

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 Noetic Revolution* in human consciousness that is only just now unifying our wisdom traditions, East and West. This noetic wisdom view—the prior and present unity of our human *noetic cognitive doublet*—objective and subjective dimensions of mind—understands the ontological interdependence and identity of all arising phenomena with their basal primordial awareness-consciousness ground. On this nondual view and practice there is no *essential* separation, no subject-object split or inherent duality of knowing subject and its appearing objects, no essential divide between self and other, no separation between relative self and ultimate primordial awareness no-self Presence. "No-self is the true refuge of self." [Buddha].

We shall discover herein that this knowing-feeling love-wisdom understanding is our human Noetic Imperative: mind and body, matter and spirit are *ultimately* an integral, trans-conceptual nondual, already unified unbounded whole (*shunyata/emptiness, Tao, dharmakaya, parabrahman*). This vast whole is the selfless, formless Ultimate Truth dimension (*paramartha satya*)—all embracing and all pervading 'supreme source' or ground—in which, or in whom the spacetime Relative Truth dimension (*samvriti satya*) of form arises, participates, and is instantiated. In the Mahayana Buddhist View these two ontic dimensions constitute the prodigious Mahayana/Vajrayana Two Truths ontic and epistemic 'dominant trope'.

As the developmental dialectic of human intellectual, emotional and spiritual evolution proceeds, and the cognitive estrangement of global Modern and 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 physical and 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 life stage that is ultimately, in the fullness of time, a bright new species—*Homo gnostica*.

Neuroscientists utilizing fMRI technology with H.H. Dalai Lama's highly trained meditators have discovered an astonishing plasticity of the brain's structure. [Ch. 4 above;

Davidson 2017, Begely 2007]. This discovery has shown that negative human emotions (fear, anger, hostility, hatred, grasping desire, greed, pride) may be healed, and positive emotions (compassion/joy) may be generated through contemplative mind training.

Indeed, on the accord of our contemplative wisdom traditions it is from such quiescent cognition that compassionate *bodhichitta*—the very cause of harmless human happiness—spontaneously arises for the benefit of living beings.

Choosing Our Realities

Moreover, such temporary positive 'state changes' may become, through contemplative mind training, permanent personality 'trait changes' as brief glimpses and experiences of the vast awareness whole become stable consciousness structures. [Davidson 2017; Siegel 2013; Boaz 2020]

Contrary to the dreary neuro-genetic determinism of the positivist waning social science paradigm, negative emotions are not 'hardwired' into the brain. Humans may be deluded (*avidya, hamartia*), but we are not inherently genetically 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*. [Ch. 4; H.H. Dalai Lama 2009]

Thus it is, the nondual View and the compassionate, non-goal directed (*Wu Wei*) 'be here now' practice of the Path may transform the mind, and this changes the self-centered behavior that cloaks our innate altruistic compassion as it spontaneously arises from our primordially present love-wisdom mind (*gnosis, jnana, yeshe*).

An effective life-world practice imperfectly frees us from the destructive negative emotions, and from blind faith in the fundamentalist proto-religion that is the Scientific Materialism/Physicalism metaphysic that has now nearly entirely colonized the Western heart and mind. In its most fundamentalist proto-religious cloak this habit of mind is the cult of Scientism, with its naïve and catastrophic reduction and commodification of perfectly subjective, all-embracing nondual Spirit to mere consumable matter. This emerging incipient Noetic Science of Consciousness is an urgent juncture in the integration, then unification of objective Science and subjective Spirit, and with that the emergence of a truly integral noetic science of mind, nature, ethics and spirituality. [Boaz 2022, *The Noetic Revolution*]

The Hard Problem, and the Really Hard Problem of Consciousness

This incipient integral noetic science of mind has cast new light upon our perennial 'Mind-Body Problem'—the infamous 'Hard Problem' for Western cognitive science, the neurosciences, and contemporary philosophy of mind. [Boaz 2022]

The 'hard problem of consciousness', first identified by philosopher David Chalmers (1969) is usually expressed as the 'explanatory gap' between exterior, exoteric objective physical brain processing, and interior esoteric subjective awareness states,

qualia, or phenomenal experience; in short, the perennial 'mind-body problem'—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 waning dualistic Metaphysical Scientific Materialism paradigm insists? Will scientists and philosophers ever understand that this deep Greek cultural background objective materialist/realist 'global web of belief' (Quine 1969) presupposes the very subjective awareness-consciousness whole in whom such a denial of consciousness arises and is formulated?

