

The Neuroscience, Logic, and Metaphysics of Mindfulness Meditation

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All the happiness in this world comes from compassionate
service to others; all the suffering comes from serving oneself.

—Shantideva

We have seen that human beings being here in time desire, require and deserve some semblance of happiness and well being. We have seen as well that these happiness mind states are already innately present within the human bodymind. We access them through the conscious "placement of awareness/attention" upon our always present love-wisdom mind Presence of the primordial ground in whom this all arises.

Therefore, both neuroscientifically, and metaphysically speaking, human happiness is a function of one's here now *present* mind state; a blatantly conspicuous relative conventional truth. As our attentional awareness is consciously placed upon our inherent innermost peace—that luminous Presence that we are—we are happy. If awareness is mired in worry and anger, we are unhappy. So the proper question as to human happiness is this: how do we accomplish such happy, peaceful mind states? That is, how do we learn "placement of attention" upon such already present happiness states? [Ch. 8; *Appendix A*] We have examined some of the contemplative considerations. Let us now very briefly explore the pertinent neuroscientific data.

The Neuroscience of Mindfulness Meditation. Over 50 years of Western world neuroscientific research has demonstrated that mindful breathing practice supports the following noble objectives: preventive medicine, chronic pain management, stress reduction (recovery from stressed induced cortisol production which is known to cause many psychophysical and physical symptoms), and psycho-emotional healing, learning and well being.

Meditation supports parasympathetic function (alpha and theta rhythm, "rest and digest", approach behavior), and thus enhances immune function, while tending to tonify sympathetic (beta rhythm "fight or flight" aversion/avoidance behavior) activation which suppresses immune function. [Porges 2014; Siegel 2013; Boaz in Sheng 2015]

Neuroscientist Richard Davidson at the University of Wisconsin has shown that beginning meditators in a corporate business setting developed stronger immune systems than controls, as evidenced by statistically significant resistance to respiratory infections. In another Davidson study, novice meditators reported being happier than non-meditating controls, experience more positive emotions, fewer stressful emotions, and an enhanced feeling of well being. [Davidson 2017; Begley 2007; Siegel 2013; Wallace 2009]

The left and medial prefrontal cortex of the brain activated in mindfulness meditation has been shown to dampen response to negative emotional mind states, while enhancing positive states. Just so, the right prefrontal cortex is activated in negative states.

The amygdala is responsible for negative internal states as fear and anger, which are then expressed outwardly through egocentric, often destructive and self destructive behavior.

In other words, the left and medial prefrontal cortex generate alpha, theta and 25-42 hertz gamma brain oscillations which mitigate and pacify the negative neural signals from the right prefrontal cortex and amygdala which inwardly manifest as fear and its flipside—anger, hostility and aggression—which then manifest outwardly as adventitious human evil: alienation, hostility, aggression, despotism and war. [Siegel 2013; Begley 2007; Wallace 2007, 2009]

This process of aggression is observed clinically in stroke patients. Patients with damage to the "happy" left prefrontal cortex are generally more irritable than those with damage to the "angry" right ventromedial prefrontal cortex, who are often relatively calm, even serene [Boaz in Sheng 2015].

Meanwhile, the frontoparietal control module network manages brain's multiple modules allowing it to function as a consciousness unity (executive function and cognitive control), while the default mode module, which spans the same lobes as the frontoparietal network, is linked to such cognitive functions as self-referencing, introspective thought and subjective feeling, passive emotional listening and learning, emotional processing, memory retrieval and 'theory of mind' (empathetic emotional connection to others). [Scientific American November 2014; July 2019]

Mindfulness meditation meta-research, over thousands of studies, has demonstrated the following positive outcomes: enhanced immune system function, respiratory function, post-surgical healing, blood pressure reduction, reduced age related brain atrophy, reduced symptoms of dementia and Alzheimer's disease, reduction in symptoms of anxiety, clinical depression, bipolar disorder I and II, obsessive compulsive disorder, attention deficit disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and complex PTSD, Borderline Personality Disorder, chronic pain, post-stroke symptoms, reduction of prison violence and recidivism, improvement of school grades, and much more. [Begley 2007; Boaz in Sheng 2015; Wallace 2009; Siegel 2013]

Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) has been shown to be as effective as antidepressants in treatment of clinical depression. [Lancet Vol. 386; Kuyken 2015]

The Neuroscience of Meditation and Our Experience of Self

We've briefly surveyed the neurobiological influences of mindfulness meditation on human behavior. How do these influences effect our sense of self-ego-I; prolonged traumatic invalidation; brain structure and function; relative human flourishing and happiness (*eudiamonia, felicitas*); and the ultimate happiness and freedom of liberation/enlightenment (*paramananda, mahasukha, beatitudo*)?

Both Zen Masters and neuroscientists agree, "mindfulness of breathing" (focused attention meditation), and "compassion meditation" both facilitate 1) a beneficial shift of attention from obsessive, usually fraught self-referential thinking ('selfing') and obsessive concern for 'I, Me, Mine'; which 2) bestows a sense of inner peace and self-acceptance; which 3) reduces anxiety and anger toward self and others; which 4) enhances altruistic

thought, intention and action for the benefit of other beings; 5) enhancing individual well being and happiness. How then shall we understand this contemplative process in the scientific gloss of neurobiology?

The unfocused ruminating wandering mind, under sway of the brain's 'default mode network'—the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) and posterior cingulate cortex (PCC)—significantly increase self-referential attention—'selfing'—with its always present fear/anxiety, anger/hostility, greed/pride, and negative judgments about self, which are then projected onto others. The micro-cognitive result in the individual is stress and unhappiness. The macro-cognitive result in the human sociocultural cognosphere is alienation, despotism, and endless war.

Scientific meta-research, synthesizing data from thousands of research projects since 1970, reveal substantial benefit in each of the three primary classes of meditation practice. These include 1) *shamatha mindfulness focused attention meditation*, usually upon the breath, or upon an object, image/vision of the Buddha or of the Christ; 2) *open monitoring mindfulness meditation*, witnessing whatever arises in awareness without grasping, rejecting, or judging; and 3) *loving-kindness compassion meditation*, feeling our natural empathy for living beings. All three classes resulted in beneficial outcomes by conclusively reducing or deactivating processing in some brain structures, while enhancing activity in others. How shall we understand this?

The Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation. 1) Reduced processing in the default mode network (PCC and MPFC) of the "selfing" wandering mind; which 2) reduced self-ego-I self-referential processing—habitual attention and concern about I-Me-Mine with its secondary anxiety, anger and ill-will mind states; 3) reduced activity in, and reduced size of the amygdala which is responsible for fear and anger ('fight or flight'); 4) reduced stress related cortisol production by the adrenal cortex while blocking its circulation throughout the upper body upon the autonomic vagus nerve (CN-X); 5) enhanced beneficial brain alpha, 'waking' theta, and high amplitude gamma band oscillations (25 to 42 hertz), while reducing excessive, often obsessive beta activity; 6) reduced activity in the right prefrontal cortex which is active in fear, anger, and ill-will mind states; 7) greatly increased left prefrontal cortex processing which enhances feelings of altruism, compassion and forgiveness toward self and others; 8) induced increased, long term frontal cortex gyrification (neuroplasticity), which proved to be permanent, even when contemplative practice ceases. [Siegel 2013; Porges 2014; Begley 2007; Davidson 2004, 2017; Wallace 2007, 2009; *Scientific American* November, 2014]

The no longer surprising result of this neuroscientific meta-research includes 1) greatly reduced preoccupation with self and its obsessive narcissistic self-narrative; 2) reduced psycho-emotional stress; 3) induced and enhanced subjective feelings of connection, well being, good will; and 4) subjective reports of enhanced happiness.

Thus does mindfulness meditation train the "wild horse of the mind" in the *placement of attention*, and continued focus of attentional awareness upon immediate, non-conceptual, present moment to moment sensory/feeling experience, upon the mindful breath—our eternal here now connection—while shifting self-referencing attention away

from chronic unfocused wandering mind with its obsessive attachment to self-ego-I, and toward altruistic compassionate thought, intention, and action for the benefit of living beings (*bodhichitta, karuna, patheos, chesed/lovingkindness, rahmah*).

We begin to realize that *mindfulness is an act of love*, a continuity of the ultimate primordial Great Love spontaneously, compassionately expressing itself in and through this relative gift of human form, for the benefit of all human and nonhuman beings.

Presence of the Primordial Ground

Clearly, meditation reduces or suspends habitual, often obsessive self-referential thinking ('selfing') that causes the terrible suffering secondary to our pervasive sense of a fearful lonely separate self, adrift in a hostile, dangerous, meaningless cosmos. And all of this accomplished through a program of mind training in present moment, trans-conceptual *feeling awareness* upon the breath—mindful placement and maintenance of attentional awareness upon the breath which settles the frantic, fearful, obsessively thinking 'monkey mind'. Thus does dualistic human awareness enter in, merge and awaken to its own indwelling, always already present Presence of nondual primordial awareness-consciousness whole itself, numinous formless primordial ground of all spacetime form—the very 'Nature of Mind' (*cittata, sems nyid, buddhajnana*). Nondual love-wisdom mind Presence of That, by whatever grand name.

Neuroscientific meta-research demonstrates the profound value of meditation—from *shamatha* calm abiding, and loving-kindness compassion meditation, to *Dzogchen Trekchö* and *Tögal* practice—all in support of our relative human flourishing (*eudiamonia, felicitas*), and our ultimate liberating Happiness Itself (*paramananda, mahasuka, beatitudo*).

Indeed, there is a "mindfulness revolution" now abroad in the Western mind and its culture. It's alive and well in most of our institutions—education, medicine, psychology, the social sciences, business, government, military, corrections, even organized religion which has grown apart from its foundation in the contemplative mythos of the great Primordial Wisdom Tradition of our much beloved *Homo sapiens*.

Wise Choice. On this neurobiological view then, human happiness is very much dependent upon an awareness management skill set—where, when, and how we *choose* to place our awareness. In short, both happiness and unhappiness are the result of present placement of our cognitive awareness/attention in this present moment here and now. And this can be learned from the wisdom injunctions of those who know—qualified mindfulness meditation teachers and their mentor/masters, in the context of a community of like-minded practitioners.

Cognitive neuroscience has identified two ways of experiencing the self—two modes of self-reference: 1) *narrative focus upon self*, our urgent all consuming story-drama about ourselves; and 2) *experiential focus upon self*, bodily proprioceptive sense experience, including direct trans-conceptual feeling experience. These two modes are hypothesized by cognitive scientists to be neurologically distinct. Recent contemplative research with

H.H. Dalai Lama's highly skilled Buddhist meditating monks has shown these two modalities of self experience are in fact a neurological and phenomenological unity. [Davidson 2017; Siegel 2013]

Once again, volumes of research have demonstrated that in both meditators and non-meditators the *experiential focus* mode involving non-conceptual "mindfulness of breathing" as the Buddha called it, reduced egocentric narrative self-referential activity in the MPFC and PCC of the brain's default mode network.

For highly skilled meditators habitual fantasy-reverie self-referential thinking of the untrained mind is absent during sitting meditation, and for varying periods of time following formal sitting meditation. Here, processing activity of the default mode network is nearly quiescent. [Siegel 2013] These skilled practitioners abide in a calm post-meditation meditative mind state most of the time. This quiescent state persists through some sleep states. The subjective experience of such a stable neurological state of mind is known to such practitioners as the happiness of the 'yogi's bliss'.

In short, 'advanced' meditators have demonstrated in hundreds of studies (Davidson 2004, 2017; Begley 2007; Siegel 2013; Boaz in Sheng 2015) the capacity to maintain such stable direct non-conceptual contemplative mind states (*yogi pratyaksa*) with their corresponding brain rhythms (alpha, theta, gamma) in post-meditation activities—while "hewing wood and carrying water", and driving, talking, loving, and even selfless creative thinking and planning.

Therefore, meditation practice for established meditators seems to facilitate the *choice* of a fluent cognitive ambulation from conceptual self narrative mode to a selfless, peaceful, non-conceptual experiential mode, almost at will. The result is calm abiding quiescent peace of mind, and a felt sense of happy, blissful connection and interdependence with all living things, including our Mother Earth; indeed, with the unbroken whole of *kosmos* itself—even as inexorable human adversity continues to arise in the relative world of conditioned lived experience.

Clearly, the neuroscientific implications of meditation for the reduction of human suffering and for human happiness are profound. Mindfulness meditation and loving-kindness meditation offer skillful regulation of negative emotional response to life's adversity by transforming the painful narcissistic self-narrative into quiescent, peaceful, and altruistic states of mind.

As we learn the practice of "mindfulness of breathing", we learn to place our present moment to moment awareness—our *attention*—upon our direct trans-conceptual wisdom mind *feeling experience*. Thus do we connect with an aspect of ourselves—indeed a Presence—that is selfless, profound, and directly experiential, beyond but including habitual discursive concepts and beliefs.

