

Reflections on Quantum Emptiness, Ontological Interdependence, and Free Will

David Paul Boaz

Our original mind includes everything within itself.
—Suzuki Roshi

Causality. With the advent of General Relativity, and the Quantum Theory with its inherently subjective Quantum Vacuum, theoretical physics now resembles the contemplative epistemologies of our Great Wisdom Tradition. As we have seen, the *Uncertainty Principle* (Heisenberg) and the *Principle of Complementarity* (Bohr) of the Quantum Theory's Copenhagen School have demolished absolute time and the linear Principle of Causality, the efficient causality upon which the classical, old paradigm physics is based. Causal correlation and Hume's "constant conjunction" have failed as a theory of causal explanation. Causality now looks more like the Buddhist beginningless or infinite causal continuum. Here, things arise as a result of prior causes and conditions in a vast interdependent causal nexus, but there is no primordial first cause, no Big Bang or theistic genesis. The Buddhist *Madhyamaka* non-linear contextual causal view of *interdependent origination* (dependent arising, *pratitya-samutpada*) is at root, luminous emptiness (*shunyata*). From this follows the view of *anatman* or no-self, and *anitya* or impermanence. Both the apparent self, its karma, and all the arising phenomena of mind are causally relatively or conventionally real, yet without essential intrinsic absolute existence or identity, and without a first cause. Arising reality is rather, luminous emptiness (*Shunyata, Wu, Tao*) which is, paradoxically, the divine fullness, the Plenum (*Pleroma*) that is the primordial sourceground or Base or Depth (*Bathos, I Am*), Consciousness Being Itself in whom mind and individual consciousness and all phenomena arise. The linear, local efficient causality principle of the old paradigm functions as a special limiting case of a more comprehensive, non-reductionist, contextual view.

The Principle of Non-Reductionist Causality. There is no one unique causal explanation for anything. Causality may be non-linear, or linear. For our Great Wisdom Tradition causation is downward (from thought and pure non-physical nondual consciousness to physical matter). For Scientific Materialism causation is upward (from elementary particles, to electro-physical brain states, to consciousness). The gradual, causal spiritual path is bottom-up. The sudden, immediate enlightenment of the non-causal, not-gradualist path is top-down.

A complete account of causality must include Aristotle's four causes—material, formal, efficient cause and effect, and final (teleological). The mere efficient causality of biology and physics is not, alone, an adequate explanation of causality. Causation is complex, nonlocal, multifactorial and contextual as is Buddhist *Madhyamaka* causation. For example, Newton's theory of gravity (the gravitational constant) functions causally in the realm of the "middle dimensions" (molecular to solar system distances) as a special limiting case of Einstein's relativistic mechanics. But, in the realm of the very small, at or near the Planck distance (10^{-33} cm.), in the realm of the very large (intergalactic gravitational effects), and in the realm of the

very brief (Planck time 10^{-43} sec. just after the “Big Bang”) the efficient causality of physics is precluded. Here the acausal stochastic predictions of quantum mechanics are more accurate than either Newton's or Einstein's classical theories.¹¹

In any case, the Planck Scale represents the distance, energy or time at which all of our concepts of causality—matter-energy and space-time—the very laws of physics break down, the concept-mind boggles and new methodologies and geometries are required. At this scale of reality General Relativity and the Quantum Theory are incompatible and contradictory. *It is hoped that a quantum theory of gravity can somehow penetrate this essential limit of conceptual causal understanding by finally unifying General Relativity and Quantum Field Theory. Superstring Theory, S-Matrix Topology, M Theory, Quantum Loop Gravity and Super-Symmetry are the unlikely candidates. With the exception of the Quantum Field Theory, all of these refuse to surrender their metaphysical attachment to foundational Realism which must be a prerequisite for a unifying theory of anything.*