Our emerging post-empirical, integral noetic knowledge paradigm relaxes this 'taboo of subjectivity' (Wallace 2012) inherent in the 400 year old 'Enlightenment' metaphysical dogma of the prevailing 'classical' objectivist Scientific Materialism/Physicalism and Scientific Local Realism paradigm. 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 personal negative emotions (anger/aggression) that destroy us, and transpersonal emotions (compassion/joy) that heal and save us.

Thus, from the metaphysical ontology you choose, arises the phenomenal reality you deserve. Well, that's cause and effect karma for you.

Our view and understanding of this apparent *problem of subjectivity* determines the root relation of knowing subject to our perceived objects—the odious split between self/subject and other/object. This perennial epistemological question as to how and what we can know, and the 'ontological problem' as to what ultimately exists, and how (Quine 1969) constitutes the most vexing dilemma in the history of science, philosophy and religion. What is the *ultimate* nature of this continuum of appearing *relative* phenomena. What is the essential or ultimate mode of being here in spacetime for we self-conscious beings in form who desire to know our origin, our identity, and our destiny. In short, Who Am I? What is our 'supreme identity'? "No small matter is at stake. The question concerns the very way in which human life is to be lived." (Plato)

Thus arises two urgent human happiness questions: 1) Who is it That I Am? 2) What is your mind?

Bing Here: The Two Truths and our Four Human Cognitive Dimensions

Please consider well the following reflections. The Two Truths *unity* of the vast aboriginal awareness-consciousness whole that is reality itself are: 1) nondual Ultimate Truth, primordial formless, selfless 'original wakefulness' of the basal ground of 2) dualistic Relative Truth that continuously arises and appears as phenomenal spacetime instantiations of the ground, including all of us. The perennial linguistic-semiotic conceptual dualities of mind/body, subject/object, self/other, finite appearance/infinite reality, matter/spirit, humanity/God arise only at this form dimension of conventional, conditional Relative Truth ($E = mc^2$).

The awareness-consciousness processional that comprises our four cognitive dimensional *mind states* and their corresponding *life stages* of this Two Truths prior and present unity are: 1) pre-conceptual ordinary direct perception, prior to thinking and naming; 2) exoteric objective, scientific-empirical, rational conceptual processing, where we spend most of our conscious lives; 3) esoteric subjective mostly trans-conceptual contemplative/meditative cognition; which then opens into 4) perfectly subjective nondual unified wakefulness or direct cognizance (*yogi pratyaksa*) of the vast unbounded whole itself. This is the formless selfless dimension of the buddhas.

The lucent already present Presence of that vast interdependent primordial awareness-consciousness ground abides always at the spiritual Heart (*hridayam*) of the human being. It is That to which we awaken, step by mindful step, through assiduous practice of the Path under the guidance of a qualified meditation master, and in the context of the spiritual community.

All four of these self-cognizing *mind states* are potentially immediately available to 'normal' human consciousness. We receive 'brief glimpses many times' as the busy mind opens to receive, and just for a moment rests in luminous nondual *rigpa* 'Presence' of the all-pervading ground, beyond thoughts and judgments about it. However, corresponding *life stages* three and four are not accomplished by a course, contemplatively untrained mind. They are experienced over time as a function of contemplative mind training upon and within *mind states* three and four.

Now each of these ascending consciousness states and stages transcends yet embraces and subsumes the less subtle, less inclusive previous states or stages. For example, cognitive state/stage three understands state/stage one and two, but not the all embracing consciousness mindstream or life stage dimension of a buddha, or of a great *Dzogchen/Mahamudra* meditation master who abides at cognitive state/stage four.

In all four of these human consciousness dimensions, arising and appearing phenomenal reality is here seen to be objectively, conventionally or *relatively* real, yet its *ultimate* nature is known by the masters of our wisdom traditions to be a perfectly subjective, ontologically prior, interdependent unity of spacetime matter/energy ($E = mc^2$) form arising through its formless, selfless emptiness/boundless 'groundless ground' (*shunyata, dharmakaya, Tao, Nirguna Brahman, Ein Sof*).

