

Realizing Human Happiness: Toward a Noetic Science of Matter, Mind and Spirit

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Integrating Science and Spirit. In the 2nd century CE two great scholar-masters—Nagarjuna in the East and Plotinus in the West—began the *nondual revolution* in human consciousness that is only just now unifying our wisdom traditions, East and West. This noetic view (the prior and present unity of our objective and subjective dimensions) understands the ontological interdependence—the ontological relativity—of all arising phenomena with their basal primordial ground. On this nondual view then, there is no *essential* separation, no inherent duality of knowing subject and its appearing objects. Mind and body, spirit and matter are a unified unbounded whole (*mahabindu, shunyata, dharmakaya, parabrahman*).

As the developmental dialectic of human intellectual, emotional and spiritual evolution proceeds, and the cognitive estrangement of global Modern and even Postmodern Scientific Materialism recedes, a “new science of consciousness” has emerged. This new science has revealed an inchoate integral noetic paradigm that integrates our *subjective cognition*—the “soft,” interior “first person” personal experience, and the transpersonal contemplative technologies of the spiritual paths of our wisdom traditions—with *objective cognition*, the “hard,” exterior “third person” data sets of the neurosciences. We need hard neuroscience to explicate the hardware of brain, and a soft, contemplative science of consciousness to penetrate the software of mind. An integral noetic science of mind must utilize this epistemic “doublet” of both objective (and interobjective) and subjective (and intersubjective) methodologies as we evolve, individually and collectively, toward our next lifestage, that is ultimately, in the fullness of time, a bright new species—*Homo gnostica*.

Neuroscientists utilizing functional MRI technology with the Dalai Lama’s highly trained meditators have discovered an astonishing plasticity of the brain’s emotional circuits (Begely 2007). This discovery has demonstrated that negative human emotions (fear, anger, greed, pride) may be healed, and positive emotions (compassion/joy) generated through contemplative mind training. Indeed, for our contemplative wisdom traditions such cognition bestows the very causes of human happiness.

Choosing Reality. Moreover, our temporary positive “state” changes may become, through contemplative mind training, permanent personality “trait” changes as brief glimpses and experiences of the whole become stable consciousness structures. Contrary to the dreary neuro-genetic determinism of the positivist old paradigm social sciences, negative emotions are not “hardwired” into the brain. Humans may be deluded (*avidya, hamartia*), but we are not evil. Nor does there exist a fixed individual “happiness set point” selected by our genes. We are free to *choose* our “basic goodness”—happiness itself—this inherent presence of the great whole that is always already present at the heart/*hridayam* (H.H. The Dalai Lama 2009).

Thus it is, the nondual *View* and the compassionate, non-goal directed “be here now” practice of the *Path* can transform the mind, and this changes the self-centered behavior that

cloaks the compassionate *wisdom of kindness* as it spontaneously arises from our primordially present wisdom mind (gnosis, *jnana*, *yeshe*). An effective lifeworld practice frees us from the destructive negative emotions (fear/anger, hostility, greed, pride), and from blind faith in the fundamentalist protoreligion that is the Scientific Materialism metaphysic—the cult of fundamentalist Scientism—with its naïve and catastrophic reduction of perfectly subjective, all-embracing nondual Spirit to mere consumable matter. This new science of consciousness is an urgent juncture in the integration, then unification of Science and Spirit, and the emergence of a truly integral noetic science of mind, nature, ethics and spirituality.

The “Hard Problem,” and the Really Hard Problem of Consciousness. This incipient integral science of mind has cast new light upon the perennial “Mind-Body Problem.” This is the “Hard Problem” for Western cognitive science, the neurosciences, and contemporary philosophy of mind (Boaz 2014).

The problem is usually expressed as the “explanatory gap” between exterior, exoteric objective physical brain, and interior esoteric subjective awareness states, *qualia*, or phenomenal experience; in short, the gap between body/matter and mind/spirit. Can the many dimensions of mind, the inherent subjectivity of mind actually be reduced to merely objective physical/chemical “emergent properties”, or epiphenomena of brain processes, as the old dualistic Scientific Materialist paradigm insists? Will scientists and philosophers ever see that this deep cultural background materialist/realist “web of belief” (Quine 1969) presupposes the very subjective consciousness necessary to formulate such a denial of consciousness (Boaz 2014)?

Our emerging post-empirical, integral noetic paradigm relaxes this “taboo of subjectivity” inherent in the metaphysical dogma of the prevailing objectivist Scientific Materialism/Scientific Realism paradigm (“The Idols of the Tribe”, [blog] www.davidpaulboaz.org). The emerging integral noetic view acknowledges the urgency of a noetic science of consciousness that explores this subjective voice of mind, particularly the emotions—our prepersonal and personal negative emotions (anger/aggression) that destroy us, and transpersonal emotions (compassion/joy) that heal us.

Our view and understanding of this apparent *problem of subjectivity* determines the root relation of knowing subject to our perceived objects—the epistemological question as to how and what we can know, and the “ontological problem” of “what there is” (Quine 1969), namely, the ultimate nature of appearing phenomena, our essential or ultimate mode of being here. In short, who am I? “No small matter is at stake. The question concerns the very way in which human life is to be lived” (Plato, Republic, Book I).

Note that this perennial duality of mind/body, subject/object, self/other, finite appearance/infinite reality, matter/spirit, humanity/God arises only at the *outer/exoteric* and *inner/esoteric* levels (concept and belief) of the *four views* that are our four levels or strata of being, our dimensions of explanation and understanding.