Alas, we have just seen that such computational excess has hit the wall of the Planck Scale ambiguity barrier beyond which merely conceptual mathematical knowledge is necessarily, logically precluded. The third person method of inquiry—the scientific method—does not obtain here. It is at this ontological strata of formation, beyond the physical/material and the merely computational, that first person methodologies—noetic introspective intuitive, tacit, meditative/ contemplative modes of knowing arise (Luisi 2009, Wallace 2005, 2006). Thus we are introduced to the non-classical, noetic Problem of Knowledge. The marvelous enterprise that is physics will indeed produce that “next more inclusive theory,” yet the ultimate nature of mind necessarily remains non-algorithmic and non-computational, knowable only through first person yogic contemplative technologies. Any unifying theory must utilize the “phenomenological doublet” of both first person and third person methodologies as we have seen above.

Ontological interdependence. As to this holy grail of grand unification, it is but the latest idol in the modernist quest for absolute objective certainty, and precluded by David Finklestein's “Universal Relativity Principle” which precludes all grand unified theories (GUTs) and final theories of everything (TOEs). Finklestein, paraphrasing Einstein, points out that the purpose of a theory or model is to evolve a more subtle, elegant and inclusive theory or model. A successful theory is a relative, temporary position which eventually becomes an “idol of the tribe,” (a species of Francis Bacon's “Idols of the Mind”), a false, logocentric absolute which cannot be corrected within the phenomenological or epistemological modality or context of the theory, as the great dialecticians Gödel, Whitehead, Hegel, Kant, Shankara and Nagarjuna have demonstrated. This noetic Principle of Universal Relativity—our Principle of Ontological Interdependence—agrees with the teaching of *Mahayana Madhyamaka* (Middle Way) Buddhism regarding seeking, grasping and clinging at anything—a belief, a theory—not even the highest, or most elegant, or most integral. *Through such ideational grasping, we become the fearful, hopeful advocates of the developmental limits of our current lifestage conceptual and belief*

¹¹ However, *General Relativity* has now been tested to be correct to one part in 10^{14} , an improvement over the Quantum Field Theory which is accurate to 10^{11} , based on 20 years measurement of the orbital decay of the Hulse-Taylor pulsar.

systems. The antidote is Shoshin, the beginner's mind wherein we momentarily "bracket" or place in abeyance our attachment to, and defence of our current, conceptual beliefs.

The metaphysical assumption of Realist Scientific Materialism that all phenomena—physical, mental, spiritual (body, mind, spirit)—are reducible to, and explainable in terms of electro-physical brain, *i.e.* that everything is physical, is a case in point. This assumption becomes an unconscious, unquestioned, intersubjective, deep background idol, a logocentric false absolute, in need of relativizing by that next more subtle, inclusive, elegant theory *i.e.* a post-quantum, post-transcendental, dualistic objective, relative Material Realism embraced, yet transcended in a subjective, ultimate nondual Transcendental Idealism. This, of course, is the perennial dualism of the Two Truths that are the one truth—"one taste"—of nondual Buddhism and Vedanta. The paradigm shifts—the revolutions—in the sciences have been just such relativizations in prevailing theory and ideology, with the fall of the old tired idols and the rise of the next more inclusive paradigm. As we have seen, we are now witnessing the demise of the 2,500 year old foundational metaphysics of Material Realism, and the phoenix-like rising of a post-metaphysical noetic integral ontology.

Just so, the post-classical Quantum Theory—the "non-objective physics"—extended relativity and transcended yet included the objective classical absolutes of General Relativity, which did the same for Special Relativity, which did the same for Newton's, Galileo's, Kepler's, Copernicus, and Aristotle's logocentric idols of space, time and spacetime. The Quantum Theory transcends yet includes the worn out epistemological idols, the monistic absolutes of reductive physicalism, mechanism, material realism, and the destructive dualism of absolutely separate observer/subject from its perceived object, a dualism of appearance and reality, of mind and body, of spirit and matter, of plus and minus charges, all arising in absolute space and absolute time. *Indeed the next idol to be relativized by the wisdom of ontological relativity—emptiness and dependent arising—will be the now unstable Standard Model with its Quantum Theory of particle interactions, and its quantum cosmology of dark matter and dark energy as it is subsumed, along with General Relativity, into that next more subtle, inclusive integral and elegant theory.* And such a theory, as we have seen, requires an Ontology of Interdependence that subsumes mere relative-conventional realistic epistemologies, and transcends, yet includes the protoreligious totemic idol that is Scientific Materialism.