As 2nd century Buddhist Middle Way Madhyamaka founder Nagarjuna told, "In emptiness there is not a shred of intrinsic existence." And this includes boundless *shunyata/emptiness* itself. Mahayana Buddhist emptiness is itself empty of any essential, logocentric, permanent, intrinsic, absolute/ultimate existence! Yet it is not empty of this all too real relative-conventional existence. H.H. Dalai Lama calls this mode of ultimate reality the 'emptiness of emptiness'.

Told Buddha in his nondual *Heart of Wisdom Sutra*:

Form is empty; emptiness is form.
Form is not other than emptiness;
Emptiness is not other than form.

Form ($E = mc^2$) arises from, abides in, and returns again to emptiness. Relative form and Ultimate emptiness—the Buddha's Two Truths—are always already an ontic prior and phenomenally present perfectly subjective nondual unity. In this nondual ultimate view, as Nagarjuna told, "There is not an iota of difference between (relative) samsara and (ultimate) nirvana." In such an ultimate view these two seemingly separate dimensional regimes of the boundless awareness-consciousness whole share a relationship of identity. Just so, as esteemed guests of this relative phenomenal world we beings in form share that ultimate identity with the vast unity of primordial awareness ground in whom this all arises, participates, and is instantiated. Indeed, That is our 'supreme identity'. *Who Am I? That I Am! What is your mind? That is your mind!*

Again, the clear words of Middle Way 2nd century *mahasiddha* Nagarjuna, founder of Buddhist Middle Way Madhyamaka:

Reality is selfless and not ultimately real, but it
cannot be proven to be unreal and illusory.
This is the illusion that we live in, and so must
not be denied but respected.

Just so, appearing spacetime reality is relatively, conventionally real—the form dimension of Relative Truth—but not ultimately real, the emptiness dimension of Ultimate Truth. And yes, these two seemingly separate dimensional realms are always an indivisible and inseparable prior and present unity; *samatajnana*, primordial 'wisdom of equality' that pervades self-reflexive *shunyata*/emptiness itself. It is our innate clear light awareness love-wisdom mind—primordial Buddha nature of mind (*tathata, buddhajnana*)—luminous present 'That I Am' Presence (*vidya, rigpa*) that already realizes this great trans-conceptual, nondual truth of both relative and ultimate human happiness. That we happily come to realize through *bodhichitta*, and the 'the Meditation' of 'the Path'. Breath by mindful breath. *Mahasukaho!*

Thus do we live in and balance our two worlds—objective conceptual and subjective emotional/spiritual—at once! The prior and present unity of Science and Spirit. That is our human condition. These two conceptual categories, these two seemingly separate dimensional realms of our dualistic being here in time and space—form and emptiness, existence and nonexistence, objective and subjective, relative and ultimate, 'Small Mind' and 'Big Mind', appearance and reality—are unified via this subtlest nondual teaching of our wisdom traditions. These two are, as we have just seen, variations on the theme of that essential prior unity of the Buddhist Two Truths—Relative and Ultimate—whence arise Buddha's Four Noble Truths, and the consciousness processional of the Four Cognitive Dimensions of our knowing and feeling human experience that arise within this aboriginal *kosmic* unity.

Hence, the Two Truths are *one nondual unified truth* that is invariant through all human cognitive state changes—outer, inner, innermost secret, and nondual; objective and subjective; conceptual and trans-conceptual contemplative. Again, as Buddha told, "Form

is empty (*stong pa/shunya*), emptiness (*stong pa nyid/shunyata*) is form." Relative, dualistic cognition sees them as separate.

Ultimate, nondual contemplative cognition sees in such dualistic experience the always already present ontic and epistemic unity. *Buddic* love-wisdom mind knows these two at once (*samatajnana*), with no distraction or separation whatsoever. Our non-conceptual innermost secret nondual cognition is utterly present to that prior primordial awareness love-wisdom condition and its bright indwelling knowing/feeling *rigpa* Presence—the great unity of emptiness and luminous cognizance. And yes, That (*tathata*) is who we actually are, 'supreme identity' of the 'supreme source' from the very beginning. *Tat Tvam Asi*, That I Am, clear light clarity, without a single exception.