The trans-rational aspects or faces of the four views are the post-empirical, trans-conceptual *innermost secret* and finally, *nondual* understanding of phenomenal reality. Here

arising and appearing reality is seen to be objectively, conventionally or *relatively* real, yet its *ultimate* nature is known by our wisdom traditions to be a perfectly subjective, ontologically prior, interdependent unity of spacetime matter/energy, arising through its emptiness/boundlessness "groundless ground" (*shunyata, Tao, Nirguna Brahman*). As Buddhist *Madhyamaka's* Nagarjuna told, "In emptiness there is not a shred of intrinsic existence." And this includes emptiness itself. Mahayana Buddhist emptiness is empty of any essential, logocentric, permanent, intrinsic or absolute existence. This is known as the "emptiness of emptiness."

Thus do we live in two worlds at once! These two conceptual categories, these two dimensions or realms of our being here—form and emptiness, objective and subjective, Relative and Ultimate Truth, "Small Mind" and "Big Mind", appearance and reality—arise via the subtlest nondual teaching of our wisdom traditions as variations on the theme of that essential unity of the "Two Truths" and these four levels of understanding. Hence, the Two Truths are one unified truth that is invariant through all human cognitive state changes—outer, inner, innermost, and nondual, objective and subjective, conceptual and trans-conceptual contemplative. As Shakyamuni Buddha told, "Form is empty (*stong pa/shunya*), emptiness (*stong pa nyid/shunyata*) is form". Relative, dualistic cognition sees them as separate. Ultimate, nondual cognition sees the already present unity. Buddha mind knows these two at once (*samata jnana*), with no distraction. The innermost secret and the nondual cognition are utterly present to that primordial awareness wisdom condition. Indeed That (*tat*) is who we actually are, our "supreme identity" from the very beginning. *Tat Tvam Asi*, That I Am, without a single exception.

Now there is a subtler aspect to this seeming problem of the inherent subjectivity from whence this all arises. The *really* hard problem for human beings is the healing and unification of this seeming primordial split, the apparent duality of these Two Truths that are our two modes of being. The objective, *finite* existence of our bodymind and its conduct (ethics) in the relative conventional world of cause and effect (karma) must be reconciled and reconnected to our perfectly subjective *infinite* sourceground, the vast, acausal, atemporal unbounded whole (*Bhavanga, chittadhatu, mahabindu, Dzogchen*) itself. After all, our nondual primordial "supreme source" is our "supreme identity" in which, or in whom everything appears and participates. So how do we reconnect? Or are we already connected? Let's see.

Human Happiness: Zen Mind, Wisdom Mind. An enduring commitment to the trans-rational, noetic, nondual *View*, and to the relative psycho-emotional/spiritual *Path* lifts the apparent obstruction—the negative emotions of the separate self-sense, the ego-I—and reveals the fully awake, always already present indwelling *presence* of that basal primordial ground. Then gradually, then suddenly the stable *Result*, the fruit that is primordial wisdom mind (gnosis, *jnana*) arises. And that is the realization of the prior epistemic unity of the Two Truths, these two modes of being here as we participate in the vast self-reflexive "implicate order" (Bohm), the all-embracing "unbroken whole" itself. Where there's a whole, there are

participating holons, that is, parts that participate in ever greater wholes. Where there are parts, there's a more inclusive subsuming whole.

As to the Result of the Path, "The fruit is no different at the pinnacle of enlightenment than it is at the primordial base." (Ad Zom Rinpoche). The spontaneous compassionate expression of this great realization in our everyday lifeworld is the secret of relative happiness (*eudaemonia, felicitas*), but it is also ultimate happiness itself (*mahasuka, paramananda*); the happiness that cannot be lost.

Here is the crazy, miraculous paradox: not only do we realize this double happiness by not seeking happiness—by "letting it be as it is", as Shakyamuni Buddha told—but we utilize the ignorance/*avidya* of "Small Mind" to realize "Big Mind," our indwelling perfect wisdom mind! In other words, we utilize the relative truth of the Path, to realize the ultimate truth that is the Fruit or Result, liberation from suffering, happiness itself. We cannot *become* happy later; we can only *be* happy now. Indeed, a most unusual paradox. It is only through transformation and transmutation of the afflictive negative emotions—the ignorance/*avidya, marigpa*—inherent in being in the realm of *relative* spacetime reality, that we realize the "crazy wisdom" that is the radical freedom and happiness inherent in the all-inclusive embrace of *ultimate* reality, the conceptually unfabricated beautiful prior unity of this present moment now, but always in the context of a past and a future. An idealized "now" without a personal past and future is meaningless. Our past and future are interdependently enfolded in this moment now, while always unfolding in the timeless continuum of that very same now (Dōgen 1986).

View, Path and Result. Our wisdom traditions have a View, Path and Result. The *View* provides both conceptual and trans-conceptual noetic knowledge and insight, and an increased tolerance for the cognitive dissonance—contradiction, paradox, anxiety—of the Path. Just so, the *Path* provides the method, that ascending subtler strata of teaching, practice and courage necessary to deconstruct the self-sense, the destructive ego-I. Together, the View and the Path awaken always present wisdom mind that develops, then completes the *Result*, the fruition of enlightenment that is radical happiness itself. On this Path to wholeness "development is envelopment" (Plotinus) at ever subtler, more inclusive levels of Spirit embrace.

From the view and understanding of the *outer* and *inner* levels or dimensions of the above Four Views, this process of the Path requires intention and effort—courage, discipline and perseverance. From the view and understanding of the timeless *innermost secret* and *nondual* dimensions, "It is already accomplished from the very beginning" (Garab Dorje). No problem at all. Now, there is nothing left to do. So all that we do is selfless, authentic and kind.

When we forget ourselves we are actually the true activity of the big mind or reality itself. When we realize this fact, there is no problem whatever in this world. The purpose of our practice is to be aware of this fact... It may be too perfect for us, just now, because we are so much attached to our own feeling, to our individual existence...When we reach this understanding, we find the true meaning of our life.

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