We begin to see that mindfulness meditation is observing our thoughts without identifying with them. We come to understand that we need not believe and defend our adventitious dreary and destructive negative ego-centric thoughts and feelings; stress is reduced; and human happiness is enhanced. Thoughts and feelings are seen to be inherently evanescent,

ever changing, and impermanent. Perhaps we should take them less seriously, and with a bit of self-effacing humor. Perhaps after all we are not the egocentric center around which the universe revolves. I have come to call this prodigious process Awareness Management.

Psychological Risk Assessment for Mindfulness Practitioners and Teachers

Let us consider two questions. 1) Is there a risk of adverse psychological outcomes in beginning meditators that are *caused* by mindfulness meditation? 2) Is there a risk of adverse psychological outcomes in beginning meditators that are *correlated* with mindfulness meditation? Now consider possible hidden bias in each question.

Clearly, '*correlation does not logically imply causation*'. Stress, non-referential anxiety, panic, dissociation, depression, and other symptoms may arise in meditation practice, especially in intensive retreats with unprepared retreatants. That this is so does not mean that such symptoms are "meditation induced", anymore than these same symptoms when experienced by first year medical students are 'medical knowledge induced'. 'Advanced' meditation practitioners, yogins, and masters, after many years of meditation practice, have every one experienced such 'growing pains'. Correlated or associated mindfulness meditation need not be construed as the *cause* of such symptomology. Moreover, if it were a cause, or even *the* cause of such symptoms, it remains a necessary, but not a sufficient cause of psychological growth.

Still, mindfulness meditation, with its prodigious benefit to psychologically stable personalities, must not be construed as a medical indication for severe long-term psychiatric diagnoses; although basic 'mindful breathing' has been shown to be quite effective for acute episodes. [Siegel 2013; Begely 2007; Wallace 2007; Boaz *Appendix D*]

To be sure, negative psychological experience does indeed often arise within the context of meditation, and as well from many other human activities. It does not follow that meditation is the root cause of such experience. Indeed, most meditation practice is intended to activate and free destructive repressed and suppressed negative psychic material that it may be surrendered and released upon the mindful breath. Mental health professionals unfamiliar with the cognitive context of meditation practice often do not understand this healing process. The process of psycho-emotional healing and growth is inherently psycho-emotionally traumatic. And its causality is multi-factorial.

Consider a standard analogy. There exists a huge volume of meta-research on the physical and mental benefits of physical exercise. But there are risks as well. Fatigue, muscle soreness and injury, back injury and pain, heart attack, to name a few.

Just so, positive psychological, emotional and behavior change—whether induced by mindfulness practice, or psychotherapy, or both, or neither—is in all cases difficult. Yes. Uncovering repressed, suppressed and denied negative emotional material is always painful. Unpleasantness and discomfort arising and falling away is an aspect of all human learning, growth and healing. We cannot be expected to dodge all of the emotional suffering of our impermanent human being here in time, try as we may. Nor should this be our therapeutic goal, nor our goal as a compassionate helper, nor our meditation

practice goal. Meditation, in any of its providential raiment, is not the panacea that some advocates would have it to be.

Physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual and spiritual growth all require some discomfort. All require that we depart some of our self-ego-I biases, negative emotions and uncomfortable comfort zones. Psycho-emotional-spiritual growth—'change in a valued direction'—requires courage, patience, self-discipline, and some risk of short-term trauma. In the vernacular of exercise enthusiasts, "No pain, no gain".

That now said, for unstable subjects with what we have come know as 'low self esteem', including some psychological and psychiatric diagnoses, difficult side effects from intensive retreat meditation practice are more apt to occur than in populations without such concerns. How is this so?

Psycho-emotional discomfort and pain, from moderate to severe, is a preexisting condition in the phenomenology of complaint and diagnosis in this troubled population. The proper question for research design is not whether such discomfort will continue during initial mindfulness meditation intervention. Following an initial lift, perhaps enhanced sleep, even reduction in medication, the client may, or may not experience a return of symptoms; which may or may not subside. *Therefore, the proper therapeutic question is this: in subjects demonstrating initial benefit, is short-term symptomatic emotional discomfort substantially exacerbated to the point of long-term psychological harm?*

In clinical psychology and psychiatry such uncomfortable states may be considered harmful if: 1) they directly result in increased symptoms beyond the baseline norm, or in psychological decompensation; or 2) such uncomfortable states are shown to be causally connected to the mindfulness "treatment" protocol itself, rather than resultant from preexisting psychopathology; or perhaps both?

Has any such harm actually been demonstrated in the clinical protocols of mindfulness meditation? My own cognitive biases being as they are, and notwithstanding potentially disastrous pharmacologically induced meditation, or self-medication states, and negative, often highly dramatized anecdotal opinions, I can find no extant hard clinical evidence that it has. In my own fifty years of teaching Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and secular mindfulness meditation, both in a psychiatric corrections setting, and in Buddhist *sanghas*, I have observed no evidence of psycho-emotional harm in 'psychologically stable' individuals secondary to traditional mindfulness meditation. *prac*

Psychological risk in meditation practice, especially in psychiatric acute care populations, is certainly a candidate for future Contemplative Science research.

The Psychological Benefits of Mindfulness Practice

As to my own, not especially astute experience working many years in a psychiatric corrections setting, I have personally introduced and guided hundreds of inmate clients with various psychiatric diagnoses in "mindfulness of breathing" (*shamatha, shiné, sati, smrti*) meditation practice. These include schizophrenic, delusional, dissociative, anxiety, mood, personality, and autism spectrum disorders, some with secondary substance abuse. I have taught Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Taoist, Jewish, Islamic, Native

American, and secular based mindfulness meditation, including prison staff psychiatrists. In all cases of those subjects with two or more weeks of actual, *vis a vis* reported practice, symptomatic relief was reported by the student-client—from reduced anxiety, anger, medication, and better sleep, to profound compassionate, emotional-spiritual healing transformation. [Appendix D]

Even a few with 'antisocial personality disorder' diagnosis (amoral sociopathy, psychopathy) learned to quiet the 'wild horse' of habitually negative thinking mind and gain some peace. Of course, those with ego-dystonic diagnoses (ego desire to heal) fared better than those with ego-syntonic diagnoses (ego denial of a need to heal).

My subjects in nearly all cases were greatly relieved that their actual "true" identity was not their pathological psychiatric diagnosis, but something far more profound. That is to say, my students came to understand that his or her 'supreme identity', by whatever grand name, is always already their innermost love-wisdom mind Presence, to wit, the immutable "I Am That I Am" Presence of Moses and the prophets, and the indwelling *Christos* Presence of Jesus the Christ; the depth of Buddha nature/Buddha mind Presence (*vidya, rigpa, jnana*); Atman Presence that is one with Brahman; *Tao-chia* Presence of primordial Tao.

My students are encouraged to conceptually unpack their non-conceptual meditation and contemplative prayer insights in the semiotic gloss of the wisdom tradition of which they are most familiar and comfortable—including secular "Scientism", the proto-religious belief system founded in the "global web of belief" of Metaphysical Scientific Materialism that has now colonized the Western mind and its culture. While these secular students often, but not always remained skeptical of the esoteric notion of an indwelling Presence of God, or of Christ, or of Buddha, they nonetheless benefitted from exoteric secular 'scientific mindful breathing' practices, and the recent neuroscience truth of brain neuroplasticity. At least some of the usual benefits of reduced anxiety, anger, depression, sleep disorder, reduced medication, were present in all subjects who chose to practice secular mindful quiescent breathing.

'Clinical progress' was viewed in all meditating subjects as reported reduction in objective symptoms—*anxiety and panic, depression sleep disorder, anger, voices, reduced medication*—and perhaps more importantly, first person subjective reports of enhanced connections with others, and feelings of enhanced happiness and well being.

These benefits proceeded fluently from two mindful awareness cognitive set points. These points included: 1) exoteric conscious aware mindful breathing ("focused attention meditation", and "compassion meditation"); and 2) our esoteric Primordial Wisdom Tradition contemplative teaching as to an *ultimate dimension* or primordial ground, "innermost esoteric", indwelling love-wisdom mind emotional-spiritual Presence—by whatever grand name—that co-exists, on the accord of these traditions, with a troubled and suffering self-ego-I living in this *relative dimension* of time and space. ["Presence of the Primordial Ground" above.] Let us then probe more deeply.

The Phenomenology of Primordial Presence

Not surprisingly, the inherently trans-conceptual, 'post-empirical', nonlocal, nondual, selfless, formless yet luminous love-wisdom mind Presence of our wisdom traditions cannot be objectively located in physical brain, nor heart, nor gut, nor in any other local spacetime location; no more so than the spacious presence of love, or of wisdom, or of happiness can be objectively physically located. 'Spiritual' Presence of the numinous 'primordial awareness ground of being', the vast unbounded whole in which, or in whom the stuff of spacetime arises is nonlocal, nondual, perfectly subjective contemplative direct experience (*yogi pratyaksa*), dimensionally beyond the grasp of our concepts and beliefs, try as we may to objectively reduce it to a purely physical/material thinking brain.

Moreover, the perfect subjectivity of our innate love-wisdom mind Presence does not admit of purely objective 'scientific proof'; as if such radically objective cognition exhausted our human awareness-consciousness processional that constitutes our four cognitive dimensions—mind states and life stages—of the totality of human body, mind, spirit knowing/feeling experience.

We have seen that, broadly construed, these four state/stages are: 1) pre-conceptual, unelaborated, objective, ordinary direct attention/perception, just prior to concept and naming; 2) dualistic exoteric objective thinking-conceptual cognition wherein knowing subject and its objects are separate and divided (*anumana pramana, kalpana, doxa*); 3) esoteric subjective contemplative meditative cognition merges with emotional feeling cognition (*dhyana, shamatha*); and 4) perfectly subjective nondual (subject-object unity), noetic (body, mind, spirit unity) direct yogic experience (*yogi pratyaksa, samadhi, satori, dhyana*) of our indwelling love-wisdom mind Presence itself. The deeply subjective love-wisdom mind of our always already present indwelling Christ mind/Buddha nature is an exemplar of this all-pervading yogic Presence of cognitive state/stage four.

We abide most of our lives in the mind states of life stage one and two. It is assiduous practice of the contemplative mind states of life stage three—under the guidance of a qualified meditation master—that open into the adept mastery of buddhas and mahasiddhas dwelling in life stage four.

Yet, wonder of wonders, the love-wisdom '*samadhi* of suchness' and the '*samadhi* of illumination' mind states of life stage four are always already present and available to the experience of our 'ordinary mind' at any moment, in any life stage. Thus do contemplative *mind states* become liberated personality *mind traits*. This is so because our four cognitive dimensions are inherently an indivisible prior and present nondual *unity* of human experience.

To be sure, it is the art and contemplative science of the ancient practice of 'mindfulness of breathing' that reveals the phenomenology and metaphysics (Ch. 5) of this numinous Presence that pilots us through the four dimensions of our being here in time. [Ch. 6 and 7: "The Unity of Science and Spirit"]

Most human beings can recognize this nameless, selfless inherently subjective but very real love-wisdom face of ours when it is contemplatively, directly experienced, more

or less beyond, or prior to the relentless distractions of our busy, often troubled, obsessively thinking and 'selfing' mind. [Davidson 2017; Siegel 2013; Begely 2007]

Please recall our *cognitive noetic doublet* that embraces the great enfolded, always unfolding and arising awareness whole of the above four dimensions of our human cognition—*exoteric objective conceptual*, and *esoteric subjective contemplative/intuitive*. We quite artificially, conceptually separate these two (or four) modalities of mind to better understand the prior and present unity. That unity is always the unbroken implicate order of the nondual unbounded whole, basal primordial awareness-consciousness ground itself in which, or in whom all of this explicate spacetime stuff arises, unfolds, participates, and is instantiated. So many words for this basic process of being human.

Experiencing Presence, and Beyond. Hence, as my students, incarcerated or not, came to understand, in a non-conceptual experiential 'felt sense' that this profound, no longer so spooky nondual *unity* of their exoteric physically embodied self-ego-I with 'spiritual' innermost esoteric love-wisdom mind Presence (their actual 'supreme identity'), they began to heal. Many came to directly experience (*yogi pratyaksa*) their own always already present Presence of the primordial ground of everything, or of the Christ, or of the Buddha, or *En Sof*, or of Mohammed—beyond ego and by whatever grand name—deep within. [For moving personal written expressions of such experiences please see *Appendix D*, "Light From the County Jail".]

'Mindfulness of breathing' as the Buddha called such contemplative experience, revealed to these troubled folks who it is that they truly are—far beyond ego; far beyond their 'pathology' and diagnosis; far beyond their not so conscious deep cultural background materialist and religious "global web of belief" (Quine 1969). They came to realize that they are actually so much more than a suffering unruly ego-I with or without clinical symptoms, or a legal problem, or a discouraging psychiatric diagnosis.

My students learned that the ultimate answer to the urgent perennial question "Who am I", is this: human beings are not just a painful, narcissistic self-ego-I in a material bag of skin. There abides always within each human form a formless, selfless, perfectly subjective love-wisdom 'Presence' of the 'primordial awareness ground of being' that is inherently clear, peaceful and happy. All of the Buddhas, love-wisdom masters, saints, and sages of the great Primordial Wisdom Tradition of our kind have taught this great truth through the compassionate example of their lives.