A Rose is a Rose: The Paradox of Perception. Consider the lovely rose arising in spacetime. From whence has it come? Where will it go? As it dwells with us for a time our senses rejoice in its impermanent reality. Then it returns to its ineffable source. Where else could it go? According to our Great Wisdom Tradition, its essential nature therefore, is not other than the luminous emptiness (*shunyata*) of the vast expanse or depth (*bathos*) of this Supreme Source (*cittadhatu*), the very essence or nature of what is—the very Nature of Mind (*cittata/sems nyid*) that is Basic Mind essence. Now generalize this consideration to include all arising phenomena, moment to moment, eon to eon in the life of the mind of all sentient beings, throughout all worlds and all times, past, present and future. Eventually, through such ontological inquiry and noetic analysis (*vipashyana*), we recognize that this continuous process of the vast causal nexus, the infinite continuum of Consciousness Being Itself—Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*gnosis, jnana, yeshe*)—is ultimately dependent upon everything else. (The exoteric mathematical analogs of this deep esoteric truth are described by the mathematics of

complexity, e.g. the “butterfly effect” of Chaos Theory; the S-matrix topology of Jeffery Chew’s Bootstrap Theory; the Large Number Hypothesis of the Anthropic Principle).

Thus, our understanding situates the relative-conventional spacetime reality of exterior and interior cause and effect into an acausal, perfectly subjective matrix or context of fundamental openness or emptiness, the luminous sourceground or potential existence of our rose, and of everything else that arises and appears to our perception. Again, in this way the relative duality of absolutism and nihilism, of existence and non-existence (*samvriti*) is resolved in the “*protean encounter*” with non-conceptual, post-theoretical contemplative ultimate truth (*paramartha*) that transcends yet embraces it. “*True mind is not dualistic mind. The Nature of Mind is the unity of awareness and emptiness. The Nature of mind is clear light*” (Shakyamuni, the Buddha, from the *Prajnaparamita* literature). Our finite bodymind, our awareness here and now with its spacetime relative-conventional phenomenal content, participates in and is identical in essence to the non-dual infinite continuity of awareness of the essential Nature of Mind, non-dual Spirit Itself. It is this “primordially pure” (*kadag*) emptiness potential in whom the interdimensional co-emergent light energy (*lhundrub*) of matter, life, mind, soul and free ethical activity arise.

Therefore, *awareness or consciousness does not arise from phenomenal existence; rather, existence arises from primordial awareness.* Again, Ultimate Spirit cannot be reduced to independently “real” conceptual entities, the egoic false absolutes of spacetime located phenomena or beings, not even avatars or gods. This is the “error” of spiritual materialism and of religious provincialism. Rather, spacetime phenomena and all perceiving beings abide in an infinite causal matrix that is non-local, non-dual Spirit Itself, ultimate Reality Itself. Yet, wonder of wonders, “Brahman is also the world,” and “Emptiness is also form.” This Spirit is the great non-dual Ultimate Truth (*paramartha*) that is actualized through full *bodhi*—the realization of the presence (*vidya/rigpa*) of intrinsic Primordial Awareness Wisdom (*gnosis/jnana*). This is the liberation of highly realized, enlightened beings. This liberation is the ultimate potential of every sentient being, and the immediate potential—the happy recognition of indwelling spirit presence—of each self-aware human being.

