

# Human Happiness and Mindful Breathing

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Happiness arises from your present mind state.

— Adzom Rinpoche

This little book will change your life. If you'll use it. If you do not wish to change your life—and who does, really—an abundance of happiness, and some peace of mind will do no harm.

We all desire happiness. Human beings seek happiness, peace, joy, bliss; do we not? Alas, we're looking in all the wrong places. We seek happiness through other people, conditions, sensory pleasure and external, mostly material stuff, as if the secret of our authentic happiness were not already present within us. We shall discover in these pages that happiness is always present within us, each moment, upon each mindful breath, just prior to the fear, anger and desire of self-ego-I.

Herein you will most certainly discover, should you choose to do so, your own trans-conceptual "innermost secret" answer to that most urgent perennial question: "*Who Am I*"? And here abides your authentic happiness, both relative personal flourishing, and your ultimate freedom—liberation from self-created suffering. How can this be?

*Who Is It That I Am* beyond the frantic conceptual white noise of this wild horse of self-ego-I, our obsessively thinking, pleasure seeking mind? *Who is it* that is born, lives and dies? What is the relationship of this one that I call "myself" to the vast primordial boundless whole in which, or in whom we, and everything else arises? What is the meaning of my life in this constant presence of my death? What is the primary cause of human happiness? The cause of our suffering? So many questions.

**Why Bother?** We shall discover in these pages that the ancient premodern practice of "mindfulness of breathing" (*shamatha/sati, vipashyana, bhavana, Atma Vichara, metanoia, kenosis, tui na*) that is now at last visited upon the modern mind reveals an innermost resolution to such vexing questions. We want happiness; but something vital is missing.

Mindfulness meditation provides a powerful antidote to the bewitchment of the natural intelligence of our innate Wisdom Mind by the colossus of obsessive discursive conceptual mind. How shall we accomplish this?

We begin by *choosing* to use concept mind to reflexively critique the inherent limits of itself. Then, through mindful attention to the breath, we move beyond our web of concepts and beliefs with their negative thinking and emotion, into the already present peaceful Presence of our trans-conceptual indwelling Wisdom Mind.

*In other words, mindfulness practice begets personal transformation.* It does so by purifying the always thinking stressed out conceptual, "wild horse of the mind" revealing what naturally abides beyond, or prior to the conceptual chaos of anxiously busy self-ego-I.

The assiduous practice of mindful breathing transforms negative human emotion into our already present Wisdom Mind—the very cause of human happiness. "Mindfulness of breathing" awakens us to that luminous innermost Presence that we always are. We shall learn herein to gradually relax into, and rest in That. The overall result is deep inner subjective and outer objective peace of mind; the peace that passes rational understanding. Too good to be true? Please consider these three *noetic* (body mind spirit love-wisdom) notions:

1) Mindfulness practice releases and frees the negative thoughts and emotions that are the root causes of human unhappiness, dissatisfaction, and suffering—grasping at self-ego-I: fear/anxiety, anger/hostility/hatred, grasping greed, envy and subtle pride.

Such stressful negative cognition rides our thoughts and the emotions they cause, much of it negative and painful. Thus do we learn to manage our thinking, and the often gloomy emotion that is carried upon it.

*In short, we learn to manage our attention. Why? Both happiness and unhappiness are caused by our present mind state!*

Yet mindfulness meditation is not suppressing or stopping negative thoughts and feelings; not "emptying the mind"; not "positive affirmation". Even as we surrender upon the out breath whatever arises through our busy distracted mind, whether pleasant or unpleasant—negative thinking and feeling continue to arise. But we do not grasp at, nor reject that which arises. We let whatever arises—negative or positive—"self-liberate" at the very instant of its arising. Thus is the busy wild horse of the mind gradually tamed and purified. And to that degree, our prior natural happiness spontaneously arises.

2) Hence does mindfulness enhance the happiness inducing emotions—kindness, generosity and compassion that generate *the primary cause of human happiness: thought, intention and action for the benefit of beings, human and otherwise.* The Sanskrit term for this urgent, noble aspiration and its effortless, spontaneous, selfless conduct is *bodhicitta*, literally awakened heartmind; in a word—altruism.

3) In Chapter 2 we shall discover that for 5000 years, in both the East and the West, mindfulness practice—cognitive foundation of all contemplative prayer and meditation practice—has conferred upon our kind an essential bright clarity and inner peace that is our true nature, the actual Nature of Mind, intrinsic awareness-consciousness itself of this boundless whole in whom mind and all its realities arise and participate. Evolutionary *development is envelopment* in ever more inclusive dimensions of primordial Spirit embrace.

That we shall come to know as Wisdom Mind; luminous Presence of That (*tat, sat*). It has many names, as we shall see. It is as old as our species. But the names and concepts about it, while pointing to it, are not it. Our indwelling Wisdom Mind Presence abides trans-conceptually, cognitively prior to our thoughts and beliefs about it; yet always present to, and non-separate from our self-ego-I. Ultimate Presence and Relative self are always a noetic (body mind spirit) unity. Self in *relative* time and space experiences separation from Presence. But there is *ultimately* no separation whatsoever.

