

The Emerging Noetic Revolution

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For no light matter is at stake. The question concerns the very way that human life is to be lived.

—Plato (*The Republic, Book I*)

On the cusp of the 3rd century CE two great scholar-masters—Nagarjuna in the East and Plotinus in the West—began the noetic nondual knowledge revolution for our species that is just now re-emerging as the new Noetic Revolution of the 21st century. (Nondual is subject/object unity, *advaya*/not two/not one; nondual wisdom is *noēsis/noetic* knowledge with no essential subject/object, matter/spirit separation.) All such societal and cultural knowledge relationships are necessarily subsumed and embraced by a vast interdependent matrix of relationship, an unbounded whole—by whatever name—that is nondual ultimate reality itself, the inherent basal source condition of all relative-conventional reality that arises therein.

As the developmental dialectic of humanity's emotional, spiritual and ethical evolution proceeds, and the ontological estrangement of the present Modern worldview of Scientific Materialism and the nihilism of its Postmodern reaction recedes, this incipient global noetic reformation in religion, science and culture has gently reintroduced to humankind an interior, integral and transpersonal knowledge paradigm, discoverable in part through the contemplative injunctions of the esoteric and nondual knowledge paths of our Premodern wisdom traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam); this all toward discovering or uncovering inherent meaning, even ultimate meaning in our lives.

What is the meaning of life in this constant presence of our death? What are the causes of human happiness? Why do we refuse to be happy? What shall we do with this precious life we've been given? The big questions ask of our origin, our identity and our destiny. Such ultimate questions orient us toward the rediscovery and recovery of the ineffable mystery of both relative and ultimate meaning and happiness for one who considers them. We shall herein consider some of them.

Some of our Premodern primordial wisdom traditions teach of the profound knowledge/wisdom dialectic of the Two Fundamental Truths—our two ways of being here—the social interobjective, and cultural intersubjective worlds of Relative Truth (*samvriti satya*/form) of arising finite conventional spacetime reality, and then the perfectly subjective Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*/emptiness), the infinite primordial nondual ultimate reality ground that transcends, yet embraces objective reality, and in which this all arises, descends and appears (involution). Our lives are an opportunity and a choice to return to this basal ground (evolution). Thus our human condition is this: we must live in and balance these two worlds—relative/objective and ultimate/subjective—at once!

Thus, the perennial dilemma for science, spirituality and culture is the resolution of this invidious apparent duality, the relationship of our objective finite material existence—body and mind—to perfectly subjective all-embracing nondual Spirit, infinite ground in which eve-

rything arises and participates. Such is the “problem” of soteriology, the individual and thus collective challenge of human psycho-spiritual awakening/liberation/enlightenment (*bodhi*).

I shall herein argue that the rigorous cognitive coupling of our objective and scientific understanding with the deep subjective realization of this momentous principle of the indivisible unity and coalescent dimensional interdependence of these two seemingly incommensurable paradigms—these perennial Two Truths—is the inherent treasure of mind, our heart’s desire, and both origin and aim of all of our happiness seeking strategies.

To this purpose I shall enlist, however cursorily, for ultimate soteriological as well as polemical and pedagogical ends, the profound intertextual epistemological dialectics—both conceptual critical analysis and contemplative mindfulness practice—of the great centrist Buddhist middle way *Prasangika Madhyamaka* philosophy of Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti and Tsongkhapa, and their luminous predecessors, Longchen Rabjam (Longchenpa) and Ju Mipham.

With this dialectal Buddhist Mahayana sutra foundation we will then glimpse the non-dialectical tantric view of the directly present immanent unity of objective material form (matter), and the ultimate perfectly subjective sphere of *Dzogchen*, the Great Perfection. Thus shall we engage the inherently vexed perennial duality that is the Two Truths of objective form/matter and subjective emptiness/spirit, remembering all the while Buddhist nondual wisdom that “form is emptiness, emptiness is form.” Knowing subject and perceived object, while appearing separate, are “always already” a prior ontological unity.

We shall then briefly explore, to the same purpose, an important bit of 20th century intellectual history, namely, an urgent Postmodern “ontological relativity” as it arises in Relativistic Quantum Field Theory—QED/QCD—of the Standard Model of recent physics and cosmology. Following this is an examination of the logical and empirical possibility (or impossibility) of a physical “Theory of Everything.” It is here that I shall criticize the separative, destructive aspect of Modernist determinist mechanistic Scientific Materialism. We shall, in this connection, re-visit the Postmodern work of Bohr, Gödel, Quine, Derrida, Bell, Kuhn and a promising new post-Standard Model anti-realist physics from a philosophically recalcitrant Stephen Hawking.

A robust, integral noetic science of matter, mind and spirit must utilize the phenomenological “doublet” of both objective third person exterior exoteric quantitative Science, and first person subjective interior esoteric qualitative spirit/value methodologies. Such a noetic approach is required if we are to guide our evolution—preconscious, conscious, and supraconscious—individually and thereby collectively, through the ascending life stages of human psycho-spiritual development. The end point of this evolutionary process is nothing less than the awakening/liberation/enlightenment of our species; which is to say, in due course, the long deferred nativity of a bright new species. I have here and elsewhere referred to this evolutionary reformation in religion, science and culture as the emerging Noetic Revolution of the 21st century. This process shall herein be our ultimate concern.

Hence, such an integral, noetic science requires the perennial cognitive dialectic (*pramana*) of both objective reason (*vikalpa, anumana*), and subjective yogic direct perception

(*pratyaksa*) of and meditation (*bhavana*) upon our indwelling inherent (*sahaja*) nondual primordial awareness wisdom (innate *gnosis*, *sahajajnana*, *yeshe*). As suggested above, these two intertextual complementary knowledge paradigms—these perennial “Two Truths”, objective relative and subjective ultimate—together enhance the path to that soteriological realization of our "supreme identity" with the primordial, perfectly subjective basal ultimate reality in which, or in whom all descending spacetime relative things and beings arise and participate.

On the accord of our wisdom traditions this realization—and its spontaneous effortless actualization in kind compassionate conduct—represents our relative, but also our ultimate individual and collective meaning that is the ultimate great happiness (*mahasuka*, *paramananda*, *eudaemonia*, *beatitudo*), the happiness that cannot be lost.