This then, is the greater, more inclusive truth that provides a resolution to the perennial dualism of the epistemological “mind-body” problem arising from this Paradox of Perception: *since the perceived object is dependent upon the cognition of a perceiving subject—which is the real—this perceived subjective mental idea, or its apparently material objective physical object?* The immediate internal cognitive/mental experience of our rose, or its external apparently physical attributes? (Or both? Or neither?) Epistemological idealists believe the internal mental or cognitive *idea* is the primary reality; Realists and Materialists (usually physicalists) believe it is the external physical appearance that is real. Solipsists believe that only the *subject*, the perceiving ego-I of the *self* is real. Nihilists deny that any of it is real. Do we have a choice?

Choosing reality: quantum emptiness and free will. Another result of quantum mechanics (along with the transistor, the microprocessor and the laser) is a tentative theoretical rescue of human freedom, “free will,” from the determinist grip of Newtonian mechanics. If the universe is just a great mechanical clock (the Cartesian-Newtonian classical view) then theoretically, given enough objective knowledge, future events can be predicted and everything is pre-determined, even our present choices. This precludes free will. This

unhappy result has been called Laplace's Demon after the 18th Century Newtonian physicist who first described it. However, according to Heisenberg's *Uncertainty Principle*, it is not possible, even in principle, to ever know enough about the present state of the universe to accurately or completely predict any future event, even the most basic. For example, Thomas Young's ingenious double slit experiment of 1801 proved the wave-like nature of light. In 1920 Einstein proved the particle-like nature of light. Quantum uncertainty and complementarity have demonstrated that it is both¹².

According to the quantum theory, the ultimate nature of physical reality is, *in principle*, utterly unknowable to the theoretical conceptual mind. As we have seen, there is an ambiguity barrier (Planck scale, divine ignorance, *Mu*, the barrier of the supreme nondual teaching of the *Chan/Zen* Patriarchs) which the discursive concept-mind cannot penetrate. As Kant pointed out, human reason cannot transcend phenomena to the ultimate reality of that that is the *noumenon*. Kant's notion of the perennial "Two Truths" is that the phenomena of relative spacetime reality, are "empirically real" because they appear to our experience, yet their ultimate nature is not ultimately knowable. Material phenomena are mere relative-conventional cognitive relations between perception, concept and the ultimately ineffable "thing in itself" (*ding an sich*). For Kant and the neo-Kantians, Reality is but the totality of phenomenal relationship and has no intrinsic independent existence. This of course is precisely the *Madhyamaka* (Middle Way) Buddhist view.

According to the quantum uncertainty relations the observer must *choose* that which is to be measured, either a particle's momentum (p) or its position (x). We cannot accurately measure both. Due to wave diffraction, no quantum object may have a definite location and a definite momentum before a measurement. So, it's not that we don't know the precise values, x or p for a particle; it's that the particle does not even have these values before a measurement. It is the *consciousness* of the observer that determines the nature of the reality observed. What we observe of that which appears depends upon our consciousness, our choices, our physiological sensory-perceptual apparatus, and its extension by means of measuring instruments, and then finally our conceptual-theoretical cultural background value laden interpretation choices about these observations (the problem of subjectivity). For example, an electron has never been observed, much less a quark, or a graviton. Nor *can* they be observed, even in principle. Yet these subjective purely theoretical entities are given arbitrary mathematical values and physical attribution, and therefore are not excluded from scientific study as objective data representing objectively "real" entities arising and appearing in or to the mind. *We have seen that, there can be no purely objective observation by an independent observer. Subjectivity enters the picture as the consciousness and cognition (perceptions, concepts, beliefs) of an observer who is always a participant in the process of the perception, observation or measurement.*

Moreover, as we pursue our exploration of matter to its ultimate depth we discover that ultimately, there isn't any! Just an infinity of particles within particles, non-linear networks within networks. And if the sub-quantum particles of the aboriginal stuff of reality are, in their

