be completely absurd, meaningless. And what people don’t even see, is Perfect, beautiful, complete, needs no words. There is an inclination, even greater than previously, toward silence and solitude even though there is obviously no such thing.

Hui-Neng says that while the Understanding is sudden, what he calls ‘deliverance’ is gradual indeed. Near as I can figure, the mind/body thing is impacted by the happening of the Understanding, and that can take some adjustment. How can it be otherwise? In some cases perhaps the transition can be smooth: if for example you live in a culture and a time in which you are saturated in the the basic elements of the Teaching all your life, the period of adjustment in the body/mind organism may be very mild.

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Clearly in my case it was different, almost the complete opposite. After a lifetime of experiencing life as almost unbearably confusing and painful, of fighting against life and everything it brought, very different patterns and habits and ways of thinking were laid down in the conditioning. There was no background of the Teaching to fall back on or refer to. And, there was no community or other resources for support immediately after the happening.

There is a tradition in Buddhism of something called Pratyeka-bodhi, 'solitary realization.' It refers to Awakening when it occurs outside of the usual transmission of teaching from master to disciple, and without the usual background or preparation or support. In such a case, the road to deliverance might well be even more “damn peculiar” than otherwise. Perhaps Ramesh was thinking of something like this when he said to me,

"So, the Awakening can be of different kinds, yes. The experience you had was, as you said, 'no one home;' there is, truly, no david. And that is truly when there is no identification. And because that happened in your case, you had a problem living your life... therefore yours is a unique case."

When I came across Jesus' comment at the beginning of The Gospel of Thomas, it was the first time I'd found a teacher saying that after the ‘finding’ of awakening, one can be greatly disturbed, greatly troubled. Depending on the conditioning of the body/mind in question, this may not always be the case, but it was the case here. This period of disturbance is itself ‘deliverance,’ the rearranging of the patterning and conditioning of the life of the body/mind in the light of the new conditioning provided in the Understanding. And underlying it all is the constant, total amazement of awareness as the All, which never dies.
Perfect Brilliant Stillness

But this all has to do with how the body/mind organism responds and adjusts to the varying ways in which the Understanding occurs. It has always been quite clear that the Understanding itself is ultimately complete and simple and total. Those who argue that there is gradual awakening, or awakening in stages or degrees, or even some process of deepening into it, seem to me to be missing something very essential and integral to the Understanding itself. It is not something of time and space, and it cannot take up time or space. It is not an experience, is not a process. It is a piercing of time and space by the pivotal intuitive insight that all time and all space and all things and all entities including the one in whom the insight is occurring, all are not. How can this be other than instantaneous, immediate? It can’t be partial; it’s either/or.

And all this is apparent only; it is seen that there is nothing here: words, ideas, thoughts, all meaningless; “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound a fury, signifying nothing.” What Is, is great beauty, great love, great silence, and that really is all. Once again it doesn’t translate, doesn’t seem to be communicable, expressible.