Many of my students came to recognize this. Some of them went well beyond it. Some became yogi/yoginis. Some are now teaching it.

Well then, how does one come to recognize, then realize in one's everyday lifeworld this cognitive miracle? For my incarcerated students mindfulness meditation and contemplative prayer became the *choice* of each one for peace and happiness in an otherwise dreadful world of unrelenting adversity.

These courageous 'students' of mine have taught me the true happiness potential of all of us human beings being here now as providential heirs of this inconceivable gift of a human life on the Earth.

Who am I? Human Happiness for Those Who Would Teach

Who am I really, over and above my given name, objective physical body, and this odd and rather surreal sense of a permanent self-ego-I? Is that all we are? If that is the result of our Greek materialist legacy that is the prevailing Western view of Metaphysical Scientific Local Realism/Materialism/Physicalism, it's no wonder we are all, as Freud told, "normally neurotic". Dismal metaphysics indeed.

Happiness Caveat: From the metaphysical ontology you choose, arises the phenomenal life experience you deserve.

On the account of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition the human being is actually the indwelling "spiritual" Presence of the timeless primordial unbounded whole that is our indwelling Christ-Buddha-Tao nature, by any name. It is that all-embracing indwelling aboriginal awareness-consciousness ground of being itself that human consciousness may experience during deep dreamless sleep, in the moments preceding and following death of the physical body, and in spontaneous contemplative *samadhi* states. [H.H. Dali Lama; Wallace 2009, 2012; Boaz 2020]

It is that present basal consciousness to which we awaken upon each mindful breath. What a relief! Such a perfectly subjective *feeling*—beyond, or in spite of any objectivist "scientific" therapeutic ideological architecture or concept or belief system—is most healing, and happy. And yes, we do have this *choice* to open, receive, practice, and teach it now.

A qualified teacher-facilitator may introduce this rather spooky indwelling love-wisdom mind idea at first conceptually, as a possibility for consideration, rather than as a fact to be believed, or rejected. As mindful practice proceeds, the practitioner begins the process of trans-conceptual direct, even "spiritual" experience of intimate Presence of that primordial awareness whole, non-theistic nondual godhead, 'groundless ground' itself. 'Groundless' because even that 'supreme source' itself is, for Middle Way Buddhists anyway, "absent and empty of any shred of *ultimate* existence" (Nagarjuna); even as the slings and arrows of all too real *relative* existence abounds. Mahayana Buddhists know this as the 'emptiness of emptiness'. There is nothing left to grasp, attach to, cling to. And yet the emptiness ground of primordial awareness remains our 'luminous cognizance', 'supreme identity', utterly beyond any name, concept, or belief about it. *Kosmic* irony indeed; to concept-mind, but not to always present wisdom mind.

Gradually, the student-client becomes aware of, and is able to articulate his/her *strategies of avoidance* of the emotional growth inherent in mindfulness practice—in awareness management—as the 'Who am I' consideration begins to bear its fruit. It now becomes much more difficult for guilty, punitive, aggressive self-ego-I to derail the practice. This great truth of our 'supreme identity' in the 'supreme source' that is innate love-wisdom mind Presence that is alive in our Primordial Wisdom Tradition now becomes refreshingly real to the inherent emotional unity of the *teacher-student team*.

This unfolding is a *process* beyond mere concept and belief—and psycho-emotional-spiritual growth happens for both student and teacher. A palpable state of grace may arise for both during this interdependent profoundly healing process.

I have hitherto referred to this mindful healing process as the breath by mindful breath awakening to our innermost always already present innate love-wisdom mind—bright indwelling Presence of That, by whatever name or concept. All of the wisdom masters of our species have taught this healing relationship between teacher/mentor and student practitioner.

Let us then, as mindfulness practitioners, and as mindfulness teachers, affirm and employ this miracle of our own innate, perfectly subjective love-wisdom awareness nature in our own healing practice, and in our personal lives. We've seen that this inherently inter-subjective relationship is, to be sure, beyond any purely objective 'scientific' understanding. Here, the science of healing becomes the art of healing. Indeed, it has always been thus. One need not have accomplished 'advanced' contemplative *siddhis* to lead. Suggest, then permit the student to discover the way.

A Consideration for Those Who Would Teach. Please consider that to ignore or omit the esoteric 'spiritual' aspect or voice of contemplative mindfulness meditation—whether for ideological, political, scientific, or pedagogical reasons, biases and taboos—may be to profoundly diminish the efficacy, force, and deep benefit of liberating mindfulness healing and being.

Awareness management must embrace that depth of awareness—'original wakefulness'—that abides within secular mindful breathing. Is not the main point of human emotional-spiritual growth this knowing-feeling recognition and realization of one's own 'innermost esoteric' primordial essence? Bright Presence of That, always already indwelling at the luminous root of human attention.

Find your own way here. Be stable in it. Then shall you feel free to guide others.

New Knowledge Paradigm Arising

The 21st century Noetic Revolution in matter mind and spirit that is now abroad in the West requires a noetic (matter, mind and spirit unity) Science of Consciousness, which includes the emerging discipline of Contemplative Science. [Wallace 2012; Wilber 2017; Boaz 2022] I have herein termed this urgent psychosocial process, "The Noetic Imperative" of this arising 21st Century noetic knowledge paradigm.

Contemplative Science, the practice of mindful contemplative meditation, both religious and secular, is an integral discipline within our emerging Science of Consciousness. We require both a 'hard' objective science of objective physical stuff, and a 'soft' noetic first person contemplative science of mind. After all, the human being has an objective, thinking face/voice, and a subjective, emotional and spiritual face/voice—our human *noetic cognitive doublet*.

Western Psychology and Medicine. Psycho-emotional-spiritual growth is inherently emotional and subjective, that is to say, much of it is trans-conceptual, prior to our concept and belief cognitive systems, and biases.

Twentieth century depth psychology has revealed that an intellectual understanding of pathological behavior is of little value in causing any real, lasting change in symptoms; let alone in our enhanced happiness quotient (HQ). Yet, under sway of ideological Scientific Materialism, Western medicine has largely refused to move beyond its objectivist, positivist foundations; though this is rapidly changing with the advent of our inchoate mindful Noetic Revolution.

Western psychology and medicine tends toward objectifying negative symptoms and pathology, and often pathologizes inherently subjective contemplative practice, and its positive, even spiritual motivation, habitually reducing it (scientific reductionism) to objective clinical criteria. Conversely, Buddhist psychology is positive in that its goal is to lessen the suffering of beings by awakening the practitioner to the 'innermost esoteric' 'Who am I' Presence of human happiness, our innate Buddha nature, *bodhi* mind-wisdom mind (*buddhajnana*) inherent in being human.

Let symptom oriented Western medicine, psychiatry, and psychology be receptive to Buddhist 'positive psychology' with its contemplative mindfulness meditation. And let Buddhist psychology and practice be receptive to Western 'transpersonal psychology', 'cognitive therapy', and 'talk therapy', that we may utilize both the objective conceptual and subjective trans-conceptual contemplative gifts of our human cognitive life.

Eastern Wisdom. On the view of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition our human body, mind, and spirit are utterly interconnected, interdependent, and indivisible. Contemplative concentration and 'mindfulness of breathing' have the 'inner power' to lift, free, and heal body and mind of physical and emotional tension and obstruction. As the life-giving *prana*-spirit wind enters in upon each mindful breath our fearless innermost nondual Buddha mind/Christ nature softens the fearful physical and emotional contraction from it. Now we reconnect to, and then rest in the already present Presence of the very Nature of Mind, Fundamental Mind, harmless Happiness Itself, primordial awareness *dharmakaya* ground of everything that arises within it. Whither one walks, or speaks, or feels, or thinks, one cognitively ambulates in original innate awareness of the primordial Nature of Mind. That is the basis of healing the bodymind, that we may arise and 'do some good' for a living being.

Clearly, this indwelling, subjective, innate 'innermost' Presence—Buddha nature, the *En Sof* 'I Am That I Am Presence' of Moses and the Prophets, *Christos* or innermost Christ Presence, the Atman Self that is Brahman, and the rest—abides beyond the domain of Western objective science and analytic philosophy. Indeed, there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our objective materialist philosophy.

In the pursuit of happiness we require both objective Science and subjective Spirit. We shall soon see that these two seemingly separate cognitive domains are an entirely complementary unity. [Ch. 6 and 7]

Therefore, enjoy this natural evolutionary process as Eastern Wisdom and Western Science at long last come to meet in the emerging noetic Science of Consciousness. Let those of us who practice the art and science of healing the troubled human body and mind

enthusiastically participate in this paradigm busting, inchoate 21st century Noetic Revolution in Matter, Mind and Spirit. [Boaz 2022]

Let us therefore welcome a 'soft' noetic contemplative Science of Mind as we rightly continue our 'hard' objective neuroscience research. Here, 'old paradigm' Western classical European Enlightenment objectivist materialist bias; Eastern nihilistic absolute idealist subjectivist bias; and 'new age' pop quantum mysticism shall all be refreshingly absent. Ah, the centrist Buddhist Madhyamaka Middle Way 'consummation devoutly to be wished'.

Noetic Praxis. The practice of mindfulness meditation is inherently transpersonal, trans-rational (not non-rational, nor irrational which are all too easily conflated), and trans-conceptual, just beyond our much valorized habitual thinking mind as it arises from its deep cultural background realist/materialist "global web of belief" (Quine 1969). Yet, as a "science of mindfulness" mindfulness meditation is alive and well in the protocols of Contemplative Science—both subjective Eastern and objective Western.

Ironically, non-conceptual mindfulness meditation is literally *conceptual* mindlessness. We are here encouraged to give our overwrought concepts, beliefs, and 'selfing' self-referential judgments and biases a break. A bitter pill indeed for those of us steeped in the classical objectivist, realist/physicalist/materialist waning old scientific Greek classical paradigm.

So it is essential for those of us in the healing arts to have at least a rudimentary understanding of post-empirical contemplative experience and practice. Western mindfulness meditation is based in the Buddhist contemplative tradition. But this wisdom is, as we have seen, readily available in the teaching of all our premodern wisdom traditions, but perhaps most especially the Buddhist Theravada and Mahayana/Vajrayana traditions.

Much of what passes for mindfulness practice in the West is exoteric secular breathing practice stripped of its Buddhist esoteric foundation. Better than nothing, to be sure. But we've seen that the profound benefit of contemplative practice abides mainly in its esoteric innermost teaching and healing of our innate love-wisdom mind—bright Presence of that—by whatever name or notion, abiding always at the heart of each human being. It is that 'Deep' in which we 'take refuge'. That, on the accord of the premodern wisdom traditions of humankind, is the innermost "supreme identity" of the human being. And That is the answer to the most urgent perennial question, "Who am I". It is That which tames and trains the 'wild horse of the mind'—surreal narcissistic unruly non-entity that is a self-ego-I arising from its primordial 'no-self' ground.

Without this subtler, esoteric teaching foundation, mindfulness remains but a helpful exoteric breathing exercise, bereft of its potential psycho-emotional and spiritual healing profundity.

Therefore, I suggest that students of mindfulness, and their teachers, expand understanding and experience into the innermost esoteric voice of the 'mindfulness of breathing' (*shamatha, sati*) that Gautama Buddha actually taught; the mindfulness from

which spontaneously arises kind, compassionate thought, intention and action for the benefit of sentient beings—*bodhicitta*, the primary cause of human happiness.

The splendid irony here is that the secret of human happiness lies not in seeking good and goods for oneself, but in helping others. No need to buy into exoteric religious doctrine and authority, mysticism or metaphysics—Buddhist, or otherwise. No authority but one's own is required. [Boaz 2020]

Thus is secular contemplative practice greatly enhanced in the gentle context of one of our primary wisdom traditions—Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Abramamic Monotheism, Shamanism. Here the practitioner receives the direct benefit of "The Three Jewels" of the practice tradition: 1) the original avatar-founder of the tradition (e.g. Buddha, Christ) seen and felt as the living, qualified, authentic meditation *master*; 2) direct transmission of the *teaching* from the master; and 3) the *spiritual community* of fellow practitioners. Here the engaged mindfulness practitioner may *choose* to become an authentic yogi or yogini, always guided by the living root master.

So, not to worry. The esoteric trans-conceptual voice of the great teaching is not the taboo dogmatic religious doctrine that you may believe it is. By the bye, Buddha, Jesus, Shankara, Lao Tzu, Moses, Mohammed and all of the wisdom masters, *mahasiddhas*, saints and sages of our Great Wisdom Tradition taught in this "two ways at once": exoteric, objective, conceptual; and esoteric subjective contemplative at once, always depending upon the present capacity of the student.

The teacher begins with an exoteric objective relative conceptual *View*, then proceeds to contemplative esoteric subjective practice—*The Meditation*—and then, to the well prepared compassionate mind of the student, the "innermost secret" nondual "non-meditation" on the basal primordial Ground, perfectly subjective ultimate Nature of Mind in whom the entire relative teaching/learning process self-reflexively arises.