**Wisdom Mind is a Choice.** Our first choice is to establish a *conceptual* foundational understanding of this wondrous awakening process. And that we have now accomplished. This is *The View*. This then motivates our second choice—engaging the *trans-conceptual* practice itself. This is *The Meditation*. *The Conduct*—kind compassionate thought, intention, and action for the benefit of human and non-human beings—results in *The Fruition/Result*—Happiness Itself, the ultimate happiness that causes no harm; the happiness that cannot be lost.

**Our Wisdom Mind Imperative.** On the accord of the primary wisdom traditions of our species, inherent always already present "innermost" Wisdom Mind Presence—by whatever name or concept—is our natural peaceful innate wakefulness. Mindfulness practice, simple "mindfulness of breathing" is the foundation of That! It is That to which we awaken each purifying mindful breath. Buddha told, "Mindfulness is the foundation of all peace and higher knowledge".

Mereology is the inquiry into the logical and prior pre-logical relationship of relative parts to their more inclusive wholes; and ultimately, of all of these spacetime participating parts to the vast all embracing ultimate unbounded whole itself, primordial awareness-consciousness ground or base or source—by whatever grand name or concept—of everything arising and abiding herein.

In due course, and by grace, some of these holonic part-wholes evolve life, and then a numinous conscious awareness of their essential interdependent non-separate relationship with the great whole itself. Ultimate realization of That has been named Buddhahood, *moksha*, *apolutrosis*. In this smallish unremarkable galaxy human beings are the conscious exemplars of that great potential.

*Because all of these instantiated self-conscious holonic parts arise from, abide within, and have never departed this wondrous unbounded totality of their whole, there exists an aspect, a voice, a face, an imprint, a Presence of this numinous awareness-consciousness whole upon and within each individual participating human consciousness—without a single exception. The subtle knowing of That rides our mindful attention to the prana wind upon the breath.*

Mereological analysis reveals Ultimate Truth in surprising ways.

Wonder of wonders, That (*tat, sat*) is who we actually are, "supreme identity" of our "supreme source", primordial ground of everything. Our human individual and

collective intention—conscious or not—is the remembrance, recognition, then ultimate realization of That. Mindfulness contemplative/meditative attention upon this *prana* life force energy Presence, always already present within the breath, is the trans-conceptual practice of That. Facilitating *your* practice of That is my aspiration for this little book.

Be that as it may, such *kosmic* understanding sounds a bit idealistic; not to mention difficult. So don't *believe* it. Check it out for yourself (Ch. 8; Appendix A).

Now here's the good news, and the bad news. Mindfulness is as simple as breathing. Indeed, it *is* mindful breathing. Almost too simple to believe. But it's not so easy. Mindfulness requires patience, a bit of self-discipline, and as we shall see, courage. And it's not at all what you think.

**What Mindfulness Is, And Is Not.** Recall that "mindfulness of breathing" is breathing mindfully; continuity of the *placement of attention* upon the breath in the belly. It is not a concept nor a belief system. It's not a philosophy, Eastern or Western, though it arose independently in the context of Western monotheism, and Eastern Veda/Vedanta; and from that the pristine early Buddhism of the *Pali Canon*; then the Buddhist Mahayana in its several wisdom vestments.

Mindfulness practice is not awakening, liberation, enlightenment; not even Buddhist boundless emptiness (*shunyata*), Hindu *moksha*, nor *Wu/Mu satori*, nor *samadhi*. It is not a concept, belief, goal, object, local spacetime place, condition nor mind state. Yet it reflexively embraces and is fully present to all of that.

Is mindfulness meditation "spiritual"? It is most assuredly not a concept *about* spirituality; it's not a concept at all. But if it *feels* spiritual, then let it be so. If not, let it be simply conscious, mindful breathing. Mindfulness is not a concept, not thinking, not naming. Our concepts too often betray the truth that abides in our direct experience. Mindfulness meditation rides the breath in the belly. Try it now for a minute or two; simply let it be as it is (*Appendix A*).

Please consider this: mindfulness is, relatively construed, simply a method or skillful means for managing obsessive negative thinking with its afflictive emotions—fear, anger, grasping/clinging desire, greed, pride—the very causes of human emotional stress, pain, and unhappiness.

Mindfulness is, in this *relative*, conventional view, an *awareness management skill set*. In the *ultimate* view mindfulness meditation utterly transcends, yet embraces, our cultural common sense concepts, ideas, goals, beliefs and biases about it. So be a little skeptical as to your present well defended deep cultural background systems of belief, particularly the mostly unexamined and unconscious prevailing sociocultural belief system that has now colonized the Western mind, namely, proto-theistic Scientific Materialism/Physicalism. Mindfulness meditation altogether transcends, yet embraces our "global web of belief" (Quine 1969).

And as well, engage a bit of "healthy skepticism" as to what you read in these pages. Much of it is indeed "beyond belief", that is, mindfulness practice transcends, yet includes the content of your present cultural system of concepts and beliefs. The peaceful Wisdom Mind Presence that contemplative practice reveals is directly experiential—a felt sense. However, we naturally, conceptually unpack these experiences in terms of our present discursive systems of belief. Well and good.

