

No Time, No Self, No Problem

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Without past, present, future; empty awake mind.

—Ju Mipham

Neuroscientists and Zen Masters agree: the not so conscious cognitive activity of the human mind is about 90 percent self-centered—I, Me, Mine—and about 90 percent negative: 1) *Aversion*; fear, anxiety, anger, hostility, hatred, guilt, shame and blame; and 2) *Attraction/attachment*; self-ego-I desire, greed, pride—all of it arising from self-centered human "ignorance" (*avidya, marigpa*). Yet even in ignorance, kind gentle Christ-Buddha love-wisdom mind—luminous Presence of That—is always present. How is this so?

Both Jesus and Buddha have told it. Our Wisdom Mind Presence is not a super cool edition of self-ego-I. Yet, our love-wisdom mind primordial Presence transcends yet embraces our self-sense. Alas, as Jesus told, "That which you seek is already present within...and it is spread upon the face of the world...but you do not see it". The not seeing it Buddha called ignorance (*avidya, marigpa*). Jesus called it *hamartia*/sin) ignoring our "supreme identity", always already present luminous love-wisdom mind Presence that dwells deep within the human heart and mind. Well, Presence of what?

Because we arise, abide and have never departed the "supreme source" that is our basal primordial emptiness ground of everything that appears (emptiness, dharmakaya, Tao, Brahman) we are necessarily an imprint, an instantiation, an aspect, a face and voice, in a word the Presence of That (tat, sat) vast nondual, trans-conceptual unbounded whole—awareness-consciousness reality being itself—by whatever name or concept.

Self and No-Self Being Here in Time

Intelligent questions like "What is the ultimate nature of self?"; "What is the ultimate nature of *kosmos*?"; "What is Buddhahood?"; "What is the purpose of being human?"; and all other such self-stimulating metaphysical/philosophical questions and conceptual answers are considered by the wise to be ultimately unanswerable dualistic distractions, conceptual fabrications and elaborations. Told the Buddha, metaphysical abstractions do not further human awakening. So, from the relative view, such speculation may quickly become a gilded cage of concepts, beliefs and biases for distracting practitioners from the direct, trans-conceptual love-wisdom Path.

Buddha declined to comment on such questions. Buddha declined to either affirm nor deny the existence of self. Buddha taught only what is fundamental to awakening from the ignorance (*avidya*) that is the root *cause* of suffering. "It is only suffering and its cessation that I teach" (*Anguttara Nikaya*).

Theravada master Ajahn Thanissaro (2015) speaks: "Is it not more fruitful to speak of what one can do, than to speak of what one is"? Yes. Yet in order to speak of what one can do, one is perforce referred to the non-conceptual, contemplative direct experience of *who* one actually is, one's authentic, "supreme identity" as indwelling already present Buddha mind Presence. That is our "supreme source" in whom one's highest capacity arises and expresses itself. It is through this spirit that we most skillfully speak and act for the benefit and happiness of living beings; and through such conduct accomplish our own happiness. After all, we're all in this reality boat together.

Lest we here succumb to the pernicious dualism of a false dichotomy, let it be said that the path of awakening utilizes our *two voices of wisdom*—conceptual understanding and doing, and nondual contemplative feeling and knowing. We learn to practice these two as a unity.

Ultimate no-self love-wisdom mind Presence—grounded as it is in the vast primordial whole that is formless being itself—empowers and guides relative-conventional self-ego-I in this delightful dance of geometry, always becoming our being here in spacetime form.

That said, discursive concept-mind is not inherently good or bad. Yet, as Hamlet said, "Thinking makes it so". All of the love-wisdom masters of our Primordial Wisdom Tradition have told it, we must skillfully use our conceptual minds, in concert with our moral feeling sense, in choosing what to adopt, and what to avoid; and to intellectually understand what and how (not why) we must establish and continue a trans-conceptual quiescent mindfulness meditation practice, that we may more fully realize just *who* it is that we actually are. We use relative self to awaken to selfless wisdom mind. As Buddha told so long ago, "*No-self is the true refuge of self*". Relative self and ultimate no-self are a prior ontic and epistemic present unity. No *ultimate* separation. No dilemma; no problem at all.

So, it is the rational mind of relative self-ego-I who *chooses* to practice the ultimate emptiness and compassion of no-self; who chooses to connect to one's selfless indwelling love-wisdom mind Presence. Yes. *Human happiness is a choice*. And so ignorance (*avidya*, *hamartia/sin*) is a choice. And so the fear/anxiety that sponsors ignorance and its adventitious emotional afflictions—anger, hostility, hatred, ego desire, greed, envy, pride and the rest—is a choice. How is this so?