The Really 'Hard Problem' of Consciousness

Now arises the urgent practical question as to the inherent nondual perfect subjectivity of the primordial awareness ground in whom this all arises. How shall we realize this great ultimate understanding?

The really hard problem for human beings is the healing and unification of this apparent but not essential primordial split, the apparent duality of these Two Truths that are our two modes of being here. The objective, *finite* existence of our bodymind and its compassionate conduct (ethics) in the *ultimate* illusory yet all too real *relative* conventional world of cause and effect (karma) must be reconciled and reconnected to our perfectly subjective *infinite* source-ground, the vast, acausal, timeless unbounded whole itself (*bhavaṅga*, *shunyata*, *chittadhātu*, *dharmadhātu*, *dharmakaya*, *dzogchen*)—bright innermost Presence of That. After all, this selfless nondual primordial 'supreme source' is our 'supreme identity' in which, or in whom everything appears and participates. So how shall we reconnect? Or are we already connected? And if so, how shall we know it?

Human Happiness is Present Love-Wisdom Mind

An engaged, enduring commitment to the trans-rational, noetic, nondual *View*, and to the relative psycho-emotional/spiritual *Path* lifts the seemingly real obstruction—the negative emotions of the separate self-ego-I—and reveals the fully awake, always already present indwelling *Presence* (nondual *vidya*, *rigpa*, *christos*) of that basal primordial ground. Then gradually, breath by mindful breath, the stable *Result* is revealed—the *Fruition* that is our primordial love-wisdom mind (*gnosis*, *jnana*, *yeshe*), bright Presence of That, by whatever name. And That is the realization of the prior ontic and epistemic unity of the Two Truths, these two modes of our being here as we participate in the vast self-reflexive 'enfolded implicate order' (physicist David Bohm) of the all pervading 'unbroken whole' itself in whom the 'explicate order' almost eternally, continuously unfolds.

Thus does the practice of the Path offer a conscious *relative* finite portal into that infinite numinous nondual 'groundless ground' that is *ultimate* reality itself, our true home, in whom this all arises and plays. That bright portal is mindfulness meditation.

Mereology is the inquiry into the relation of parts to their more inclusive wholes. We learn here that where there's a whole, there are participating holons as Ken Wilber (2006) terms the part-wholes that participate in ever greater more inclusive wholes. Where there are parts, *ipso facto*, there's a more inclusive subsuming whole. We discover through meditation practice how it is that we may consciously realize that we are already connected to, and have never departed that vast whole that embraces and includes all of these lesser part-wholes—the reflexive self-knowing wakefulness of ultimate boundless whole itself. We come to know, and feel we are always already embraced and pervaded by it. We are That!

Hence does Hamlet's 'consummation devoutly to be wished' become, wonder of wonders, "It is already accomplished from the very beginning...To remain here without seeking something more is the Meditation." [Dzogchen Founder Garab Dorje]

As to the Result or Fruition of the Path, "The fruit is no different at the pinnacle of enlightenment than it is at the primordial base." [Adzom Rinpoche]. The spontaneous compassionate expression of this great realization in our everyday life-world conduct is the secret of relative human happiness (*eudaemonia* or *human flourishing, felicitas*); but it is also ultimate liberation, even enlightenment that is Happiness Itself (*mahasuka, paramananda, beatitudo*); the harmless, selfless human happiness that creates no negative karma; the happiness that cannot be lost.

Here is the miraculous ironic paradox: not only do we realize this double happiness by not seeking happiness—by 'letting it be as it is', as Buddha told—but we reflexively utilize the ignorance/*avidya* of relative 'Small Mind' to realize ultimate 'Big Mind,' our indwelling perfect love-wisdom mind itself!

In other words, we utilize the Relative Truth of the Path, to realize the Ultimate Truth that is the Fruit or Result of the Path—liberation from suffering—selfless harmless happiness that causes no harm to living beings. Both Tibet's Padmasambhava, and Japan's great Zen Master Dōgen have told it well: We must practice these Two Truths as a prior and present unity.

Because past and future are elsewhere, ultimately only this present moment now exists. The past is but a present memory. The future is but a present anticipation. This timeless moment here and now is when and where everything happens! Is it not? Therefore, we cannot *become* happy in the past or the future; we can only *be* happy now. Indeed, a most unusual paradox to a dualistic future-looking, goal directed conceptual thinking mind. Human happiness is a present situation, always now.