An open Zen Mind/Wisdom Mind is the requisite, mostly selfless creative mind state for learning new ideas and responses to our arising realities of thinking and feeling. Buddha once told his monks and nuns, "Do not believe what I teach out of respect for me; come and see".

However, mindfulness is not mere "bare attention"—egoless, pure, non-conceptual, nonlocal openness, non-engaging, non-reactive, non-judging (*Wu Wei*). *Attention* to the breath, or to anything else cannot be "bare". Contemplative *placement of attention* upon the breath in the belly requires local conscious *choice* by an agent to place attention on the breath in the belly. It a self that chooses contemplative practice.

Perhaps too many beginning practitioners have been off put by the seeming demonization and didactic denial of all too human self-ego-I in the protocols of Mahayana Buddhism. As Buddha told in the Pali Canon, it is the struggling self, in union with awakening innermost Buddhamind, that chooses the Buddha dharma path.

Mindful attention, properly so called, is 1) conscious awareness of being here in the "eternal present" moment now with whatever arises to/in the mind; 2) alert, vivid trans-conceptual clarity of that; and 3) an awakening selfless (*anatman*) compassionate desire to utilize 1) and 2) in order to reduce the suffering of sentient beings. These three are a prior unity and abide already all together at once!

Again, mindfulness/*shamatha/sati* is not purely egoless blank bare awareness, "blank Zen". And it is not Buddhist boundless emptiness/*shunyata*, although it is entirely empty and absent of our concepts and beliefs *about* our experienced realities.

Now, all of this constitutes a nice neat conceptual schema. Or does it? Again, mindful attention transcends and embraces our conceptual "web of belief". So mindful attention is meta-conceptual, beyond mere concept and belief; and it is metaphysical, beyond physical brain structure and function. Mindfulness is the trans-rational, trans-religious, intuitive contemplative immediacy of *feeling*—the "felt sense"—of our authentic real being here—bright Presence of That—when we stop thinking about it.

Clearly, Wisdom Mind is not for the metaphysically squeamish. Once again, it transcends, yet embraces our mostly physicalist, materialist "global web of belief".

**Being Here Now.** Everything that happens, happens now, in the here-now of *this* present moment. Nothing happens next—in the future. The future has not yet arisen. It is but a *present*, often fearsome reverie. Future is always becoming present. And nothing happens in the past. The past is gone beyond, but a *present* memory, cling

to it as we may. Time with all its contents is always only present now. As physicist John Wheeler told, "Time is what keeps everything from happening at once". Therefore, we cannot *become* happy or enlightened in the future. But we can *be* happy now.

We shall see in Ch. 5 that time does not exist *observer-independently, ultimately* or absolutely. This belief is the prevailing legacy of classical Scientific Materialism/Physicalism bequeathed by Sir Isaac Newton and his "Age of Reason" European Enlightenment forebears. Rather, time is an all too real *relative* conventional *observer-dependent* reality; product of the mind of a present sentient perceiver/observer. This is the view of Quantum Field Theory (QFT) in its most recent theoretical cloak, namely, Quantum Electrodynamics (QED).

As Einstein observed, "Time, the distinction between past, present and future, is an illusion; but a stubborn one". Indeed, this represents physics' mainstream view of time at the microscopic strata of reality—quarks and leptons—of recent relativistic physics. Thus, time has no foundation in the physical basis of nonlocal subatomic reality. Time arises "locally" at the spacetime macroscopic dimension of trees, stars and the concepts of physically embodied minds. Middle Way Buddhists would agree (Appendix D; Boaz 2020A, *The Collapse of Objective Reality: Quantum Nonlocality and Buddhist Emptiness*; excerpts at davidpaulboaz.org).

So, mindfulness of breathing is not past looking, and it is not future looking. It is simply attention being present here and now to the breath. So there need be no fear, and no dilemma. Fear and dilemma are excess conceptual/emotional cognitive baggage. There is then, no problem at all in this safe spacious nonlocal "secret place" between the inherently vexed thoughts of obsessively busy and worried concept mind—self-ego-I. We shall unpack this ironic "noself help" cognitive process in Chapter 6.

Mindfulness is the quiescent "space between your thoughts"; innate peace and subtle bliss. Hanging out here gives the gift of peace as, step by mindful step, our mindful breathing bestows a fearless stable continuity of this always present numinous awareness in the madness of our everyday lifeworld. It furthers one to practice That. It furthers one to take refuge in That. That is our 21st century noetic Wisdom Mind imperative.

We shall explore in Chapter 4 the neuroscience, psychology, physics, and logic of this "mindfulness of breathing" that awakens our inherent, already present Wisdom Mind Presence. Here we shall explore the neuroscience and logic of this great 21st century noetic "mindfulness revolution" that is now upon us (Boaz 2020B, *The Noetic Revolution: Toward an Integral Science of Matter, Mind, and Spirit*; excerpts at davidpaulboaz.org).

So, what more is mindfulness of breathing not? We've seen that it is not the rejecting, purging or suppressing of thoughts and negative emotions. It's not emptying the mind; not a trance state, nor a yogic swoon; not transcending the ego; not entering a bare "blank state" ("blank Zen") in order to "escape reality" with all of its adversity and

suffering in this difficult realm of relative conditional space and time—known to Hindus and Buddhists as the conditional existence of *samsara*.