Both human happiness and human suffering arise from our present mind state! Thus do we train the wild horse of the mind in moment to moment placement of attention upon our quiescent inner peace—bright Presence of That—ultimate human Happiness Itself (Appendix A).

Time—past, present, future—the perennial "three times" abide in this fleeting *present* moment that is too brief to grasp and hold. This very instant is already becoming the past as it simultaneously receives the future. So this prodigious moment now is *ultimately* illusory. The past is but a *present* memory of what is gone. And the future? It is a present,

often fraught anticipation of that which has not yet arisen. So, past, present, and future are ultimately illusory! While time—the three times—are relatively, conventionally (Relative Truth dimension) all too real to an experiencing conscious observer presence, yet from the non-conceptual, nondual ultimate view (Ultimate Truth dimension), time itself is illusory.

Well, what has this time consideration to do with what the Buddha termed the primary human emotional affliction—namely, *fear*? Fear and its subtle cloak that is anticipatory anxiety—from which the other "emotional poisons" (anger, hatred, greed, envy, pride) arise—is not *inherently* existent here and now; though it sure seems so. Fear is present as an anticipation *about* a non-existent event, something that might cause our physical death, or worse. Recall Buddha's teaching on the impermanence (*anitya*) of the relative existence of all conditioned phenomena being here in time. Everything that arises shall decay and pass away. So, fear is excess emotional baggage that we choose to engage, or not to engage. That is the question. How is this so?

We have a *choice* as to where to place our present attention-awareness—upon our fearless love-wisdom Buddha mind Presence—or upon anxiety about the future. Just so, we may choose to indulge regret, guilt, and anger about the past, or not. This amazing choice is cultured through contemplative mind training, in a word, meditation. I have called the development of such mindfulness yoga—*awareness management*. And yes, managing our present attentional awareness requires, like most things noble, assiduous practice, with relief and release arriving in step-functional stages. That is the truth of the matter. Indeed, we should all feel better already!

Be That as it may, real existential danger—atavistic lions, or thieves in the night—are right here and now, undeniably all too real. But the spectrum of fear—from anxiety/worry to panic and terror—is a compelling emotional response to that which does not exist here and now. Fear and anxiety are ubiquitous human emotions. Viewed holistically they are a dark phantom of our imagination, not real or solid at all. Danger is real. *Fear* of a future event is not real.

So, don't believe everything you think. Thoughts come, and they go. Thoughts are just thoughts, empty of substantial real existence. Careful consideration and practice of this truth is the beginning of the fearless liberating wisdom view.

Not much help to a patient at the onset of an uncued anxiety/panic attack (get them up immediately and walk); or to a student with anxiety or phobic disorder.

Broadly construed, Sigmund Freud attempted a century ago to show that a conceptual, logical, intellectual understanding of one's present neurotic fears and their presumed past causes yields a cure. "Make the unconscious conscious". Sounds reasonable. But it didn't work. The reason is clear. Conceptual knowledge alone, even with emotional cathartic relief, does little to change long term habitual behavior. How shall we understand this?

The *objective*, conceptual cognitive dimension of self-ego-I—human reason with its scientific knowledge—is a wondrous gift. But it must be completed by its counterpart, our inherently *subjective*, trans-conceptual love-wisdom mind—peaceful, loving Presence of

That. And that requires contemplative practice, and courage in the face of impermanence (*anitya*), our onto-pathological omnipresent fear of nonexistence, in a word, spooky *death*.

We've seen that our human cognition has two faces, two voices—objective, rational, "scientific"; and subjective, contemplative, spiritual. I have called these "the two faces of wisdom". Obsessively rational Greek materialism—that has now entirely colonized the Western mind and culture—is our prevailing cultural dominate trope, namely, the ideology of Metaphysical Scientific Materialism/Physicalism. This "scientific" ideology has been agonizingly slow to grasp this urgent noetic doublet—exoteric objective and esoteric subjective—that is the prior unity of human cognitive life. (Please refer to the *Introduction* above for a brief review of the four dimensional structure of human cognition).

Scientific Reductionism. "Science" by its nature is reductive. It naturally reduces matter to smaller and smaller units. For example, the realm of biology, life, is reduced to the principles of chemistry, which reduces its atomic structures to the subatomic particles of physics—quarks and leptons (*Appendix D "Idols of the Tribe"*).