Abiding here, in due course and by grace, arises the *Fruition/Result*, Happiness Itself, harmless selfless happiness that cannot be lost. Thus is this ancient atavistic love-wisdom process the prior and always present unity that is the whole of the teaching as it emerges through the gradual practice of the *Path*. Then may we realize that "It is already accomplished from the very beginning" (Garab Dorje), deep within us. Now we see that there was no need to seek it at all. "To remain here without seeking something more, that is the Meditation." Sweet *kosmic* irony indeed.

Be that as it may, psycho-emotional-spiritual healing must no longer remain caged in a bygone classical purely objectivist Newtonian scientific paradigm. So, let modern mindfulness teachers and their critics understand both our conceptual and our transpersonal nondual (trans-conceptual subject-object unity) or 'post-empirical' premodern mindfulness wisdom tradition paradigm.

Yes. Human cognition has two voices—objective conceptual, and subjective contemplative. These two are already an ontic prior yet epistemic present unity. Let us utilize them both in the art and science of healing this precious ultimate *kosmic* gift that is our body, mind and spirit continuously arising and being here in relative cosmic space and time.

Psychological Risk and Benefit Assessment Revisited

An effective mindfulness program is multifactorial with many variables. We've seen that psychological risk assessment consists of much more than the typical emotional discomfort while making significant emotional and behavioral changes.

Psychological risk in the practice and teaching of mindfulness meditation—awareness management—as well as the profound risk of derailing or withholding a potentially life changing meditation practice for ideological or pedagogical reasons is, broadly construed, a function of the following seven factors: 1) both ego-dystonic and ego-syntonic motivation for change; 2) emotional stability and "ego strength" (required for *desire* to change behavior in the ubiquitous face of fear of change; 3) misunderstanding of what meditation actually is (it's "spiritual" or not as the client chooses to understand it), and what meditation is not (it's not a panacea for the inevitable adversity of our lives); 4) idealistic egocentric expectations about practice and its outcomes; 5) overly ambitious practice schedule (long meditation sessions and/or retreats); 6) ego involvement and negative and positive projections of the student upon the teacher, and the teacher upon the student; 7) orientation, qualifications, experience and skillful means of the teacher. Add others; or create your own list.

Chadwick (2005); Boaz 2020; Kuyken (2015); Williams (2014) have all shown that emotionally vulnerable individuals with "low self-esteem" and "poor self-image", even those with psychiatric diagnoses that include psychotic symptomology can safely learn and experience the benefits of mindfulness meditation in the context of a strong student-teacher relationship. Such practitioners are often not candidates for extended retreats, though some, with a few months of meditation practice, do well on retreat.

Sadly, with the advent of the Mindfulness Revolution now abroad in the Western World, *qualified* mindfulness teachers—whether secular or "spiritual", are somewhat rare. I have personally engaged with "mindfulness teachers" who have read a book, taken a class and presume to teach what is arguably the most urgent agent for positive psychosocial change in this new millennium. Some of these pretenders to wisdom have not actually engaged, let alone established a guided, or even unguided mindfulness practice themselves! Perhaps, as in Western Europe, some official standards and certification for mindfulness meditation teachers should be established.

The Neuroscience of Meditation and the Problem of Consciousness

We've seen that mindfulness meditation enhances brain neuroplasticity increasing brain tissue volume and thickness in relevant areas, such as the left and medial prefrontal cortex, and the insula, much as the relevant areas of the brain become larger in violin and piano virtuosos; and in the mighty memory of London taxi drivers.

Such research in neuroplasticity (increase in size and function of highly used areas of brain) demonstrates that as the brain changes, the mind changes. And as mind changes, brain changes. [Begley 2007] *With practice fleeting brain state changes reflexively become permanent personality trait changes.* Thus do we *choose* to mindfully engage and change our

lives. We might call this wondrous process psycho-emotional-spiritual growth! Perhaps after all we do have a bit of free will. [Ch. 10] After all, the entire endeavor of goal directed human action depends upon it, despite what some analytic philosophers may present in their contrived logical arguments to the contrary.

Mindfulness meditation rewires brain structure thereby enhancing its function, including human effectiveness, attentional awareness focus, reduced self-referencing/'selfing', and happiness and well-being. Happiness and unhappiness therefore are not 'hardwired' into the brain. There is no genetically or epigenetically predetermined 'happiness set point'. [Begeley 2007] We have just enough freedom to mindfully *choose* our reality constituting psycho-emotional mind states. This freedom to choose meditation practice is the basis of all of the contemplative paths of our Primordial Wisdom Tradition. (Thanissaro 2015; Ch. 2 above)

Good Vibes. In a now famous study at the University of Wisconsin (2004) under the guidance of neuroscientist Richard Davidson, the functional MRI and EEG record demonstrates that the quiescent brains of H.H. Dalai Lama's highly experienced meditating monks (8-10 hours a day of meditation over many years) produced, during "compassion meditation", high amplitude cortical alpha (8-12 Hz), cortical theta (4-7 Hz), and gamma band brain rhythm (30-100 Hz), not only during formal sitting meditation, but in most waking states. Gamma activity during meditation was most apparent at 25-40 Hz. These gamma band oscillations, the largest ever observed, were nearly absent in the control group of novice meditators—graduate students, of course.

Gamma band brain rhythm is clearly an aspect of the overall causal picture, and may help to explain the oceanic feeling of connectedness and interdependence with all life, and all things, and the ensuing bliss, peace, clarity, equanimity and enhanced feelings of kindness and compassion reported by these very experienced practitioners.

Here, even the control group reported such feelings. Gautama Buddha called the ground process of these profound experiences the unity of primordial emptiness with the interdependent arising of form (*pratitya samutpada*). Again, novice meditators also reported some of the benefits. Research indicates that in this inexperienced cohort, benefit is a function of, not gamma, but waking cortical alpha and theta brain activity.

The 'Problem of Consciousness'. Gamma band oscillation has been theorized to be involved in the amazing cognitive *unity of conscious perception*, the "binding" of the inconceivable complexity of billions of neuronal connections of the human central nervous system into a singular conscious perception, for example, seeing the objective color deep blue as the subjective *experience* of deep blue. Or recognizing the lovely face of your spouse.

That gamma band activation is in some manner clearly responsible for human neural consciousness and therefore its more fundamental primordial awareness-consciousness source or ground is expressed as this prickly "binding problem", which is a subset of the even more vexing "hard problem of consciousness". [Chalmers 1996] The

legendary "hard problem" is this: what is the relation of objective neural (brain) processing activity to the vivid subjective experience that is human consciousness?

In other words, There is a *prima facie* "explanatory gap" between exterior, objective, physical brain processes and interior subjective awareness states (*qualia*)—phenomenal experience—in a word, human consciousness. Generally, this is known to consciousness studies and philosophy of mind as the 'mind-body problem'—the perennial duality, the ostensible gap between mind and matter, between matter and spirit. It arose 400 years ago with René Descartes, and plagues us still.

For Mahayana Buddhists the "hard problem of consciousness" is explained as the ontic and epistemic unity of the apparent duality of Relative Truth—objective, causal "interdependent arising"—with its subjective nondual primordial "groundless ground" or Ultimate Truth that is boundless emptiness/*dharmakaya/kadag* in whom the dimension of spacetime Relative Truth arises and appears. [Ch. 3; *Appendix C*]

The "scientific" objectivist strategy usually constitutes filling the "explanatory gap" between physical brain states and trans-physical awareness states with objective causal neural brain matter. This represents the scientific materialist/physicalist objectivist bias that human mental and emotional experience arises entirely from mere electro-physical brain structure and function alone (Metaphysical Functionalism); or that it is reducible to purely physical brain structure and function (scientific reductionism). This is an attempt to "explain away" the hard problem by denying the subjective face of our human experience. In the words of Hard Problem creator David Chalmers (1996),

Why should physical (brain) processing give rise to a rich inner life at all. It seems objectively unreasonable that it should, and yet it does. The really hard problem of consciousness is the problem of experience. When we think and perceive there is a whirl of information processing, but there is also a subjective aspect.

Philosopher of Mind Colin McGinn defined the problem of consciousness with this pithy question: "How does the water of brain become the wine of consciousness?"

Review of the View. We've seen that the resting state gamma brain activity of Richard Davidson's amazing yogi subjects (2004) was far higher than in control groups (briefly contemplatively trained graduate students). Even in the control group grad students' empathy with others (theory of mind) and compassion, both arising in the insula, were enhanced.

This study, and many others (Siegel 2013) indicate that mindful meditation facilitates not only physical brain growth in the associated areas (neuroplasticity), but growing brain-mind integration, attentional stability, clarity, empathy, and a subjective feeling of equanimity, subtle bliss, well being, and 'peace of mind'.

The foundational integration of 1) the left and medial prefrontal cortex, 2) the insula, and 3) the anterior cingulate cortex are active during the intentional "placement of

attention" upon the breath in the belly, and in the prefrontal cortex behind the forehead during mindful breathing.

One might even be here permitted to speculate that our remarkable meditating monks would score higher than the controls on surveys of subjective overall happiness; would possess a less hostile destructive self-ego-I than most folks; and would be more kind and compassionate toward all sentient beings than your average graduate student, or their research directors for that matter.

Recall that on the view of the buddhas, and the many masters of the traditions of the great Primordial Wisdom Tradition of our species, such altruistic "loving-kindness" and compassionate thought, intention and action for the benefit of living beings is the primary cause of human happiness. Karmic food for thought, and for meditation.

The Physics of Mindfulness Meditation

Well, what does "hard science" modern/postmodern physics make of such a soft "spooky" subjectivist contemplative consciousness metaphysic? Let us all too briefly survey the greatest Nobel laureates of 20th century physics.

In the words of quantum theory pioneer Max Planck (Nobel Prize 1918): "I regard immaterial consciousness as fundamental...matter is derived from it."

Werner Heisenberg (Nobel Prize 1932) on the quantum Principle of Uncertainty:

Subject and object are only one. The barrier between them does not exist...
There is a fundamental error in separating the parts from the whole.
Unity and complementarity constitute reality....Causality can only explain
later events by earlier events, but it can never explain the beginning....
It will never be possible by pure reason alone to arrive at absolute
truth....Scientific concepts cover always only a very limited part of reality;
the other part that has not been understood is the infinite.

For Niels Bohr (Nobel Prize 1922), creator of the quantum Principle of Complementarity, "Opposites are complementary....Truth and clarity are complementary." For Bohr, subject and object, self and other, existence and non-existence, quantum wave and particle, position and momentum are a complementary, nonlocal 'entangled' nondual prior and present unity. Again Bohr,

For a parallel to the lesson of atomic theory...we must turn to thinkers
like Buddha, or Lao Tzu....I go into the Upanishads to ask questions....
Our description of nature is not to disclose the real essence of the
phenomena, but to describe our relations with it.

Irwin Schrödinger (Nobel Prize 1933, with Paul Dirac), creator of the Schrödinger Quantum Wave Equation: "Consciousness is absolutely fundamental. It cannot be accounted for in terms of (matter), or anything else."

Paul Dirac (Nobel Prize 1933, with Schrödinger), discoverer of the Dirac Equation which fully unified Einstein's 1905 Special Relativity Theory (SRT) with the 1928 Quantum Theory of Bohr and Heisenberg opening the way for Richard Feynman's prodigious Quantum Electrodynamics (QED). Dirac's sublime equation also predicted the physical reality of antimatter. For Dirac,

All matter is created out of some imperceptible substance not accurately described as material since it uniformly fills all space and is undetectable by any observation...It appears as nothingness—immaterial, undetectable, omnipotent...out of which all matter is created.

Einstein (Nobel Prize 1921), a founder, yet later detractor of Quantum Theory:

A human being is part of a great whole. We experience ourselves as something separate from it...This delusion is a kind of prison. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in all its beauty.

In the "spooky" (Einstein's term) conceptual explanatory gap of subjective nonlocal (faster than light) quantum chaos abides the non-objective "wisdom of uncertainty", the ironic and paradoxical, subtle, profound, trans-conceptual, direct experience (*yogi pratyaksa*) of subjective contemplative certainty—for those with good taste anyway. It's flavor is subtle, and quite satisfying. It is indeed, a mindfully acquired taste. As Buddha told in his early *Pali Canon Udana*:

Just as the great ocean has one taste,
the taste of salt, so also my teaching
has one taste, the taste of liberation.

In that profound post-empirical nondual certainty we take refuge, ease our fearful weary concept-minds, and rest in the ultimate Nature of Mind, our innermost love-wisdom mind Presence of the primordial ground of this phenomenal world that exoteric post-Standard Model Quantum Field Theory (QFT, QED) knows as the non-zero emptiness of the quantum vacuum energy ground state, or ultimate zero point energy field (ZPE). This vacuum energy is now the primary candidate for the mysterious dark energy that accelerates our already expanding universe, the end of which in a few trillion years (give or take a trillion) is a quite chilly "Big Chill Heat Death". [Ch. 7]

This highly speculative, trans-empirical, purely metaphysical, almost mystical quantum ZPE ground state is none other than our old friend Einstein's Cosmological Constant (Λ *lambda*) which in 1917 he inserted into the field equations of his great 1915 General Relativity Theory (GRT) to explain an expanding universe which his theory predicted. But Einstein was certain that the cosmos was static; the prevailing cosmological ideology of the time. Thus did the great physics master tweak his wondrous expanding

universe GRT with his *lambda* Λ constant "to hold back gravity" and remain true to the "perfect cosmological principle" alternative to recent Big Bang cosmology. This was the timeless, ageless "steady state universe" model of his esteemed cosmologist peers Hermann Bondi, Thomas Gold, and Fred Hoyle.

