

Verse 177 begins a focused discussion of the two Paths, which is the major symbolic theme of this second fragment. The Path of discipleship, which is the process of coming into knowledge of oneself and of wholeness — both within ourselves and with all life around and above us — reaches a dividing point. The one Path becomes two. One of the branches leads to liberation from limitations and pain, that is, it takes us out of this world and brings us to Nirvana. The other branch, however, returns to this world, giving those who take it the opportunity to become Servers of humanity, or Bodhisattvas of Compassion.

The phrase “cast the prize away” has a gloss (33) referring the reader to a later gloss (34) to verse 306 in Fragment 3. That later gloss is a long discussion of the doctrine of the *trikaya* or “three bodies (of the Buddha).” That doctrine will be treated in detail in the third fragment of *The Voice*. It includes the *dharmakaya*, which is the Buddha body of those who take the Path of Liberation to Nirvana, and the *nirmanakaya*, which is the Buddha body of those who take the Path of Renunciation of Nirvana in order to remain in the world and serve it.

As gloss 34 says, those who take the Path of Renunciation of a Nirmanakaya lead a “Secret Life” because they are in, but not of, the world. Consequently they work in quietness and mystery for the welfare of all beings and especially of humanity: Gloss 34. The “Secret Life” is life as a Nirmanakaya.

The two Paths are also called “open” and “secret,” as verse 180 states and gloss 35 explains: Gloss 35. The “Open” and the “Secret Path” — or the one taught to the layman, the exoteric and the generally accepted, and the other the Secret Path — the nature of which is explained at initiation.

The Open Path is exoteric because all religions speak of salvation or illumination or enlightenment or liberation as the goal of life. But the other Path is esoteric or Secret because the ideal of remaining in the world as a behind-the-scenes helper of humanity is not a common theme in exoteric religions, being taught chiefly in the esoteric tradition.

The four portals referred to in verse 179 are perhaps the four states of verse 22, and the “seven portals” are dealt with in fragment three, entitled “The Seven Portals.”