Yet, wondrous scientific method has burdened itself with cognitively cumbersome metaphysical baggage known to philosophers of science as "metaphysical scientific reductionism"—the unproven and unprovable belief that all phenomenal and cognitive processes are reducible to purely physical brain structure and function. Of course there is no empirical evidence of such a meta (beyond) physical truth. This "functionalist" materialist/physicalist bias is then a non-empirical metaphysical system of belief—to wit, our deep cultural background Greek materialist "global web of belief", Quine (1969).

Our "common sense" objective concept-belief cognition is grounded in this nonobjective system of metaphysical presuppositions. Just so, empirical science is founded in the same uncertain metaphysical principles—Metaphysical Local Realism, Metaphysical Materialism, reductionism, causality, and the rest. Even the foundational axioms of logic and mathematics that produce *deductively* certain conclusions, are uncertain and incomplete, as evidenced by Kurt Gödel's 1931 Incompleteness Theorems, and Werner Heisenberg's 1928 Uncertainty Principle (Boaz "Quantum Logic" 2021a).

But, as Ken Wilber has pointed out, "hidden metaphysics is bad metaphysics". Let us then recognize and acknowledge our discomfiting, but quite natural metaphysical belief biases, lest we fabricate destructive individual and collective ultimate truths of them.

It seems that the *ultimate* nature of *relative* appearing spacetime reality (these Two Truths: emptiness and form) is beyond physics, that is to say the primordial dimension of Ultimate Truth is, *ipso facto*, the realm of post-empirical meta-physics. No problem at all—unless we choose to reify and defend such beliefs as absolute truths.

Is our obsessive grail quest for absolute *objective* certainty inherently doomed to failure? Perhaps there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our materialist philosophy. This at least is certain: our endless quest for certainty shall have to extend itself into the post-empirical, trans-conceptual subjective realm of our wisdom mind noetic doublet—objective and subjective.

The subject-object unity that is nondual Wisdom Mind tames the objectivist-physicalist bias of the obsessively thinking Western mind, and unifies our objective and subjective human natures. As if these two were ever separate in the first place.

Yes, human being here in ultimately illusory, but not relatively illusory time includes both objective conceptual and subjective trans-conceptual cognitive capacity; both relative self and ultimate no-self. We need them both. The wisdom unity that is Buddhist contemplative *shamatha-vipashyana* meditation practice, with mantra prayer, accomplishes that. Let us then penetrate more deeply into our innate, always present indwelling selfless Buddha mind.

Our Buddha Mind: Self and No-Self

The three pillars of the Buddha's teaching are: 1) *Suffering*, the omnipresent suffering (*dukkha*) of living beings, its cause and cure; 2) *Emptiness/shunyata* of all appearing phenomena as impermanence (*anitya*), selflessness/no-self (*anatman*), and interdependent arising (*pratitya samutpada*); and 3) *Buddha nature*, awakening to the innate Buddha nature/Buddha mind always already present in all beings; then its compassionate expression in human beings as *bodhicitta*—altruistic thought, intention and action to benefit living beings.

The Buddhist Path to liberation from suffering is the assiduous practice, under the guidance of a qualified Lama, Roshi, or Ajahn, of these three foundational pillars, practiced as a unity. Thus do we enter the luminous mind-stream of the Buddha.

The practice of the Path reveals the cause of suffering—primal ignorance (*avidya*) of the impermanence, selflessness, and interdependent arising of all phenomena. These must be understood, and surrendered. Skillful selfless action/*upaya*—compassionate *bodhicitta*—is the primary cause of human happiness. Self-centered, unskillful action under sway of ignorance increases the suffering of beings, and therefore our own cause and effect negative karma—the primary cause of human unhappiness. Told the Buddha, "*What you are is what you have been; what you will be, is what you do now.*"

Upaya is the selfless wisdom of our all-embracing Ultimate Truth reality dimension manifesting as skillful compassionate activity in the dimension of spacetime conventional Relative Truth. Recall, these are the Buddha's Two Truths—the Buddhist dominant ontological trope—boundless *shunyata*/emptiness, and spacetime form arising therein. As Buddha told in his lapidary Prajnaparamita *Heart of Wisdom Sutra*: "Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Form is not other than emptiness; emptiness is not other than form".