Alas, Einstein came to regret his *lambda* Λ Cosmological Constant. In 1929 Edwin Hubble demonstrated that the universe was far from a static 'steady state', but was indeed expanding. Adding factual insult to Einstein's theoretical injury, in 1998 it was discovered independently by the Perlmutter and Schmidt teams that the expanding universe was actually accelerating! Yes, mysterious dark energy is the probable cause; and the positive value of Einstein's Cosmological Constant Λ is the primary suspect for dark energy. [Ch. 7] Discomfiting outcome for Herr Professor Doctor Einstein, to be sure. As physicist Steven Weinberg told, "Perhaps he should have taken his mathematics more seriously."

So yes, the foundational primordial awareness-consciousness ground of our great Wisdom Tradition is alive and well in recent objectivist classical relativistic physics; and even more so in post-classical non-objective quantum physics and cosmology with their ZPE quantum emptiness. But this is far from a demonstration that dualistic objective Science "proves" the great nondual wisdom teaching of Buddhist emptiness/*shunyata*. Better perhaps to view it as a dualistic metaphor for an inherently nondual, trans-conceptual *one truth* of the perfectly subjective ultimate nature and ground of all-embracing reality itself in whom this all arises

Unfortunately, in spite of what we have just heard from our quantum pioneers, lesser minds of recent relativistic and quantum physics are still trying to reduce the random observer-dependent, nonlocal entangled subjectivity at the very heart of the quantum theory to the old classical observer-independent paradigm bias that is ideological objectivist, reductionistic Scientific Local Realism/Materialism/Physicalism. Philosophers of physics and cosmology, including myself, are tearing their hair out. Let Physicists, philosophers of physics and Buddhist scholar-practitioners dialogue over pizza and ale. Why isn't this happening?

It may be useful in this regard to understand that objective Science cannot give us the whole picture even of objective physical reality, let alone the perfectly subjective boundless whole of primordial awareness-consciousness itself in which, on the view of some of our quantum pioneers, not to mention Gautama Buddha, spacetime physical stuff arises, participates, and is instantiated.

As Bertrand Russell suggested in 1927, and cosmologist Arthur Eddington later told, "Physics describes what matter *does*; it doesn't tell us what it *is*." What this appearing reality ultimately *is* abides beyond physics, in the only recently respectable domain of metaphysics—contemplative science, ontology, and philosophy of mind—both West and East. [Appendix B; Klein 2006; Wallace 2012; Boaz 2022]

The Object of Mindfulness Meditation

Broadly construed, the *object of meditation* in our wisdom traditions is the mind. Even more basically, it is the breath. We have seen in Chapter 1 that in the earliest *Pali*

Canon tradition of Buddhism we discover Gautama the Buddha's The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, or the Four Objects of Mindfulness. These are: 1) *physical body*, 2) *feeling*, 3) *mind* and 4) *phenomenal world* that appears as the objects of the mind.

For Buddha, "Without full awareness of breathing there can be no development of meditative stability and understanding." [*On the Full Awareness of Breathing* from the *Anapanasati Sutra*] Mindful awareness of breathing offers success in accomplishing "The Four Objects of Mindfulness" (*Satipatthana Sutra*); which "Leads to success in the practice of the *Seven Factors of Awakening*...which give rise to understanding and liberation of the mind". [Buddha] These two seminal *Pali Canon* sutras are the Buddha's essential teaching on liberating the mind from the ignorance (*avidya*, *marigpa*, *ajnana*, *hamartia/sin*) that blocks recognition and realization of our selfless intrinsic wisdom mind awareness.

The Buddha's *Seven Factors of Awakening* (Skt. *sapta bodhyanga*) are: 1) Mindfulness (*sati*, Skt. *smrti*), full attention to the breath, life force *prana* energy, awareness of arising reality; 2) Investigation (*dharmapracicaya*) and study of arising cause and effect reality; 3) Energy (*virya*) as patient diligent determination; 4) Joy/Bliss (*priti*), peaceful and happy feeling; 5) Great Peace (*prashrabodhi*) and tranquility of body and mind; 6) Contemplative concentration (*dhyana*, *samadhi*), focused, one-pointed clear light awareness which utterly surrenders obstructive thoughts and feelings thus awakening to non-judgmental nondual Buddha nature (*tathata*) Buddha mind (*buddhajnana*), which manifests and expresses itself through *bodhicitta*—kind compassionate conduct for the benefit of living beings; and 7) Equanimity (*upeksha*), selfless loving acceptance of oneself and the beings and the stuff of reality 'exactly as it is', beyond the emotional afflictions of attraction/attachment and aversion/hostility. The prior and present unity of these Seven Factors of Awakening results, through assiduous practice of this Path, in the result or *fruition* of full *bodhi* awakening of our already present Presence of Buddhahood—harmless, selfless happiness that cannot be lost.

Thus is essential 'mindfulness of breathing' the foundation of everything that was to come later in Mahayana and Vajrayana meditation teaching and practice. Here, in these early sutras (*Pali*, *sutta*) the object of meditation—the object of our non-conceptual *refined attention*—is fundamentally the breath, in and out, here and now, and not elsewhere. This is essential 'observation meditation', free of discursive delusional thinking mind. Told Buddha, "Now I am breathing in, peaceful and happy. Now I am breathing out, peaceful and happy."

Thoughts, concepts, negative and positive emotions, worry, anger and doubt continue to arise, but with practice and patience these persistent distractions self-liberate nearly instantly and so do not condition or karmically defile the 'primordial purity' of our pristine natural mind state—the very Nature of Mind and all its contents.

Sometimes pleasant feelings of non-conceptual peace and well being, a feeling of connectedness and interdependence of everything will arise—*samadhi*, *satori*—in the bright empty space around afflictive thoughts and emotions. Is that the payoff? Must there be a payoff? If there is no self, then for whom is the payoff? We shall soon see.

In any case, through mindfulness of breathing whatever arises in the mind, pleasant or not, is freed and released upon the out breath into the vast spacious mind field of the

boundless whole of inherent primordial awareness-consciousness itself, self cognizing 'innate intrinsic awareness', home of all conscious beings instantiated herein. We learn to rest in That. No need to grasp, cling or reject any of it. Surrender it all upon the out breath as *prana* enters in upon the in breath. "No problem at all." (Suzuki Roshi)

Life-force energy (*prana, lung c'hi, pneuma/Holy Spirit*) arising upon each conscious breath facilitates the direct, non-conceptual *experience (nyam)* of these "Four Objects of Meditation" as they arise from the purity of the selfless formless, immaterial primordial 'groundless ground' (*dharmakaya*)—nondual boundless whole itself (*dharmadhatu*)—with no conceptual barrier; utterly absent our contrived personal and cultural "global web of belief" (Quine 1969) that defiles and obstructs our always already present, 'already accomplished' nondual intrinsically aware innate love-wisdom mind Presence. What a relief it is!

In due course and by grace we come to see and feel and know with contemplative certainty this numinous nondual fundamental Nature of Mind itself, formless, selfless Presence of intrinsic awareness-consciousness itself, primordial ground in whom this all arises and participates, including every one of us. Our innate wisdom mind, luminous Presence deep within us, already knows this noetic post-conceptual, nondual truth.

From the Mayahana point of view, the result of these four mindfulnesses is the realization of twofold egolessness—the egolessness of self and the egolessness of phenomena. That is essentially what mindfulness is all about.

—Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche

Quiet Interlude

The continuity of recognition (nondual wisdom, *jnana, yeshe, vidya, gnosis*) of the intrinsic awareness of our innate clear light wisdom mind—bright Presence of That—is naturally and spontaneously expressed as compassionate *bodhichitta*, the thought, intention, and action for the benefit of living beings. And, we are told, that cognitive *process* is the primary cause of human happiness. Non-recognition of wisdom is the primary cause of unhappiness and human suffering. It is known to the wise as ignorance (*ajnana, avidya, marigpa*). So let us now briefly directly experience (*yogi pratyaksa*) the very nature of this love-wisdom mind that we actually are.

Now place your *attention/awareness* on the breath as it rises and falls in the belly. On the in breath *feel* life-force energy (*prana, c'hi, pneuma/Holy Spirit*) inter in and pervade your entire body-mind. Just let it be as it already is. No need to think *about* it. Then on the out breath *surrender* any obstruction to its flow—thoughts, concepts, beliefs, doubt, painful emotions, memories, happy or sad images—as this all releases into the psycho-emotional energetic field that surrounds you. This frees you, step by mindful step, of the "mind-

forged manacles" (William Blake) of obsessive, addictive, often negative thinking. Relax and 'bracket' your concepts, beliefs, and cognitive biases.

Now, just for a moment, close your eyes and raise your eyebrows. Feel alpha and 'waking theta' brain rhythm—the "relaxation response"—as it arises as a subtle stirring or fullness in the forebrain, just behind the forehead. Gently breathe in for about five seconds. Now breathe out for about seven seconds through pursed lips, as if breathing out through a small straw. No need to think about it. *Feel* your rising and falling breath in the belly. Maintain your awareness only upon the breath. Partially open your eyes.

This "polyvagal breath" inhibits cortisol production in the adrenal cortex. We've seen that cortisol produces the 'flight or flight' stress response with all its deleterious physical and mental effects. Cortisol is distributed via the vagus nerve, the 10th cranial nerve which provides parasympathetic control of heart, lungs, and digestive tract. [Porges 2017, *Polyvagal Theory*]. Thus, broadly construed, mindful breathing practice inhibits cortisol production, produces peaceful 'rest and digest' cortical alpha and theta brain rhythms which reduce often stressful 'fight or flight' cortical beta brain rhythm.

So, that's one 12 second breath—five seconds in; seven seconds out. Practice three such breaths—about 36 seconds. Let mind settle and enjoy the peace in this quiet luminous space between your thoughts. If you wish, partially open your eyes and do nine breaths—an auspicious 108 seconds—less than two minutes. This will gradually clear your mind of distracting thoughts and emotions. Notice the subtle feeling-knowing peace, sense of well-being, even bliss that is now present to your awareness.

Notice that thinking and feeling distractions naturally arise; yet present no disturbance. External and internal distractions are simply a part of the process. That is the simplicity of this profound process. Observe and enjoy as you release arising distractions, pleasant or not, and return again and again to the peace of your quiescent breath. It's a choice. Now open your eyes and close your mouth. Continue by breathing normally for as long as it feels good—five minutes; half an hour; perhaps an hour.

Now notice your present mind state; and your emotions. How do you feel? Rest in that peace for as long as you wish. This is the beginning of your mindfulness practice. Take refuge in it often. But don't expect too much all at once. If you have an established practice consider how you may use mindfulness of breathing in it.

[For much more on mindfulness meditation practice please see Chapter 8, condensed in *Appendix A*.]

Awareness Management. Meditation may be viewed as going from distraction to distraction without losing enthusiasm, as Sir Winston Churchill might have told it. In due course a mindful continuity of basal love-wisdom awareness wholly pervades the self-contracted bodymind. This is experienced as harmless, selfless Happiness Itself. Meanwhile, "adversity happens". But now you know what to do! *Happiness is the result of how and where you place your attention/awareness.*

But don't *believe* any of this. It's beyond belief. Mindfulness of breathing is so much more profound than mere discursive concepts and beliefs about it. Yes, mindful breathing transcends yet embraces our concepts and beliefs about it—our deep cultural background

skeptical, scientific materialist 'global web of belief'. *Mindfulness is a feeling 'felt sense'*, mostly absent conceptual thinking and belief.

At any time—several times a day—*feel directly* throughout your body-mind this spacious, quiet peace of mind. Whether for 36 seconds, or 108 seconds, let the life force of *prana/pneuma/Holy Spirit* pervade your entire body-mind. Let it penetrate everywhere—muscles, organs, cells, right down to your atomic and subatomic structures. "Leave it alone and let it be as it is." [Buddha] Now, stop thinking and act.

Real Metaphysics of Mindfulness Meditation

Who Is It That I Am? The masters of the three times (past, present, future) have told it well: this vast luminous, numinous, pristine intrinsic awareness is who we actually are. *Tat Tvam Asi; That I Am*—bright Presence of That. That is the ineffable primordial ground of all experience, very ground of being itself. Only recognize it each moment now.

Become aware of the ultimate significance
of the ineffable ground of being! If there is
innate intrinsic awareness of this very point,
there is Buddhahood.