Quite the contrary, we shall see that mindfulness is a *direct* non-conceptual, trans-rational, transpersonal yet conscious choice to engage with the realities that we karmically create and experience, moment to moment so that we may see all this "as it is", inherently free of self-ego-I grasping and clinging with its afflictive emotions—fear, anger, greed and pride—the very causes of human suffering, alienation and evil.

Once again, mindfulness meditation is not what we think. As should now be clear, neither is it very amenable to discursive description. It's more easily understood as to what it is not, as I have done here. So, "Come and see" for yourself. Go ahead and check it out for two minutes (*Appendix A*).

Mindfulness of breathing is not positive affirmation, positive thinking, creative thinking. Indeed, it altogether transcends the habitual thinking of concept-mind and its deep background cultural "global web of belief". Mindfulness of breathing cannot be accomplished by cognitive science, thinking, theory, belief or the egoic effort of trying really hard to do something, or to not do something.

Yet, a bit paradoxically (to concept mind), we utilize a little effort and conceptual analytic penetrating insight (*vipashyana*) to reflexively unpack the nondual (subject-object unity) wisdom essence of inherently non-conceptual quiescent mindfulness (*shamatha*), that we may express this inner peace as effortless, spontaneous, mostly, but not entirely selfless, kind, compassionate action/conduct—to wit, *bodhicitta*. No small matter is at stake. This mindful, non-goal directed conduct (*wu-wei*) is, on the account of both Eastern and Western wisdom, the very cause of human happiness.

**The Two Hands of God.** Relative objective, and ultimate subjective: this noetic doublet that is the two voices of our natural human cognition—the *subjective* mindfulness of breathing that is *shamatha*, and the *objective* selfless conceptual penetrating insight of analytic *vipashyana* meditation—are the two complementary faces of mindful contemplative practice, both West and East.

The former subjective voice utilizes trans-conceptual direct experience; the latter objective voice reflexively utilizes the analytic capacity of our *selfless* awakening conceptual mind to critique itself—to recognize its limits. These two are a complementary prior and present unity. Together they ground and complete our *experience* of the vast boundless whole that is the very ground of all of arising reality itself; including all of us. Both of these cognitive modalities are already present within us—this cognitive noetic doublet that is human cognition. We must utilize them both.

But there's treachery afoot. Our duplicitous ally that is self-ego-I, along with its other impudent excesses, may try to idealize and valorize objective discursive concept-mind, while denigrating or denying the interior subjectivity of mindfulness. The trans-rational dimension of our appearing realities is a bit too spooky for ego to readily

engage. Most folks choose to remain in the not so comfy house that ego built. It takes a little "ego strength", and courage to deconstruct, then integrate it. Mindfulness of breathing facilitates the requisite ongoing continuity of mindful awareness.

For example, naturally scholarly and scientific oriented folks—like myself—enjoy, too often obsessively, the objective voice of metaphysical analysis, even objective analysis of subjective spiritual stuff, and tend to neglect the trans-conceptual aspect of meditative practice so foreign to our not always comfortable conceptual comfort zone, our global cultural, and personal "web of belief". I have come to call this scholarly affliction "intellectual self-stimulation".

Just so, philosophical folks—me included—may find our mindful attention diverted to all manner of incessant intellectual questions and theories—distractions which may, without mindful vigilance, actually derail one's entire mindfulness practice in the name of scholarship, provided one gets around to establishing a trans-conceptual mindfulness practice in the first place.

On the other hand, those of us with ears to hear only our sensitive subjective non-conceptual "inner voice" may view the mindful, objective wisdom analysis of inherently subjective meditative practice as overly intellectual. Too often it is.

Here we discover a cognitive bias in favor of quiescence, while denigrating or ignoring mindful objective wisdom analysis (*vipashyana*) of the science and philosophy of one's chosen wisdom path. Dualistic cognitive bias—conceptual or anti-conceptual—is subtle bewitchment of our nondual Wisdom Mind Presence. Discovering your own personal biases shall be an interesting yoga, if you have the intestinal fortitude for it.

Objectively identifying these, and our many other cognitive biases—the all too rare healthy skepticism of one's own personal "web of belief"—is an important aspect of overall mindfulness practice in its objective context. As to the subtle subjective context, the same caveat obtains. Clinging and defense of the views of our self-ego-I, or denial that we do so, is the red flag of cognitive bias; is it not?

We shall see in Chapter 5 that there exists a centrist middle way that offers a skillful syncretic recognition of the prior unity of the "two hands of God". *This great human cognitive dialectic—consciousness processional that is unity of our singular noetic doublet—outer exoteric objective; and inner esoteric subjective mind stream has a simple resolution.*

Simple, but not easy. From the limited view of self-ego-I the process of recognizing, then realizing in conduct our innermost unity and utter interdependence (*pratitya samutpada*) with the aboriginal *prana* life force energy of *kosmos* itself is a fiendishly difficult labor of love, to be sure. Mindfulness meditation helps.