¹² A recent experiment by physicist Shahriar Afshar has perhaps cast doubt on Bohr's sacrosanct Principle of Complementarity. Afshar has shown by experiment that when the particle aspect is observed, the wave aspect is also present. But the particle aspect is not present when the experiment is set up to observe the wave. Thus the wave nature, even during particle interactions, seems to be prior. Einstein and Schrödinger may have been right after all. The wave, not the particle, not both, may be the ultimate (theoretical) foundation of matter. The wave behavior of the Zero Point Energy Field of the Quantum Vacuum seems to support this thesis.

essential nature, empty of inherent existence (*shunyata*), without substance, without attributes (*nirguna*), how can macroscopic sentient observers be otherwise? This understanding of course, parallels the nondual view of our Great Wisdom Tradition. Such a philosophical generalization from the microscopic world of quarks and leptons to the macroscopic world of cats, trees and stars seems justified, at least in the conventional realm of the “relative truth” of empirical, objective spacetime reality.

Once again, the objective reality of phenomena is nominally real from the view of relative-conventional truth. The things of the spacetime dimension of Relative Truth are real. Yet, ultimately, from the view of ultimate truth, this all is *maya*, illusion, mere conceptual elaboration, imputation and reification by an impermanent self absent any inherent intrinsic existence; illusory in the mode which the ancient Vedas, Upanishads and Tantras have told for millennia. "What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning" (Heisenberg 1958). Observer, observation and theory are interdependent, interconnected designations and imputations—creations of the mind—ascending and descending each moment each breath from the depth of the *plenum*, implicate order of the whole, great primordial nondual sourceground or matrix of all that is. "Our experience contributes to causing particles to emerge from a reality extended in space-time" (Bernard d'Espagnat). Physical and mental phenomenal reality is "a construct of our sensations, perceptions, memories" (Erwin Schrödinger 1958); in a word, consciousness. "Mind and world arise together" (Humberto Maturana 1987).

Physicist Geoffrey Chew on the quantum emptiness at the micro level of reality:

There is no continuous space-time atomic reality as described in terms of isolated events that are causally connected but are not embedded in continuous space-time. Space-time is introduced macroscopically, in connection with experimental apparatus, but there is no implication of a microscopic space-time continuum. You should not try to express the principles of quantum mechanics in an *apriori* accepted space-time. That is the flaw of the present situation. (in Capra, *Uncommon Wisdom*, 1988)

The observer then, does not directly experience physical reality. What is experienced through the appearances is the *process of consciousness* that is our deep intersubjective interrelatedness, *autopoiesis*, our “structural coupling” with the physical Unified Quantum Vacuum, and its prior metaphysical unbroken whole, Ultimate Truth, nondual Spirit, Consciousness Being Itself. Here observer and observed are not separate, but intrinsically, interdependently connected. Here is the complementarity of the Two Truths of Reality Itself, Tao, Suzuki Roshi’s “Big Mind” that is the primordial consciousness base in whom arises “Small Mind,” relative, empirical phenomenal spacetime reality.

We have seen that the contribution of Niels Bohr's quantum *Principle of Complementarity* is that the nature of light is both particle-like and wave-like. Both aspects are necessary to explain its behavior. Coherent, experienced physical and mental reality (light) is constituted of physical and mental/conceptual complementary opposites: wave-particle, yin-yang, negative-

positive, quark-lepton, eros-agape, *deus-theos* (transcendent-immanent), free will and determinism, appearance and reality, body and mind, matter and spirit, objective and subjective, all binaries, all dualities, relative energy structures, the dance of geometry that is our relative spacetime mindstream. *"An independent reality in the ordinary physical sense can be ascribed neither to the phenomena nor to the agencies of observation"* (the physical mechanisms of perception and the scientific instruments that extend that perception), (Niels Bohr 1934). Reality Itself (light/mind/spirit) arises in spacetime dualistically, as wave-particle, subject-object, plus-minus charges. Remembering the Principle of Non-Reductionist Causality, both views are complementary descriptions or explanations of the same coherent phenomena. We must see both poles without attaching to either (the phenomenal "bracketing" of the transcendental *epoche*, the *shoshin* response) in order to transcend the dualism in the bigger picture, the non-dual view of our absolute emptiness base or matrix source in whom the entire enfolded process unfolds and arises for us.