Sadly, our contemplative meditation practice often strives for some future state of happiness or enlightenment. Such a program "is doomed to failure" told great Ch'an/Zen Master Hui-neng. Taoist Master Chuang Tzu told, "You will not find happiness until you stop seeking it."

Hence, only this present moment is really real. That is the body-mind location of happiness. Just so, "Make the goal the Path" (Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche)—your life-world practice as it is right here, this very moment now. "It is already accomplished." It is that miracle to which we awaken now.

Therefore, "Rest your weary mind and let it be as it is; all things are perfect exactly as they are." (Gautama Shakyamuni the Buddha) That is the ultimate view of our love-wisdom mind—primordial Nature of Mind (*cittata, sem nyid, sugatagarbha*).

It is only through transformation and transmutation of the afflictive negative emotions—the primal atavistic ignorance (*avidya, marigpa, hamartia/sin*) inherent in being in the realm of *relative* spacetime reality, that we realize the 'crazy wisdom' (*yeshe chölwa*) that is radical freedom and happiness inherent in the all-inclusive embrace of *ultimate* reality, the conceptually unfabricated, unelaborated, uncontrived reflexive beautiful prior unity of this present moment now—but always in the context of our personal past and future.

How so? A valorized, idealized 'present moment now' without awareness of our personal past and future is meaningless. Our past and future are interdependently enfolded in this karmic moment now, while always unfolding in the timeless continuum of that very same now. Buddha told, "Our future is entirely dependent on what we do now." [Dōgen Zenji 1986; Boaz 2020]

Our perfect love-wisdom mind—always indwelling numinous Presence of That—is the open secret of our already present human happiness.

View, Ground, Path, Fruition

Our wisdom traditions have a View of the nondual primordial Ground of Being. The View provides both *relative* conceptual and trans-conceptual nondual noetic *ultimate* knowledge and insight, motivation and increased tolerance for the cognitive dissonance—contradiction, paradox, anxiety—of the Path to realization.

Just so, the Path provides the means/method—that ascending subtler strata of teaching, practice, compassionate conduct and courage necessary to train the often destructive 'wild horse of the mind' that is self-ego-I. Together the View and the Path awaken our always present love-wisdom mind that envelopes, develops, then completes the ultimate Result/Fruition that is liberation from suffering—our indwelling Buddha mind/Christ nature—full *bodhi* enlightenment that is harmless radical human Happiness Itself.

On this relative path to wholeness '*spirit development is envelopment*' (Plotinus) at ever subtler, more inclusive levels of spirit embrace. Yet, in the ultimate view, "Let it be as it is and rest your weary mind; all things are perfect exactly as they are." [Buddha] From the view and understanding of the relative outer and inner levels or dimensions of our above Two Truth/Four Cognitive Dimensions (state/stage 1, 2, 3) this *process* of the Path requires intention, effort, ethical courage, and wisdom.

In the view of all three Buddhist teaching vehicles these noble bodhisattva enlightened qualities of character are the *Six Paramitas* or Six Perfections. These are: 1) selfless generosity; 2) ethical discipline, *bodhichitta*, good will; 3) patience, acceptance, renunciation; 4) effort, diligence, perseverance; 5) meditation, equanimity; and 6) wisdom—both relative discriminating *prajna* and nondual ultimate *jnana/yeshe*.

From the view and understanding of the ultimate timeless innermost esoteric contemplative mind states of stage three, and *nondual* dimensional states of stage four—"It is already accomplished from the very beginning." No problem at all. Now, there is nothing left to do. So all that we do is selfless, harmless, authentic and kind. Twentieth century Zen Master Suzuki Roshi (1970, 2020) has told it well:

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.

—Suzuki Roshi, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*

This very practical no-self/*anatman* understanding of your being here in spacetime form is the realization of both relative and ultimate human happiness. No metaphysics is required. No conceptual philosophical or belief system is required. No authority but your own love-wisdom depth is required. Such a selfless understanding is the foundation of realization of your always already present happiness.

Our emerging 21st century Contemplative Science begins and completes the integration of this great gift of our human inter-dimensional noetic cognitive doublet that is relative objective Science, and perfectly subjective ultimate Spirit. The prior and present nondual unity of objective Science and perfectly subjective Spirit. *Emaho!*

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