Alas, we simply do not see the biases of our own self-ego-I. Mindfulness practice illuminates them, then allows them either to "self-liberate" at or near the instant of their arising, or to safely arise into objective consciousness where they are recognized as counter-productive "distractions". In this latter condition our biases, or other thoughtful



distractions are still operational, yet now amenable to the luminous intervention of our always present innate clear light Wisdom Mind Presence. We have termed this rare process "beginner's mind", or Zen Mind, a higher function of Wisdom Mind. It is most important here to recall that our all knowing Presence (*vidya, rigpa*) and our seemingly separate self-ego-I are always already a prior yet present unity, right here now. Presence does not reject self but embraces it in love-wisdom, as the mother embraces and corrects the willful child.

Further, esoteric, subjective compassionate mindful wisdom cannot be entirely reduced and relegated to the uncomfortable comfort zones of merely exoteric self-ego-I, no matter its intellectual, scholarly, scientific or artistic virtuosity. Our "innermost esoteric" Wisdom Mind transcends yet always embraces the best, and the worst of ego.

Please rest assured that your mindfulness practice will challenge your ego's comfort zones in guiding you from bias and ignorance (*avidya, marigpa, hamartia/sin*) inherent in the exoteric understanding of self-ego-I, toward trans-rational innermost esoteric, innate Wisdom Mind—numinous Presence of That—that is your true actual "supreme identity"—Happiness Itself. Indeed, this seems to be a rather good description of mindfulness meditation practice.

So, in this light of our "two hands of God", what more is mindfulness not. Once again, it is not thinking, nor is it not thinking, nor is it thinking about thinking, or not thinking. It is not existence of something, nor non-existence of something. It is not affirmation nor denial of anything at all. It is not an objective physical, nor conceptual thing to be grasped and rationally categorized.

In other words, mindfulness meditation is not a brand of Metaphysical Idealism, a metaphysical position indulging a nihilistic denial of self-ego-I and its appearing realities—the denial of an objective real world out there (RWOT). Nor is mindfulness meditation Metaphysical Realism, nor Materialism, a metaphysical affirmation or belief in an inherently absolutely substantially real and permanent existence of an observer-independent RWOT.

We shall see rather, that a practice of mindful breathing represents a trans-rational, transpersonal centrist middle way between these two philosophical extremes—the ultimate non-existence of stuff that is Absolute Idealism, and the ultimate existence of stuff that is Absolute Realism/Physicalism. Again we shall find a centrist middle way.

Nor does foundational mindfulness meditation—contemplative practice—bestow mystical psychic powers or *siddhis*, such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy, and the like. That said, the realized meditation masters of our Great Wisdom Tradition have demonstrated such powers for millennia.

**The Two Truths: To Be and Not to Be.** We shall in Chapter 3 engage the centrist Middle Way view of the Buddhist Mahayana Tradition. Buddhism has established a centrist metaphysical position between the dualistic philosophical extremes of *either*

existence, *or* non-existence; of being or non-being; of affirmation or denial of appearing stuff. Middle Way *Madhyamaka Prasangika* affirms the *ultimate* unity of the perennial Two Truths: 1) form, *relatively* real spacetime existence; 2) ultimate formless primordial "groundless ground", nondual Being Itself in whom form and life forms arise and are instantiated (Appendix D).

As to these foundational Two Truths of reality being itself, Buddha told 25 centuries ago, "Form is empty; emptiness is form. Form is not other than emptiness; emptiness is not other than form". The duality of the arising of spacetime form from its boundless emptiness "groundless ground" are always already a nondual unity.

In this Buddhist Mahayana Two Truths trope—Relative Truth and Ultimate Truth—the dimension of Relative Truth, the world of spacetime form exists relatively, conventionally, but not intrinsically or ultimately. This represents a brand of relative but not absolute Realism/Materialism—stuff really exists, just as common sense and physics tells us. But on this Middle Way view the dimension of space and time is not reduced to an illusory Hindu (*avidya maya*) dimension of non-being/non-existence; a brand of Absolute Metaphysical Idealism. In short, the world of space and time is *relatively* really real; but not *ultimately*, absolutely, observer-independently real. More on this vexing Two Truths trope below.

Our primordial innermost Wisdom Mind Presence is the trans-conceptual, selfless (*anatman*) knower of this wondrous unity of our relative existence being here in time, and the simultaneous ultimate absence of any intrinsic permanent existence of an experiencing self. Presence is not a reified objective self; not an object; not a concept nor belief; not a being. Nor can it be reduced to the lofty spiritual experience of a "higher self" *Atman*. Presence is mostly selfless purity of our original being without thinking or naming (*namarupa*) anything. Ultimate Being Itself—luminous noetic Presence of that—is inherent nonbeing itself; so it is known to the wise as a "groundless ground, the absence or emptiness/*shunyata* of "any shred of intrinsic self-existence" (Nagarjuna). Yet, to a sentient self-ego-I there is plenty of extrinsic *relative* existence. The unity of the Two Truths? Clearly, beyond the dualistic semiotics (syntax, semantics, pragmatics) of human languages.

All profoundly paradoxical; but only to our logical thinking mind. Buddha told, "This cannot be taught". How then is our mysterious awareness-consciousness Wisdom Mind Presence realized?

