

Cynthia Bourgeault  
On  
**Knowing and Gnosticism**  
From  
*The Meaning of Mary Magdalene,  
Discovering the Woman at the Heart of Christianity*  
Pages 38-39

Karen King has properly said that there is not such thing as “Gnosticism” – i.e., an organized counterbalancing religion (like Christianity only with the “wrong” Doctrines). But while this point cannot be made strongly enough, there is still widespread confusion as to what *gnosticism* actually means, and when the term is used indiscriminately to describe an unfamiliar cosmovision, it winds up unfairly (for better or for worse) prejudicing our response to it. ...

The word *gnostic* comes from the Greek *gnosis*, which means “knowledge.” It’s a perfectly respectable scriptural word. Paul uses it repeatedly in his writings, including the celebrated lines from 1 Corinthians 13: “For now I see through a glass darkly, but later face to face; now I know in part, but later I will know even as also I am known.” But the essential thing to keep in mind about this knowing is that it’s participational – a “knowing even as also I am known.” **It is not just a knowing from the head; it’s a knowing with the entire being. ... Gnosis speaks of a complete, integral knowing uniting body, mind, and heart – and by its very largeness connecting the seen and the unseen.**

Please note that this “knowing” is not *initiatic* wisdom. It is **not about Mystery rituals or secret initiation ceremonies where esoteric information is imparted.** ... The difference between these two kinds of wisdoms can be summed up in a helpful distinction suggested by Ken Wilber – between “states and “stages.” Initiatic rituals can briefly change people’s states, transporting them into ecstatic visions and cosmic consciousness. **But gnosis is about stages; it is integral knowledge brought about by the slow unification of one’s being. ... Jesus taught gnosis and was a master of gnosis, ...** But he did not change anyone’s states, either by secret rituals or esoteric information. **Rather, he set his disciples upon the only known path to integral transformation: the slow and persistent overcoming of the ego through a lifelong practice of surrender and nonattachment. His gnosis is gradual, conscious, and sober.**

Gary’s Comments (5/1/2011)...

**Diagram from Pathwork Lecture 127 -- Evolution’s Four Stages: 1. Automatic Reflexes, 2. Awareness, 3. Understanding, 4. Knowing**

Note how the following diagram that I developed from Pathwork Lecture 127 fits this explanation of Knowing. This is my experience – that I do my work of meditation, daily review, reading the Lectures and other materials, etc., and then

suddenly I get experiences of deeper knowing. They come out of nowhere and seem only indirectly connected to my personal development work and practices. All pretty amazing. This Knowing does not come directly from the content or intellectual concepts imparted by the lectures, as moving as they are for me. Rather the Knowing arises all by itself, during meditation or during life, but is indirectly connected to my practices, including my devotional readings of the Pathwork lectures and other similar material. It is indirect in that this Knowing (or gnosis) seems to come from my intuitive self, even my heart self.