So quantum theory has demonstrated, in a left-brain exoteric modality, that the integral holism of our Great Wisdom Tradition is correct—the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, but "there is a mutual dependence between parts and the whole" (H.H. The Dalai Lama). Yet, more importantly, it has demonstrated that there are no independently existing inherently separate parts at all! As our Principle of Ontological Interdependence asserts, the parts, arising observable phenomenal thoughts and objects are a nonlocal, interconnected pattern or network of relationships with no separate, independent, intrinsic existence.

Back to free will. Can human beings freely choose to act in the face of scientific determinism? Our sense or feeling of free will or volition seems to be supported by Heisenberg's discovery that an essential indeterminacy exists at the very heart of nature, the quantum level of reality. *Moreover, both the subjective non-causal (free will) and the objective causal (determinism) are necessarily complementary modalities of adequate explanation.* Both are necessary. In Bohr's words, *"Volition and causality are equally indispensable elements in the relation between subject and object which forms the core of the problem of knowledge"* (Bohr, 1934). Causal determinism and acausal volitional free will are a complementary process. Laplace's Demon—a clockwork determinism—is slain. *However, even if the indeterminist interpretation of mechanics at the quantum level, or even at the neuronal level of reality is correct, this does not necessarily allow for free will at the macro-level of human action and behavior. Nor is free will precluded even if some of our actions are shown to be determined, psychologically, at the macro-level of human behavior.*

Human happiness and free will. We create or designate our reality by our participation or observation or placement of attention (cognition). *"You become (or duplicate the qualities of) whatever you meditate on or whatever you identify with via the surrender that is attention itself" (Adi Da Samraj). "What you are, is what you have been. What you will be, is what you do now" (Shakyamuni Buddha).* Is what you do selfless, authentic and kind? This Perennial Wisdom truth has been called the law of *karma*, reaping what is sown which, according to the Dalai Lama, is a subset of the Causal Principle, the more general Law of Cause and Effect. *"What you do now" results precisely in your future. Psychospiritual growth lies in opening to the use of whatever is given here, now. "Make the path the goal." The path is now. Thus, whether the self is empty of inherent existence or not, each human being creates a destiny by his/her choices of the placement of*

attention, emotion, thought and action. Our behavior is objectively, causally and structurally determined (biomorphically), yet externally, subjectively causally undetermined, unpredictable and free. What you choose is what you get! Although the burden of past actions (*karma*) is profound, yet we are free—right now—to choose a way to liberation. This “Way” is represented by our primordial Great Wisdom Tradition's “View, Path and Result,” psychospiritual practice under the guidance of a qualified master in the crucible of the spiritual community. The purpose of the choices of the practice of the spiritual path is to “know thyself,” and thus to realize the ultimate freedom that is Happiness Itself (*mahasukka, mahananda*). Yet, “We need a teacher because it is impossible to study ourselves by ourselves” (Suzuki Roshi). The subtle defences of the ego-self are prodigious. Our Great Wisdom Tradition is quite clear on this urgent point. Although it takes “ego strength” to deconstruct the self-cherishing ego, one who acts as his/her own guru has a fool for a student.