Noetic Wisdom Mind far exceeds the reification and objectification of the concept and belief structures of a self-ego-I. Yet, as the busy mind begins to stabilize itself via attention to the life-energy *prana* wind upon the breath, Presence may be *directly* experienced—a bright felt sense—and in due course lived fully and compassionately by an engaged mindfulness meditation practitioner, a yogi or yogini working with a meditation master (Ch. 3).

"Yoga" is a Sanskrit term that translates "union"; in this case the primordial unity of the Two Truths—Relative and Ultimate—and the feeling-knowing realization of that nondual love/wisdom. "Not two, not one, but nondual". The Latin "*religio*" and English "religion" are derived from the word "yoga". Hindu, Buddhist and Taoist yogis and yoginis accept ongoing instruction from a qualified meditation master in the context of a "spiritual" community. The foundational essence of that practice relationship, and all further Wisdom Mind development, is based in *shamatha/sati*—mindfulness of breathing.

It is a very useful yoga to see and hear and practice this relative outer objective conceptual, and ultimate inner subjective trans-conceptual Two Truths unity that is always present in the rude "irony of the world" (Hegel)—this paradox and irony of being here as mortal guests of phenomenal reality. Seeing the subtle intrinsic humor of this absurd and difficult human lot is as good a beginning as any.

Therefore, Relative objective and Ultimate subjective cognition—these are at once the "two hands of God" that enfold and reveal to humanity the love-wisdom that we actually are. Who am I? *Tat Tvam Asi*. That I Am, without a single exception.

*Verily, it is our reflexively aware primordial Wisdom Mind Presence (rang rig yeshe, vidya)—continuity of vast implicate original awareness "groundless ground"—that reflects or mirrors this natural, wakeful "supreme identity" that we already are now—when we listen.*

Thus shall we discover in these pages that our human cognition reaches far beyond mere Relative Truth of concept and belief—our objectivist, logical Greek realist and materialist philosophical bias. This bias is the prevailing cultural ontology of Modernist Scientific Materialism/Physicalism—and in its fundamentalist, literalist vestments—the doctrinaire proto-religion that is Western "Scientism". Indeed, the perfectly subjective, trans-conceptual peace and subtle bliss of *shamatha/sati* mindful breathing is the direct, trans-logical directly experiential proof of this, as we shall see in Chapter 8 (condensed in *Appendix A*).

But mindfulness meditation is not the Relative Truth doctrinaire, dogmatic exoteric religion that we find—along with their Ultimate Truth innermost esoteric and nondual views—in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, mysticism, shamanism or any other "ism"; although all of our religious/wisdom traditions utilize some form of "mindfulness of breathing" in their quiescent contemplative prayer and practice. Again, mindful *shamatha* is the *relative* foundational practice that begins the *ultimate* realization of the already present unity of our primordial Two Truths.

**Primordial Wisdom Mind is a Choice, Not a Search.** A great misfortune has befallen the Christian tradition. Although esoteric contemplative Christianity is alive and well in monasteries all over the world, recent evangelical literalist/fundamentalist Christianity seems to have lost the profound trans-conceptual contemplative ecstatic

mystical practice of its pre-modern Saints, Protestant mystics, and indeed of Jesus himself (Ch.2).

The innermost esoteric mystical tradition of Christianity has been thereby lost to millions of faithful Christians. For this fundamentalist, ultraconservative movement conceptual belief and scripture study limited only to certain select New Testament texts is emphasized over mystical contemplation of, and direct experience of God. Is not God—theistic or nondual—greater than our concepts and beliefs about "Him". There is a palpable fear of going through that trans-conceptual contemplative "dark door" into the unknown. "God knows what sleeping evil might be awakened there".

Has the precious innermost esoteric teaching of the Christ again reverted to the fear based exoteric religion of medieval Christianity?

Jesus himself told, "That which you seek...The Kingdom of God...is already present within you, but you do not see it" (Luke 17). This "not seeing" is *hamartia*/ignorance, "missing the mark", poorly translated from the Semitic Aramaic tongue of Jesus, and then Greek, as "sin".

In the East, ignorance is choosing not to see the truth of God's Presence within us. It is *avidya*, *marigpa*, *ajnana*. West or East the antidote to such ignorance is nearly always choosing contemplative inwardness, "going within", beyond helpful conceptual scriptural study, beyond beautiful liturgy, beyond deep faith and belief to the direct trans-conceptual experience of the love-wisdom of the *Christos*, or the Buddha that always abides within our human form. Mindfulness meditation—*shamatha*, *sati*, *kenosis*, *metanoia*—has always been the esoteric foundation of such profound spiritual inwardness. Sadly, contemplative mindfulness meditation is generally absent in contemporary, especially Western Protestant and Catholic Christianity.

Moreover, the choice of mindfulness should not be confused with Hatha Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Neo-Vedanta, *pranayam*, "Transcendental Meditation" (TM), Krishna Consciousness, chakra balancing, practice liturgy, guru devotion, Zen koan work, Tai Chi or Qi Gong, or scripture study—although mindfulness will be present for practitioners of most of these.