—*Aspiration Prayer of Samantabhadra*

Now, because this numinous Presence of the primordial ground of being is always already present at the spiritual Heart (*hridayam*) of each human being, we all bear the "innate intrinsic awareness" imprint of indwelling Buddha nature or Buddha essence deep within us—without a single exception! Perhaps we are not yet fully awakened Buddhas. Perhaps we have not yet fully realized our innate *Christos*, our luminous innermost secret Christ Presence. Yet, That is our actual nature. It is mindful awakening to inherent, indwelling awareness of "That I Am" Presence to which our contemplative practice always points. And wonder of wonders, "It is already accomplished from the very beginning." (Garab Dorje) We awaken to that great truth upon each mindful mantra breath.

Yes, mindful breathing allows negative thoughts and feelings to naturally arise so that we may efficiently and safely release them. Just so, profound intellectual, emotional, and spiritual insight naturally arises so that we may conceptually unpack and integrate it all in our post-meditation world view. But during meditation such attractive insights are seductive distractions. Surrender it all upon the out breath. Engage them later. Such skillful concern is called *vipashyana* or selfless analytic meditation, or penetrating insight. *Vipashyana* may be seen as the penetrating analytic voice of trans-conceptual quiescent *shamatha*. [Ch. 1]

But for now, during your formal meditation, whatever arises, label it "distraction", and release it all on the out breath. Do not grasp at the beautiful, nor shrink from the ugly. "Let it be as it is." (Buddha) With a bit of selfless, fearless patience it shall surely pass of its own accord. Should a distraction prove exceptionally persistent—if you get stuck in it—invite it in for tea and mantra. Get to know its nature. Who is it, really? Yes, it's a mind

created illusion. Don't dodge it, judge it, obsess about it, or indulge it; and don't take it too seriously. Ultimately viewed all such distractions are merely the natural apparitional phantoms of the incessant play of the mind. All that arises in the mind is natural, mere displays of the selfless clear light Nature of Mind itself in whom this all arises and plays.

Therefore, gently penetrate such stubborn distractions with the power of mantra (*OM AH HUM*), and with light/voice of *prana* life force energy (*c'hi, pneuma*, Holy Spirit) that arises upon each in breath, and stay with it awhile. Enjoy the humor of your process here. All this is but the playful display of the mind—this diaphanous dance of the mind. Nothing serious. No drama. No problem at all. Now watch it all dissolve as you return again and again to your alpha mantra breath. This view of distractions to pure Presence that you are is always a choice. Explore it. Enjoy it. Make it *your* practice. [Ch. 8; Appendix A]

Mind created stuff appears like a vivid rainbow. Like a rainbow it is empty of any solid reality; apparitional, absent any iota of intrinsic or ultimate existence. Through such an understanding the mind is made free, that it may be happy, and become compassionately useful to both self and others. Distractions are indeed a great opportunity! This is the correct View. But once again, don't believe it. Check it out for yourself. As Buddha told, "Come and see (*ehi passika*) for yourself."

So mindful breathing is not a *conceptually* elaborated metaphysical boundless awareness-consciousness whole of the primordial ground of being itself; nor is it God, nor even nondual godhead; nor happy relative flourishing, nor ultimate happiness; nor enlightenment, nor the yogi's bliss. These are all, prior to *direct subjective contemplative experience*, merely *fantasque* views, concepts and beliefs. Yet, such mindfulness is the profound means and skillful method, even a path, to all of that wondrous wisdom experience. How is this so?

Human Happiness and the Logic of the Non-Conceptual

Let us now briefly engage the profound contemplative paraconsistent *logic of the non-conceptual* via a reflexive logical conceptual critique of logic itself. We deepen our understanding of our inherent cognitive *noetic doublet*, both faces of our human knowing/feeling—exoteric objective, and esoteric subjective—by utilizing objective logic to reflexively point out the inherent limits of objective logic. We use penetrating conceptual insight to enhance and to further our contemplative understanding of a deeper and more inclusive subjective knowing strata of formation that transcends, yet includes mere objective conceptual knowing. Philosophers of Mind have named this holistic program "cognitive reflexivity".

Such a multi-faceted contemplative understanding opens a finite conscious cognitive portal into infinite subjective directly *experiential* knowledge, namely, the present inherent wisdom unity of thinking subject and its perceived object. The invidious and adventitious semiotic subject-object split between knower and the known is healed, that the prior and always present nondual unity of this destructive cognitive duality is revealed, and healed—breath by mindful breath.

And this healing is incipient love and wisdom—the liminal dawning of, and awakening to our always already present love-wisdom mind—clear light Presence of intrinsic awareness itself—by whatever name or concept. Letting this being be as it is, is naturally joyous, even as adversity continues to arise. Adversity and bliss are not an intrinsic duality. Rather, they are a spacious intimate complementary unity. It's how we *choose* to respond, or to react to inexorable adversity that is the open secret of our human happiness. We come to accept that reality; or we do not. Let us further conceptually unpack this heady notion of the logic of the non-conceptual.

The Logic of Reality. Contemplative mindfulness practice bestows the mostly selfless, trans-conceptual, trans-rational initial recognition, then deeper realization, then altruistic expression in kind compassionate conduct of our innermost peace and happiness, our bliss and connectedness to everything and everyone through the vast unbounded whole that we all share. "We all share the same God." That vast implicate whole is primordial awareness ground of all this arising appearing explicate spacetime located being itself. Love-wisdom Presence of That is always already present within us, here and now, beyond our obsessive logical concepts and beliefs about it. That is the great 'paraconsistent' trans-logical teaching of our Primordial Wisdom Tradition.

[We shall explore paraconsistent, intuitionist, multi-valued alternative deductive logical systems in Ch. 7]

Jesus told, "That which you seek is already present within you...but you do not see it." The Apostle Paul: "Awaken thou that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee." Said Buddha, "Wonder of wonders, all beings are Buddha." OK. As an ego-I we are not yet fully awakened to that 'original wakefulness'. Yet, the intrinsic awareness Presence of our innermost Buddha nature/*bodhi* mind/*christos* is already present, each moment now. It is That to which we awaken, step by mindful step, as we tread this difficult, joyous contemplative Path to wholeness.

Thus does mindfulness of breathing open this awareness portal into our already present love-wisdom mind that we may at last fully enter in. In this way then "full mindfulness of breathing" is the cognitive contemplative "foundation of all higher knowledge"— subjective and objective meditative love/wisdom practice, expressed in selfless skillful conduct for the benefit of other beings.

How is it that we do not recognize this great wisdom truth that is the profound trans-rational paraconsistent *logic of the non-conceptual*? Our always already present selfless primordial wisdom mind—intrinsic awareness itself—is veiled by our habitual seeking strategies for a lesser happiness. We seek it through our egocentric objective concepts and beliefs which convince us that our happiness lies elsewhere, in the past or future, somewhere or in someone else, or in some material or relational thing, or mind state, or holy personage outside us. We have seen that this seeking of happiness that is "already present within" is known to our Primordial Wisdom Tradition as ignorance (*avidya*, *hamartia/sin*)—"missing the mark" of our already present indwelling happiness. Seeking

happiness that is already present is a form of unhappiness; is it not? As the old song goes, "We're looking for happiness in all the wrong places."

Perhaps if we gain more material stuff and egocentric relational power over others, or perhaps true religion, or a guru, or our estranged spouse comes home, then we'll be really happy. If we cannot be happy here now, perhaps we can be happy elsewhere, in some future state of being.

Mindfulness quickly reveals, and with great clarity that our happiness abides only in this spacious, intimate present moment now. And it's already present! Feel it now. Because the past and the future are always elsewhere—present memory of what is past, and present anticipation of what is future—where else but this moment now could our happiness be? It's all so law-like; so perfectly logical. Indeed, the pristine logic of the non-conceptual. Some fine day, perhaps today, we shall all shine through it.

The beautiful reality is that we cannot *become* happy later; we can only *be* happy now. Thus do we take full responsibility for our present mind state, right here and now. Thus do we cease our endless negative fault finding projections onto other persons and conditions, and begin to simply be happy in this wondrous gift of our present life, just as it is, here and now. How? Through mindful *shamatha*, conscious "placement of attention" upon the breath. Now do 108 seconds to now! Use your 108 bead mala.

We limit ourselves most by our well intentioned attachment to and defense of our present deep background cultural "global web of belief"; what we now think we know to be true; do we not?

It's not what we don't know that gets us in trouble.

It's what we know, that just ain't so.

—Mark Twain

So what's the mindful antidote to such dubious happiness seeking strategies? A reflexive healthy skepticism of one's own well defended egocentric concept-belief systems provides a discomfiting, not so easy, yet powerful opening into our already present Presence of love-wisdom mind.

How shall we do this? It's all too complicated! Ignorance is bliss; isn't it?

But now you know what to do. Yes! A few mindful, conscious, normal belly breaths upon feeling worried, anxious, sad, irritated, impatient, angry, defensive or judgmental of self or others is the skillful, selfless compassionate method. And yes, such trans-ego-I meta-cognition takes a little practice to reign in and stabilize the wild horse of the mind. But the benefit is present almost immediately! And what pray tell might that benefit be? How about happy peace of mind? By now you know it works. We choose to practice it, or we choose not to practice it. To practice or not to practice. That is the question.

That is the prodigious logic of the non-conceptual, the basis of understanding for realizing both relative human flourishing and ultimate liberated human happiness.

The Logic of Reality and the Metaphysics of Presence

Fourth century BC Taoist master Chuang Tzu told it well: "You will not find happiness until you stop seeking it." So we simply breathe mindfully, present moment to present moment. The red flag of ego-grasping distraction is cognitive/emotional discomfort upon the arising of negative emotion—1) fear/anxiety, 2) impatience/hostility/anger. These two are actually two sides of the same afflictive coin. As anxiety arises, look for the anger below it. As anger arises, look for the fear below it. The immediate antidote, and long term cure is quiescent 'mindfulness of breathing'.

With our clear light mindfulness practice, in due course we shall notice a profound continuity of peaceful mindfulness—always disrupted by one or another distraction. That's life. That's the process. No need to try to change it. *Wu Wei*—non-goal directed enlightened activity. "Let be as it is." *Ultimately* considered, it's perfect just as it is. *Relatively* considered, it's the practical cause of peace of mind and happiness in an absurd and painful spacetime world—known to Buddhists of all stripes as *samsara*. Ultimate selfless, formless boundless emptiness; and beautiful chaotic Relative form. In Buddha's timeless but enduring words, "Form is empty, emptiness is form"; perennial continuity of the Two Truths, always already this *one truth* prior and present unity.

Wonder of wonders, breath by breath, mind is purified of its ego-grasping afflictive negative emotions based in dualistic duplicitous attraction and aversion: fear/anger/hatred, pride/envy/greed, guilt/regret. Ever so gradually our inherent imperfect bliss arises and outshines for us, and for all others in our sphere—riding the breath, between endless distractions, again and again. Indeed, as we have seen, meditation practice is going from distraction to distraction without losing enthusiasm.

Being Here Now. Once again, this indwelling already present happiness must not be our *goal*. It is after all, already present as the bright continuity of our love-wisdom mind Presence. Presence of what? Of the primordial ground of being itself. And goals are future looking. Alas, the future never shows up! It's always becoming the timeless present moment now. Perfect just as it is. Adversity. No problem.

Both physicists and Buddhists bespeak this conspicuous fact that only the present moment exists. Presence abides in this eternal present. Only this present moment is really real; like it or not. The past is gone, but a present memory. This eternally present moment is only always vanishing into the past. And the future has not yet arisen. It is but a present, often fraught anticipation. Future is always only becoming the present moment. Our memories and regrets of the past, and our dreams and fears about the future happen only in the present moment—this awareness-consciousness singularity of '*eternal now*'. Presence is only now. Thus do we train the distracted mind to 'be here now'.

Therefore, past and future are but absent, empty, illusory, misleading concepts, beliefs and fantasies. Yet, as Soto School founder Dōgen Zenji reminds us, being here in time (his *Ugi* or Being-Time) is spontaneous wisdom mind Presence in this world of space and time. Yes, existence is inherently impermanent, being only in the present moment now, but this present moment is inherently interdependently interconnected to our past and our future. *This instant of our present moment now has meaning only through its*

relationship with our past and our future. Denial or distraction from the present by living in our past or future "is to lose reality itself." And to fail to consider and learn from our past is to lose the very karmic meaning of Presence in our lives.

Well, what then is the really real nature of this inscrutable present moment? Given the holistic *kosmic* interdependence of 'the three times'—past present, future—if past and future are *ultimately* illusory, how can the present be anything but illusory?

How indeed. The notion of 'present' is necessarily related to our concepts of 'past' and 'future' via a syntactical relation known as 'complementarity'—a semiotic/linguistic interdependence of semantic meaning; semiotic foundation of quantum pioneer Niels Bohr's prodigious Principle of Complementarity, ontic grounding relation of Quantum Field Theory. [Ch. 7]

So, 'present' receives its logical, syntactical meaning from our definitions of 'past' and of 'future'. Light derives its meaning from opposing dark; truth from falsity; part from whole; self-subject from object-other; objective from subjective; relative from absolute; adversity from peace/bliss; matter particle from matter wave.