Strange interlude: reduction, paradox and realization. That the Quantum Field Theory aids our metaphysical understanding does not however, mean that physics “proves” the assertions of religion, or the truths of our primordial wisdom tradition. *It remains a fallacy (the “reductionist fallacy”) to attempt to logically derive or “reduce” assertions from one dimension or phenomenological level to those of another.* For example, we cannot logically or mathematically infer derive deduce or reduce macrocosmic qualitative (value) principles (psychology, religion, ethics, free will) from the principles of the quantitative behavior of subatomic microcosmic events, try as we may. David Hume, G.E. Moore and many other have shown that we cannot infer prescriptive values from descriptive facts of nature. We cannot derive “ought” from “is.” *The dimension of ultimate reality—noumenon—holarchically transcends, pervades, includes, and is prior to the physical/mental dimension of phenomena, but cannot be proven to be so by the logical or ontological rules of either dimension (Gödel, Kant, Hegel, Aristotle, Chandrakirti).*

Remember the prior unity of the perennial dualism of these “Two Truths,” finite relative-conventional phenomena, and the infinite nondual absolute, the Supreme Source of all of this arising. *Ultimately* these conceptual Two Truths are the non conceptual, nondual one truth. However, *relatively* they are empirically, logically and ontologically distinct dimensional modalities. Yes, the monistic One, Absolute, unchanging Being Itself of Parmenides, Plato and Plotinus transcends yet embraces the Heraclitean ever changing plurality of Becoming that is material relative-conventional spacetime reality. But beyond these conceptions elaborations about the nature of truth abide the nondual truth of the matter. According to Buddhist *Madhyamaka* this one thing may be approached through “valid cognition” (*pramana*) both direct perception (*pratyaksa*) and inference (*anumana*) conception though (*kalpana*) as an aspect of the path of the liberating wisdom of emptiness/selflessness. But the actual realization that this truth is, verily the very nature of mind—the nature of Reality Itself—this wisdom is utterly nondual.

Therefore, confusion, paradox, mystification or metaphysics must not be identified or conflated with religious mysticism. Nor should mysticism be identified or confused with vertical “spiritual empirical” meditative contemplation. Meditative contemplation—the contemplative accessing of the nondual primordial wisdom state of presence, *vidya, rigpa, christos-logos* of the supreme source—is the result or fruition of gradual dualistic, valid cognition with non conceptual spiritual practice on under the guidance of a qualified master.

And this result appears confusing, mystifying and paradoxical to relative, conceptual dualistic mind states, especially to the practitioner on the path. This mystery, or even mystical bliss is not however, the desideratum of the moment to moment contemplative state of presence. Nor are meditative, mystical transcendental experiences (*nyams*). Liberation is not essentially transcendental. It is rather the realization of the prior great perfection of our natural “ordinary mind.” Nagarjuna told, “There is not the slightest difference between samsara and nirvana.” While its results may be experienced, truth of the the primordial nondual state of “immediate spontaneous pure presence” is not a concept and not an experience. What is it then? Again, what can be said conceptually is that it is non-conceptual, “nothing special” (*wu-shin*) generous and kind, often has positive affect, may be directly transmitted or “pointed out” by a master to a prepared student, and may arise through the gradual practice of the path (“brief moments, many times”) as the negative afflictive emotions—anger, fear, greed, pride—are surrendered. Then, by grace this wisdom is stabilized and ultimately realized, integrated and compassionately actualized in the lifeworld, to the great benefit of beings. And all the while it is always “already accomplished,” now present and awake at the heart of each human form. Indeed, a most amazing paradox.

Toward a Secular Ethic of Compassion.