Mindfulness is not psychotherapy, self-hypnosis, physical or mental passivity, past life regression, psychic out of body travel, messaging, channeling angels or dead masters, or other psychic phenomena, though it may be present. Mindfulness meditation is not psychedelic, hallucinogenic, or pharmacological. It's not naturally or inherently "dangerous"; although fear of the unknown can be scary and off-putting to almost any of us.

Perhaps psycho-emotional-spiritual growth may on occasion require choosing to go beyond one's psycho-emotional comfort zone. Perhaps growth toward stable happiness and wellbeing requires, if not a "leap in fear and trembling" into the spooky unknown, at least a small courageous step into something new.

Further, mindfulness of breathing is not a belief in, nor a concept about God, nor the seeking of God through prayer, or any other happiness seeking strategy. Indeed, mindful breathing *seeks* nothing at all. It quiets the white noise of the busy mind so that peace and happiness which already abide beyond discursive mind may be directly experienced prior to filtration through our objective web of belief. Though it feels good, practice is not *goal* directed. Again, mindful breathing is choosing to be present now, upon each mindful breath. It is not a goal for some future desirable mind state.

Mindfulness is rather, a non-ideological, pleasant, peaceful and subtly blissful trans-conceptual nondual (prior to the subject-object split) knowing appreciation of the gift of being here now as a special guest of the phenomenal world. It's also a skillful method for safely "bringing up" into conscious awareness, recognizing, then releasing painful unfinished psycho-emotional business. It's almost too simple to believe, until one directly experiences it. Indeed, mindfulness practice is, almost by definition, utterly "beyond belief". And yes, it takes a little practice.

Because mindfulness is naturally "letting it be as it is" here and now, it is not part of the human obsessive "great search" for *future* happiness, nor peace, nor enlightenment, nor relational or financial success, nor material good and goods, as if such seeking strategies can make us happy — although some of this stuff sure helps.

Alas, the future remains in the future. The future has an annoying way of not showing up. It is too busy always becoming the present. Once again, we cannot *become* happy in some future mind state. But we can actually *be* happy here and now. This present moment now is, after all, the spacetime location of our happiness. What good is future happiness? Everything happens here and now, and not elsewhere.

So, mindfulness of breathing is not future oriented, nor goal directed. Indeed, mindfulness practice *seeks* nothing at all, although its psycho-emotional-spiritual results and benefits are prodigious; not later, but in this present moment here and now (Ch. 5). And that is, after all, where we live.

It is mindfulness in this present moment that pervades all of the practitioner's cognitive activity—outer objective, inner subjective, and innermost esoteric nondual—in short, thinking, feeling, and meditative-contemplative cognition. Holistic, foundational mindfulness of breathing—clear light touch of Wisdom Mind Presence—is not a mind state or cognitive space or local place that is in any way separate from all "other" cognition. It transcends yet embraces all cognitive states and stages.

*Although Wisdom Mind Presence is already present within each human form, it is always a **choice**. Presence is all pervading—body, voice, mind, and spirit, yet it is our **attention** to That upon each mindful breath that is mindfulness of breathing. That is the Meditation that changes everything.*

**Mindful Wisdom Mind: Cause and Effect.** To be or not to be mindful; that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of

outrageous ignorance, or to take arms against this sea of troubles, and by mindful breathing, end them". (Apologies to Shakespeare)

So, before we go off merrily into some transcendental trans-conceptual bliss-out let us establish a little conceptual context. Viewed exoterically and objectively mindfulness is merely a concept, or system of concepts that presume to reflexively describe a mental contemplative practice the purpose or goal of which is the freeing of the human mind from misleading systems of concepts, especially the counter-productive, even destructive effects of *obsessive* conceptual thinking activity, and the painful counter evolutionary emotions that ride such thinking. So yes, *conceptually, causally* construed mindfulness practice *is* goal oriented. We desire to be happy. Well and good.

This objective *exoteric view* amounts to a causal—cause and effect—program: "If you want this future *result*, first practice this *cause* now". This of course is a variation on the perennial dualistic causal theme that is constant throughout our religious-wisdom traditions: "If you want to be happy/enlightened/saved/resurrected later, better believe/practice this doctrine/program now". It's a causal program. It's hard to dodge cause and effect karma. Indeed, Buddha told 25 centuries ago, "What you are is what you have been; what you will be is what you do now". Said Jesus, "As you sow, so shall you reap".

Now, the subjective *esoteric view*. As we have just seen, the future never shows up! Again, both past and future are always only the present moment now; to wit, our past is a present memory; our future is a present rather spooky fantasy/rumination which we try to control via present planning, and plenty of present worry. In the esoteric view there exists only the present moment here and now. The perennial "three times"—past, present, future, are always only now. Unfortunately, this "eternal now" is too brief to grasp and hold. All that remains is Wisdom Mind Presence. That is the real. Our assiduous attention to the breath—mindful continuity of That; Presence of That is real. This is the non-causal or acausal view. The Two Truths: *Relative* conditional causal, and *Ultimate* nondual acausal—That (*tat, sat*) is *The View*.

It furthers to remember, moment to moment, that these two views—exoteric causal and esoteric acausal—are always a prior, yet present unity. Our Wisdom Mind already knows this Two Truths unity, and so protects the engaged meditation practitioner from conceptual confusion and paradox. Humor abides in the irony of the process. No *ultimate* dilemma whatsoever.