None of these *concepts* has any purely singular or independent, or absolute meaning in itself, without its ontic counterpart. Semiotically, the logical syntax of language, as well as the 'semantics' and the 'pragmatics' of language is dualistic and relational. Just so, mind is dualistic. Language is binary and truth functional; statements are true *or* false. But there's a lot of meaningful grey between true and false, between black and white, between existence and nonexistence.

Therefore meaning—conceptual semantic and trans-conceptual contemplative—is not independent, but *interdependent*. As philosopher Hilary Putnam told, "Meaning ain't in the head." Linguistic meaning is objective, semantic and cultural. Religious, spiritual and contemplative meaning is non-objective, a trans-rational emotive feeling sense. The consciousness processional of human cognition—objective, subjective and innermost nondual—is an interdependent prior yet always present complementary unity. Practice them from this unified view. And yes, such a view motivates and facilitates the assiduous practice of the Path that results in the 'fruition' of both relative and ultimate human happiness. Scientific cause and effect.

Indeed, for Mahayana Buddhists, and for scientists alike everything that arises and participates—physical, mental, spiritual—in this great *kosmic* gift of our spacetime phenomenal world is *caused* by prior causes and conditions—a selfless infinite causal web or matrix of utterly interconnected, interdependent causes and conditions of this infinitely complex 'mereological' relationship of parts with their wholes, and these unfolding holonic wholes with the implicate unbroken whole that is cosmic spacetime and all embracing *kosmic* nondual reality being itself. The stuff of our relative spacetime reality arises and abides in that primordial unbounded whole. Heady wine indeed.

The Buddhist Mahayana Middle Way View. On the Mahayana Buddhist view nothing exists purely observer-independently, from its own side. Our realities arising and appearing to an observer-experiencer in relative time are utterly *interdependent*—centrist Middle Way Buddhist "interdependent arising" which is not other than Buddhist emptiness. So, emptiness/*shunyata* is not some transcendental, ultimately real logocentric

or theistic greater or deeper reality existing beyond, or prior to the conventional truths of relative space and time. Even the basal boundless emptiness ground of all of this arising is itself empty and absent, as Nagarjuna told, of "any shred of intrinsic existence." Rather, emptiness is conceptually imputed, reified/objectified into really real stuff by our individual and therefore collective-cultural relative conventional minds—our 'global web of belief'.

H.H. Dali Lama refers to this great nondual ontic truth as 'the emptiness of emptiness', as we've seen. Thus is boundless emptiness (*shunyata*), a 'groundless ground'. On this Buddhist view there is no *ultimate* ground! There is only this mind created and imputed impermanent causal emptiness matrix. Spooky indeed to self-ego-I embedded in a Scientifically materialist culture grasping at a permanent immortal base for itself, and for all of its *relative* appearing realities.

Not to worry. Stuff and we ego-I perceivers of it are, while ultimately non-existent, nonetheless really real relatively and conventionally. It is foolish to deny that stuff exists. The question is, how does it exist—relatively or ultimately? Spacetime stuff exists only relatively. So we still have to show up for work; and choose to practice meditation, and to be kind to all beings, that we may all the more appreciate this mysterious, trans-conceptual ultimate Nature of Mind—numinous love-wisdom mind Presence of That in whom this all arises.

In short, in Buddhist Mahayana metaphysics this curious ontology (how things ultimately exist) is known, as we have just seen, as 'dependent arising' or 'interdependent arising', or "interbeing" (*pratitya samatpada*). And this is Buddhist boundless emptiness (*shunyata*), *dharmakaya*, *kadag*, all inclusive perfectly subjective unbounded whole itself, 'basic space' of *dharmadhatu*, Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*). And yes, it is this perfectly subjective vast dimension that embraces and subsumes all the stuff and beings of the objective phenomenal spacetime dimension of conventional Relative Truth (*samvriti satya*) that arises and participates therein.

Therefore, these Two Truths are the two utterly interdependent reality dimensions of relative Form and its ultimate Emptiness. [Appendix C] Buddha illuminated the seminal relation of the impermanent emptiness and the interdependence of these two reality modes in the "fourfold profundity" of his foundational nondual teaching—his *Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra of Wisdom*:

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

Why should we care about such heady ontological considerations? In order to objectively understand just what it is that subjective mindfulness of the present moment accomplishes we must reflexively engage its subjective heart with a bit of selfless

penetrating insight (*vipashyana*). Thus do we unify the two voices of our human cognition—objective conceptual, and subjective contemplative.

Therefore, this spooky, diaphanous present moment, though *observer-dependently relatively* real, is *ultimately* illusory and absent or empty of any *observer-independent, singular, absolute intrinsic* existence. Moreover, the illusory present moment is simultaneous, instantaneous and timeless so there is nothing for self-ego-I to grasp at, and cling to. Subjective knower and objective perceived/known cannot therefore be ultimately split. Appearing reality is a prior and ever-present Two Truths—Relative and Ultimate—unity. We come to know this syncretic invariant *one truth* upon the breath, *shamatha*, the foundation of our wisdom mind (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*)—clear light Presence of That.

In other words, the ultimate nature of the physical and mental spacetime stuff of form, the Relative Truth dimension, is the timeless trans-physical primordial boundless whole that is all embracing boundless emptiness itself, Ultimate Truth in whom it arises and participates. The Two Truths are already and always a nondual primordial one truth awareness-consciousness whole or groundless ground, reality itself—*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*—in whom this all arises. Wisdom mind—intrinsic awareness Presence (*vidya, rigpa*) of That, is the subtle innermost knowing-feeling 'felt sense' experience of it.

Therefore, wisdom mind knows and feels the deep trans-conceptual essence of this great nondual one truth, prior to any separation between knowing subject and its objects known. Our wisdom traditions have told it well. As we have seen many times in these pages, the recognition, then nondual, trans-rational realization of this great foundational love and wisdom truth is Happiness Itself, the selfless, transpersonal happiness that causes no harm, the happiness that cannot be lost.

Well then, is wisdom mind happiness our proper goal? It is not. We have seen that goals are future looking; stuck in a future that doesn't show up! Only this present moment here and now is really real. And even this timeless moment is more or less illusory—beyond grasping and clinging—already streaming toward our past.

What *is* real? Our present conscious, mindful mantra breath—luminous, numinous subtle *prana* life energy is our stable reality. Therefore, the simple practice of conscious, mindful breathing is our goal. Thus do we "Make the goal the Path."

No-Self Help: The Benefits of Selfless Wisdom Mind

So, what is the mindfulness practice payoff? We need a payoff; don't we? If you actually practice it, rather than just conceptually ponder it, you shall quickly find yourself settled into the spacious, loving, fearless freedom of the luminous fundamental consciousness ground state in which, or in whom you, and everything else arises. And that, we are told by the wisdom masters of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition is your quiet, indwelling love-wisdom mind—intrinsic awareness Presence—by whatever name or concept. You are not in any real way ever separate from That! Although "normal" self-ego-I dualistic concept-mind cognition makes it seem so most of the time.

Recall our 'awareness management' discussion where *both your happiness, and your suffering arise from your present mind state!* Fear, anger, hatred, greed and pride cannot beget

happiness. As H.H. Dalai Lama said, "A negative intention cannot yield a positive result." So we train the wild horse of the mind to rest in the innermost peace of our present love and wisdom—bright Presence of That.

Now, we are beginning to understand that we may readily accomplish a bit of control over our unruly negative mind states. Indeed, the peaceful payoff begins with practice—your first three 12 second alpha mantra breaths (5 seconds in; 7 seconds out = 36 seconds of now). If you're adventurous, pull out all the stops and practice 9 such breaths; a providential 108 seconds to now of blissful mental freedom; even with all the distractions. Check it out now. [Ch. 8, condensed in *Appendix A*]

This ultimate, bright, safe spacious and awake nonlocal "secret place" of natural mind cannot be *directly* known by our concept-belief mind. Cognition that is inherently non-objective cannot be known via objective cognition, try as we may. That it can is an error in reasoning called a 'category mistake'. Understanding of inherently subjective phenomena, for example nondual primordial wisdom (*jnana, yeshe*), which exceeds the limit of objective cognition, cannot be grasped by purely logical, objective means. Although we have herein certainly tried.

Yet, we read and study and objectively, conceptually unpack the great nondual teaching, that we holistically round our understanding with both aspects of human cognition—esoteric subjective, and exoteric objective. Then we begin to integrate it into our personal and collective 'global web of belief' (Quine 1969), as we are doing here.

Thus it is, love-wisdom mind Presence is inherently a subjective contemplative or meditative cognitive *space*. It is not a local place in relative time or space. It transcends yet includes and embraces objective conceptual cognition; just as the subtle loving mind of the mother embraces and corrects the mind of her beloved child.

Wisdom *bodhi* mind, *buddhajnana*, arises in the luminous 'space between your conceptual thoughts'. Once again, the bright Presence of That is who we actually are; "supreme identity" of our 'supreme source', ultimate primordial boundless implicate infolded order of the whole, unfolding always here in time. It is that 'original wakefulness' to which we awaken through the practice of the Path. Or so saith the noble minds of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition.

Who Am I, really? Am I this *relative*, conventional, impermanent, fearful, angry narcissistic self-ego-I? Or am I the *ultimate* formless, selfless primordial boundless whole, very ground or womb of being itself—peaceful, blissful Presence of That—in whom this ultimately illusory bogus self, and everything else in *relative* spacetime reality arises and participates? Or both? What is my ultimate "supreme identity"?

We have seen it again and again in these pages. We are told by the wisdom masters, sages and saints of our Great Tradition that it is our always present love-wisdom Buddha mind, Christ nature, Presence of the primordial awareness ground (*dharmakaya*) of all appearing reality. That vast whole transcends, embraces and knows our lesser identities, as the mother knows and loves her child. "The mother knows the child." [Adzom Rinpoche]

What is your mind? That is your mind. The very fundamental Nature of Mind.

Yet our often childish self-ego-I is a very important part in the whole reality equation. Who is it after all that *chooses* to practice mindful opening to receive innate indwelling wisdom? Who is it that "becomes" happy, and enlightened?

Under sway of our grasping at I-me-mine, peace and happiness elude us. Yet it is through the suffering of such painful illusion and delusion that we awaken. It is through our emotional wounds that healing light enters in. As we earn our freedom from ultimately illusory, but relatively all too real ego-I, big happiness payoff; no problem at all.

We've seen that directly experienced unity of these two views—objective relative and perfectly subjective ultimate—this *noetic wisdom doublet*, the two voices of our human being here in time—is the peace and happiness inherent in our always present Presence, abiding deep within. We discover this truth upon each mindful breath. And this "basic goodness" and merit of *bodhicitta* is cumulative and distributive. Thus do we offer it to all living beings at the conclusion of our practice sessions: "May all beings be free of suffering, and the causes of suffering. May all beings have happiness, and the causes of happiness."

Well, what might this indwelling 'inner peace' of your innermost love and wisdom nature actually *feel* like when you, however imperfectly, cease seeking it, and stop thinking about it, surrender your concepts, biases and anxiety about the unknown, and open your heart and mind to receive it? It is this *attentional awareness stability* of innate love-wisdom mind that is the fruition/result of the Path of mindful meditation. And yes, it feels good.

So you are in good company. All of the wisdom masters, sages and saints of the "three times"—past, present, future—have taught this truth of the auspicious "Who Am I" conundrum. And yes, it takes generosity, patience, courage, self discipline and wisdom to challenge the tyrannical skeptical and fearful self-ego-I with all of its duplicity. Who is it that requires the development of these happy qualities of character? Clearly, it is narcissistic self-ego-I—the wild horse of the thinking mind.

But wait! On the accord of our great wisdom tradition, both East and West, the ego is an illusory phantom. It doesn't ultimately exist. Yet, it exists relatively, conventionally. It is in this local spacetime dimension that fearful and aggressive self-ego-I *chooses* to be tamed by a Presence that transcends yet embraces that reality dimension. And that already present Presence is a choice!

Therefore, to the degree that we bestow upon ego-I its reality through ego grasping activity; to that degree we are enslaved by it. Thus, selfless, harmless *bodhicitta* activity for the benefit of all beings is the measure of this happiness equation, and the antidote, and ultimate cure to suffering, stress and strife. Precious *bodhicitta*. Find a way. Your happiness depends upon it.

More good news. We shall discover as we begin to open our heart and mind unto our "supreme identity" through the practice of mindfulness of breathing that this prosaic happiness calculus, with its much too much conceptuality *about* happiness, is all rather more clear and simple than dualistic discursive thinking makes it seem. And that's a happy thought!

Wisdom, Skepticism, *Bodhicitta*

Skepticism has three voices: 1) Healthy; 2) Radical; and 3) Inane.

Inane Skepticism may be expressed thusly: "I got no beliefs. I don't believe in nothin' less I can see it and touch it. Everything is all just physical." This is "common sense" gross Physicalism—Bertrand Russell's "Metaphysics of the Stone Age." It is mirrored in our prevailing Western cultural metaphysic that is Scientific Materialism/Physicalism—known to its detractors as the proto-religion of 'Scientism'.