To be or not to be. “In the moment of love, the nature of emptiness dawns nakedly” (Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche). Concerning our human conduct and its relation to happiness, Plato told, “No small matter is at stake. The question concerns the very way in which human life is to be lived” (Republic, Book I). “We enter the future backwards” (Paul Valery). As we proceed into our future on the thermodynamic “arrow of time,” the precise result of our thought and action cannot be foreseen. Nevertheless, we’ve seen that from the interdependent arising of all spacetime phenomenal reality, with all the impermanent conscious beings who perceive it and act in it, emerges the inexorable karmic *law of cause and effect*. Interdependent Relationship. What we give, positive and negative, consciously and unconsciously, is what we receive. Our present life situation—our view, our suffering and our happiness—is *caused* by our previous thought, intention and action. What we do now, our thought and conduct creates and determines our future destiny. What we are now is *exactly* the result of our past actions. Here, there can be no egoic “plea for excuses,” no fudge factor. Nothing is lost. *Simply put, this “law of karma,” of reaping what we sow, is the basis of human freedom.* We are free to choose the unbiased and impartial love-wisdom unity path to enlightenment—our step-by-step supreme happiness and liberation from suffering—in direct relation to the process of our gradual recognition, then realization and actualization in conduct of the imponderable, inexorable timeless truth of interdependent relationship (*hetu/tendrel*), the Law of Karma. “*What you are is what you have been; what you will be is what you do now*” (Shakyamuni, the Buddha). This path, whether or not one is aware of it, is the lifestage developmental path or evolutionary path toward our liberation from alienation and suffering. Thus spake the masters of our nondual primordial Great Wisdom Tradition.

Because we are utterly interdependent and interconnected, and because we all desire happiness and desire to avoid suffering, an altruistic secular Ethic of Compassion naturally re-emerges from this Great Wisdom Tradition teaching. All of our major religious-cultural traditions and most secular ethics within these streams have founded their ethic upon human kindness and compassion (*karuna, maitri, nyingje, bodhicitta, ahimsa, hesed/charis, altruism*). “Ultimately the purpose of religion is to facilitate love and compassion (H.H. The Dalai Lama, 1999). Compassionate thought, intention and action (conduct) is the very basis of moral virtue. Non-virtue results “from causing harm to another’s experience or expectation of happiness . . . A positive result cannot come from a negative cause” (H.H. The Dalai Lama). A thought, intention or act is ethical or morally right, based on “The Good” of happiness—the motivation—and wrong if it causes suffering—the consequences. Therefore, intention, motivation (deontology) *and* consequence (teleology) of an act determine the karmic result. The effect or consequence of an act is inextricably linked to its prior intention-motivation. Both determine its ethical content. What then shall we do with this precious life we’ve been given, this time to attend to opening to the great source that links us all together?

The primary moral imperative is the wisdom of kindness. This emerging secular ethic of interdependence requires the practice of wise, unbiased, gentle and generous activity in the service of all beings (including ourselves and our Mother Earth). This is “the courage to be” that is the wisdom of uncertainty, beyond fear and hope, continuous ego- self-surrender in the

fearsome face of emotional-spiritual transformation. With self-surrender (*wu wei, aporia, islama*) arises the nondual state of equanimity that is the compassionate Witness Presence—our original mind that is our indwelling, always present presence, our christ/buddha nature that is who we actually are now. Here our ethical precepts are lived spontaneously, without effort. “If you keep your original mind the precepts will keep themselves” (Suzuki Roshi). “Make of yourself a light,” (the Buddha’s last words to his disciples). “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jesus of Nazareth). This is our Great Wisdom Tradition’s secret of liberation that is Happiness Itself, the happiness that cannot be lost. The practical significance of this Moral Imperative for the 21st Century? We learn to transcend ego-ethnocentric hatred—thanatos, the deadly denial of our primordial Wisdom Mother (Gnosis, Shakti, Prajnaparamita, Yeshe)—and help one another, or perish from the earth. This is our choiceless choice (cf. “A New Secular Ethic of Compassion,” www.davidpaulboaz.org).

All the happiness there is in this world comes from compassionate service to others, and all the suffering comes from serving oneself.
-Shantideva

Clearly, these primordial truths of our shared Great Wisdom Tradition have great constitutive power in the unfolding of an incipient integral noetic resolution to the pressing problems of knowledge (wisdom), morals (conduct), and governance (political economy).