Moving fluently with wisdom Presence upon each mindful breath through continuously arising consciousness—That is *The Meditation*. Practice is the union of View and Meditation. From your practice spontaneously arises *The Conduct*, kind compassionate thought, intention and action for the benefit of living beings. From such assiduous practice arises *The Result*, the fruition of enlightenment—Happiness Itself—the happiness that does no harm; the happiness that cannot be lost.

As Buddhist Middle Way founder Nagarjuna told 2000 years ago, ultimately, "There is no difference whatsoever between *samsara* and *nirvana*; they are the same (*samatajnana*)". Engaged mindful attention to this great primordial wisdom truth liberates the astute adept from the ignorance (*avidya*, *ajnana*) and suffering that is fear, anger and desire of self-ego-I. That is *The Result* that is, as Buddhist *Dzogchen* founder Garab Dorje told, "already accomplished from the very beginning". Presence understands this great nondual truth.

Therefore, as to soteriology (liberation, salvation), even though karma, the inexorable law of cause and effect conduct obtains in the relative conditional causal world, a proper authentic doctrine of salvation or liberation from suffering must refer us to *our present mind state*—our thought, intention and action—in the present moment, here and now. Thus it refers beyond relative exoteric linear cause and effect (Relative Truth) toward the timeless acausal view of Ultimate Truth.

For example, the Buddhist Mahayana—the "Causal Vehicle" says the practice of the dualistic causal Path—Buddha's Four Noble Truths and the rest—will bring much *relative* happiness and human flourishing. Well and good. But if your *ultimate* goal is to later *become* fully enlightened and ultimately happy, that takes a few years, or a few lifetimes. Thus the Causal Vehicle is future-looking. Practice these causes now in order to attain that effect later. Therein lies the seemingly paradoxical causal duality.

This duality is resolved in the Mahayana/Vajrayana ultimate teaching, namely, acausal, monistic, panpsychic, nondual *Dzogchen* view and practice—the highest Buddhist yoga—*Ati* Yoga. This ultimate yoga is practiced in all four major Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana Schools: *Nyingma*, *Kagu*, *Gelug*, *Sakya* (Appendix D below; Boaz 2020 Ch. 14). Heady wine indeed; and beyond our scope here.

Hence, we must approach mindfulness meditation not only objectively, but as well, from a view that is nondual, innermost esoteric and subjective, devoid of future-looking dualistic seeking strategies. This does not mean that we stop balancing our checkbooks. And we still have to show up for work.

As we shall soon *directly*, trans-conceptually discover, mindfulness is simply choosing to place one's *attention* via conscious mindful breathing right here in this precious, timeless, spacious moment now, prior to any thinking about it, and thus before it is objectified via discursive, habitual, linguistic conceptual/intellectual activity (Ch. 8; *Appendix A*).

Still, it furthers to conceptually unpack our trans-conceptual experience toward a unified conceptual objective/subjective understanding. After all, our human mind partakes equally in both of these cognitive dimensions—our noetic doublet. Holistic conceptual understanding must not be denigrated nor denied. Thus do the dualistic ambulations of semiotic language reflexively confer nondual wisdom upon the mind.

We shall also see that one may engage mindful breathing while sitting, kneeling, standing, lying on your back, walking, making love, and even while working in the

midst of all kinds of conceptual activity and other physical and mental "distractions". Mindfulness of breathing is a continuity of our innate intrinsic awareness Wisdom Mind Presence, here and now. Our choice of "*placement of attention*" upon That. Happiness arises from that present mind state!

**Primordial Wisdom Mind.** The teaching of the great avatars, sages and saints of the Primordial Wisdom Tradition of our species is that the mind of the human being is naturally pristine, "primordially pure", clear and bright, like the vast space of empty sky (Ch. 3). Thoughts and feelings, pleasant or not, arise like passing white and dark clouds, but in no way alter the luminous clear nature of open sky.

Just so, luminous sky-like mind, inherently free of the distractions of attraction and aversion, of grasping or rejection of such appearing thoughts and feelings remains utterly unaltered from its original space-like primordial purity. Such perturbations pass through the vast expanse of sky like diaphanous clouds. This spacious boundless whole is our innate, always already present Wisdom Mind. Mindful meditation is the yoga that facilitates the recognition, then realization of the indwelling Presence of it. Let us further explore this astounding natural and happy process.

The name "mindfulness" derives from the Sanskrit word *shamatha* (*sati* in Pali) and means "peaceful calm abiding", or "meditative quiescence" wherein the progressive *refinement of attention* upon the breath gradually reveals the natural, wakeful, peaceful, subtly blissful state of the mind as it actually is, calm and clear, before the arising of self-ego-I with its obsessively conceptual, future looking, ego-grasping desire, fear, anger, hatred, greed and pride. Contemplative mindfulness practice is the uplifting immediate cognitive process that imperfectly integrates such refined attention with the constant painful distractions of everyday life.

"Contemplation" has its lexical origins in the Latin *contemplatio* which is rooted in the Greek *theoria*—the praxis of recognizing and realizing the ultimate nature of innate awareness-consciousness itself that cognizes all of our arising realities—myriad experience of embodied minds.