Well, what is the epistemic status of this skeptical monistic physicalist view? Is it an objective factoid, a 'true fact'? Is it a subjective unexamined opinion? A well-considered opinion? A closely held belief?

Recall that monistic Metaphysical Materialism/Physicalism—everything is ultimately only physical, or reducible to physical brain—is itself a metaphysical *belief*, an ontological assumption that cannot be logically or even empirically proven true or false. It is but a 'scientific' belief. Inane skepticism devours itself. The same holds for monistic Metaphysical Absolute Idealism, that everything is a mental illusion and ultimately non-existent. Don't we need a Middle Way between these inane metaphysical extremes?

Healthy Skepticism says, "Don't believe everything you hear or read. Don't become ensnared in the fear/anger mass paranoia of inane skepticism proffered by conspiracy theories. Check it out with your own intuition, natural intelligence, and direct experience." Buddha spoke to his disciples, "O monks: do not believe what I teach out of respect for me. Come and see." Wise counsel indeed.

Reflexive Radical Skepticism counsels, "I must remain skeptical of *my own* closely held and well defended beliefs and biases—my cultural deep background "global web of belief; my own foolish self-ego-I". Can you do that?

Such heroic recursive, self-reflexive cognition is indeed a bitter pill for any self-respecting ego-I. Yet, in 'open presence' (*rigpa, vidya*) love-wisdom mindfulness of your concept and belief systems, you learn to establish the bias free '*witness presence*' who lovingly observes the foolish games of this nonentity we call 'I'. That is how to accomplish such original radical cognition. And from that wisdom engagement spontaneously arises your own brand of compassionate *bodhichitta*, open secret of human happiness—of *your* happiness.

Yes. We become ego-attached to, and defensive of our own closely held concept and belief systems. It requires a mature mind with a strong, secure, flexible but gentle self-skeptical ego to engage the witness presence and manage the prodigious often self-destructive self-ego-I. Indeed, it takes a strong, highly intelligent ego to confront its own biases and well defended narcissism, then deconstruct that, and gradually free itself. Thus begins the healthy gentle relationship of self-ego-I, healthy self-esteem, and the selfless compassionate love-wisdom Buddha Heart Buddha Mind that we actually are, being here as esteemed guests of the phenomenal world.

Hence, one of the first steps on this Path is the exercise of a healthy and radical skepticism; to doubt one's own closely held beliefs and biases; specially the negative/denial/doubt that is the painful imprint of the false self that is desire-mind ego-I. With the conceptual and non-conceptual stability of mindfulness (*shamatha*) and penetrating insight meditation (*vipashyana*) we may critically examine, then choose to

move beyond our mostly unconscious "global web of belief" and open heart and mind to that luminous wisdom ground which subsumes and embraces this whole shebang that we have come to know and love.

A human mind imbued with the realized 'full *bodhi*' of nondual (trans-conceptual subject-object unity) compassionate wisdom is indeed rare. Only the most accomplished masters have realized such a peaceful, blissful cognitive freedom. But we can approximate it mindfully. Recall the pith of Taoist wisdom master Lao Tzu from his celebrated *Tao Te Ching*—one of the first mindfulness guides. "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." And yet, most ironically, our wisdom mind Presence is always already present at the human Heart—without a single exception! We awaken to That upon each mindful breath. We arrive at our destination each moment, each breath.

OK. We must evaluate stuff—air, food, thoughts, intentions, actions, even the unconscious biases of self-ego-I. Will it help me? Will it harm another? What would Jesus or Buddha do in any given ethical situation? Does my action express the kindness and compassion of my indwelling selfless love-wisdom essence? Yes, we must have some opinions and beliefs, even cognitive biases to guide us in this chaotic relative conventional world of space and time. But let our beliefs be founded in our direct transpersonal contemplative experience, more or less free of the cognitive biases of self.

That is the main point. Our primordial wisdom mind, should we choose to listen and hear, informs our thoughts, intentions and actions continuously, beyond bias and ego strategies of defense, here and now, upon each conscious mindful breath. We may *choose* to engage Presence of That, between the naturally arising distractions, most of the time. How? Moment to moment continuity of mindful awareness of that already present Presence of the boundless emptiness 'groundless ground', the very aboriginal Nature of Mind—*your* mind!

This is the difference that makes all the difference. In direct proportion to that, we are of benefit to others, which benefits ourselves. And that is the open secret and primary cause of our happiness. We're all in this together. Simple, but not so easy. Yet it is actually happening upon each conscious mindful breath. Love and wisdom are always already present, even when we forget to remember it.

Our primordial love-wisdom mind is then synonymous with human happiness, both relative human flourishing, and ultimate liberation, even enlightenment. Not the concept or the belief *about* Presence (*rigpa*), or about happiness; not the quasi-conscious desire for happy stuff, not even the direct felt sense experience of it. What then? Happiness is kind loving *activity*, conduct, its skillful practice in our everyday lifeworld. Or so it is told by the masters of the Great Wisdom Tradition of humankind. And when we forget, and know that we have forgotten? Breathe effortlessly and consciously from the belly for a few seconds upon the mantra prayer of your choice, for example *OM AH HUM*. Discover the light and intelligence now present upon the breath prior to your obsessive thinking. That's it!

Or is it? We must here thicken the mindfulness plot just a bit. Is our own precious direct blissful experience of this nondual innermost Presence (*vidya*, *rigpa*, *christos*) that we actually are all there is to this wondrous process of awakening to our always present

selfless happiness? Is the yogi's bliss what human happiness is all about? We have seen in these pages that it is not. Our precious 'spiritual' practice can become narcissistic. Destructive ego-I spiritual pride is the result. What's missing here?

Buddhist Bodhicitta, and Beyond

In Middle Way Mahayana/Vajrayana Buddhist tradition we are told by the *vidyadhara/rigzin* meditation masters of the three times (past, present, future) that the inherent subjective clarity, peace and bliss of our actual human nature is a *nyam*, a mere subjective *experience of a self*. But the loving kindness that is *bodhicitta* is innately selfless, even as the giver receives great benefit from the act of giving.

It will be useful in this connection to briefly consider the profound teaching of Gautama the Buddha of this present age. It shall be a very brief consideration indeed for his entire teaching may be essentialized in 20 words from the early Buddhist *Pali Canon*. This wisdom pith expresses the truth of our entire Primordial Wisdom Tradition.

Please consider well this love-wisdom guidance as the key to human happiness, and to your own relative and ultimate happiness. From the *Dhammapada*,

First, do no harm.
Practice what is skillful
in benefitting beings.
Train and purify your mind.
That is my teaching.

First, do no harm to any living being through your thought, intention, or action. Then wisely, skillfully and selflessly practice to benefit living beings. To accomplish these two, train and purify your mind of the adventitious negative afflicting emotions that are the causes of the suffering of beings, especially human beings, including oneself. Buddhists classify these "afflictive emotions" into the two categories of egocentric cognition and action. *Aversion*: fear, anger, hostility, hatred. *Attraction/Attachment*: habitual grasping clinging desire, greed, jealousy, egoistic pride. [Boaz 2020, Ch. I]

In arguably the most sublime paradox of the contemplative love-wisdom Path, our self-ego-I instantly, spontaneously, directly receives profound happiness from *bodhicitta* conduct—the thought, intention and action for the benefit of sentient beings. We already know this through our own past experience, when we think about it.

As we objectively, conceptually unpack our subjective *shamatha* experience with its inherent *bodhicitta*, we begin to accomplish a cognitive balance of the whole contemplative process—a big step toward purification of the mind of narcissistic self-ego-I from its negative afflictive emotions. Thereby is the mind purified and rendered useful for skillful thought, intention, and action for the benefit of living beings, and because of this, for the benefit of oneself. Relative self, and ultimate no-self, always a prior yet present unity. From this awareness arises the precious *bodhicitta*.

This great awakening process is, in a word, *bodhicitta*—the *bodhicitta* of intention, and the *bodhicitta* of action. These arise in *ultimate bodhicitta*, the great compassionate gift of our life, just as it is now, and our life force *prana* wind upon the breath, all being here in spacetime as guests of the phenomenal world. We learn to be present to That. Our ever present mindful mindstream becomes a bright continuity and gentle expression of That. How? Simply place your *awareness/attention* now upon the breath in the belly. Where your attention resides, that's where, and who you are. No metaphysics, no mysticism, no religion nor belief system need apply.

We must recognize, then realize in compassionate conduct the prior and present unity of both primary aspects of mind—our cognitive noetic doublet—inner esoteric subjective nature, and our outer exoteric objective nature. Human nature and cognition thus has two faces—objective and subjective, as we have seen. As good a definition of ignorance (*avidya*) as any is the mindless omission of one of these through the idealization and valorization of the other.

In other words, deep unified understanding of the whole mindful contemplative process requires that we integrate our subjective experience of "innermost" direct contemplative clarity and bliss (*shamatha*) with its complementary counterpart, penetrating wisdom insight (*vipashyana*, direct seeing, *samadhi*). Thus may our practice render the fruit of loving-kindness that is precious *bodhicitta*, the antidote to narcissism, and the very cause of human happiness. Think about it. Then meditate on it. Then arise and do some good. A kind word. A bit of sincere appreciation and encouragement. Compassionate creative listening. Patience and generosity toward someone, anyone, everyone. It will make you happy now.

Skillful execution of this delicate balance of quiescent mindfulness and the penetrating insight of analytic insight meditation requires the wisdom guidance of a qualified master. It's useful, even auspicious to be mindful of the "advanced" possibilities of mindful contemplative practice. It is, after all, in the Buddhist Mahayana/Vajrayana tradition, the foundation of *Dzogchen*, the Great Completion—the very pinnacle of the Buddhist path to liberation from the suffering of spacetime existence, and to the ultimate happiness that is enlightenment itself.

Broadly construed, *Dzogchen* completes the relative Two Truths duality of the Mahayana Causal Vehicle. (*Appendix C* below; Klein 2006; Wallace 2012) But don't make your goal some future "advanced" mind state or life stage. Rather, let your goal be your immediate imperfect practice of the Path, this moment now—every thought, intention, and action. "The rest shall be added unto you." [Jesus]

Please do not presume that reading a few books on *Dzogchen*, and a few retreats shall make you a *Dzogchen* practitioner. Should you aspire to such ultimate wisdom find a qualified *Dzogchen* master, and a community (*sangha*) of fellow Buddhadharma practitioners. Here you shall prepare your mind with mindful *shamatha practice*, and with the Tibetan Vajrayana foundational *Dzogchen ngöndro practice*. [Boaz 2021]

Through mindful *shamatha* we are enabled to recognize, and in due course and by grace, fully realize both inner subjective and outer objective aspects of our innate love-wisdom mind with its precious *bodhicitta*, that we may skillfully, compassionately engage

it in thought, intention and action for the both immediate and ultimate benefit of all beings. Thus does *vipashyana* analytic insight meditation balance outer concept-mind, and inner peaceful contemplative mind. It's like coming home.

However, even though "It is already accomplished from the very beginning", deep within us, only the prideful 'spiritualized ego' would presume to accomplish ultimate primordial wisdom (*jnana, yeshe*) alone. We cannot "take heaven by storm". We need the Three Jewels: 1) the Buddha seen as your qualified meditation master; 2) the dharma teaching of the Buddha, and 3) the precious *sangha* or spiritual community.

Such an equality of cognition and action is the mindful grace that is our active intrinsic awareness wisdom—*meditation in action*—for the relative, and ultimate benefit of all beings being here in this world of spacetime form. Wonder of wonders, *that* is the selfless process of love and wisdom. That is what makes us happy now.

Be that as it may, the good news is this: that which we seek, the happiness inherent in our love-wisdom mind—numinous innermost Presence of That—is, a bit ironically, always already present within each one of us. It is That, we are told by those who know, to which we awaken—step by mindful step—toward the ultimate happiness inherent in "full *bodhi*" compassionate wisdom of liberation/enlightenment; Happiness Itself, whether we believe it or not. Penetrating that well kept secret—that we may begin by establishing the practice of compassionate wisdom—is indeed the main point of this Guidebook.

But wait! Suppose that the 'full *bodhi*' of ultimate enlightenment, 'Happiness Itself', is not your present goal. We've seen that that is a good thing. We are betrayed by future-looking destinations. Perhaps what you need now is a little peace of mind, a bit less stress in your life, and a bit more 'relative' happiness. Perhaps a few extra bucks would help as well. Or a new partner; or a new boss. The *choice* of mindfulness of breathing shall open your heart and your mind to attract and receive all that. It happens one step at a time. It begins with the first happy conscious mindful breath.

Plenty of concepts here *about* human happiness, both relative human flourishing and nondual Happiness Itself—the happiness that does no harm; the happiness that cannot be lost. So relax, then rest in the very nature of your selfless love-wisdom mind.

Therefore, with our always present open love-wisdom mind at the ready, let us further explore this urgent human happiness trope that we may come to know its Presence *directly*, subjectively, then express it objectively, compassionately toward other beings in our lifeworld sphere. Yes, that most of all. That is after all, on the accord of all the masters of the three times, the main cause of our present human happiness.

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