Upaya or skillful means/method asks this urgent question: "What actions within my present sphere will cause the most long term benefit to sentient beings in form?" *Upaya* is nothing less than a noetic wisdom imperative that requires, not a final surrender of self-ego-I, but a skillful centrist middle way balance between our relative compassionate ego-self acting in the world for the benefit of beings, and our ultimate no-self love-wisdom Buddha mind that empowers such an ethic of beneficent action. Self and no-self, together at last. As if they were ever separate at all. Yes, "*No-self is the true refuge of self*". Both

relative human flourishing and ultimate human happiness/liberation is the result of this union of relative self and ultimate no-self—the Buddha's Two Truths.

We've seen that for beginning bodhisattvas—we Buddhas in training—*upaya* acting in the world through our personality self-ego-I may be understood as an awareness-attention management skill set nurtured and guided by one's own living spiritual mentor. This truth has been taught by all the wisdom masters, *mahasiddha's*, and sages of the three times—past, present, future.

The awakening process to our innate Buddha love-wisdom mind Presence is first the establishment of *shamatha*, "mindfulness of breathing"; then step by step self-ego-I non-attachment to all this seductive impermanent (*anitya*) stuff in the world. This includes attachment to our own blissful mindfulness practice. And it includes fear of death. Our physical death is real. Fear of it is excess psychic baggage. Practice reveals this great truth.

Thus may we envision (*samadhi, satori, vipashyana*) that all experience is *inherently* good—"basic goodness"—because all physical and mental phenomena arise from their pristine, untainted, perfectly subjective boundless emptiness ground—the *Perfect Sphere of Dzogchen*, Great Perfection—the nondual Great Completion of the dualistic wondrous Buddhist Mahayana Causal teaching vehicle.

Once again, Buddha told, "Let it be as it is and rest your weary mind; all things are perfect exactly as they are". In Chinese Taoism this great expression of *Ultimate Truth* (*Tao, Wu*) is known as *Wu-Wei*—selfless, effortless and spontaneous compassionate action for the benefit of sentient beings. Such skillful action arises only from the selfless, pristine purity of the boundless whole, primordial ground itself that manifests for the wise as love-wisdom mind Presence—direct experience of That—by whatever name or concept.

Yet, cautions the Buddha, do not expect the conceptual logical proof of the realm of Relative Truth to "prove" Ultimate Truth: "Do not depend upon logic, inference, analogies, scripture, agreeable views, or probability" (*Kalama Sutra* 3:15). Awakening to selfless no-self/*anatman* wisdom mind Presence is trans-conceptual, non-discursive direct yogic contemplative experience (*yogi pratyaksa*). Wonder of wonders, it is self who *chooses* to practice this supreme happiness no-self teaching. No need to denigrate or deny self-ego-I. No need to fabricate a spiritually way cool Atman "Higher Self". *Let it be as it is*.

Therefore, Buddha's no-self *anatman* need not be an off-putting, pragmatically impossible denial or proscription of self-ego-I being here in relative time, but a call for a skillful centrist middle way liberation strategy, under the guidance of a qualified master, wherein relative self and ultimate no-self work peaceably together in the samsaric dimension of Relative Truth. Enlightened awareness management is the key.

And yet, in the *Dhammapada* we again hear the nondual view of Ultimate Truth: "*Sabbe dhamma anatta*"—"All phenomena are no-self". Ultimately, relative self is surrendered, subsumed and embraced in the selfless, ultimate primordial boundless emptiness ground—no-self itself. Complementary opposites: Suzuki Roshi's Ultimate Big Mind and Relative Small Mind together, always a prior and present unity. How remarkable! Practice makes it so. Let it be so.

Hence, the proper question is not "Who is my true self?" The answer to the atavistic question, "Who am I" is this: "I am that I Am Presence" of the primordial boundless selfless whole in whom this all arises. To borrow an ancient Vedic pith, *Tat Tvam Asi*: That I Am!

Now we understand that our primordial wisdom mind Presence is utterly free of the false dichotomy of self and no-self. Self/form and no self/formless emptiness are the interdependent, dialogical and complementary unity of human being here in time and form. It's worth repeating, "Form is empty; emptiness is form". Here ends the dialog of relative self and ultimate no-self. This selfsame unity "Is already accomplished from the very beginning" (Garab Dorje). No problem at all.

The Metaphysics of No-Self

Gautama Buddha told it well, "No-self is the true refuge of self". Let us remain present to that as we conceptually unpack this *kosmic* irony that is the notion of *anatman*, or selflessness.

So, let us now engage a bit of *vipashyana*—analytic penetrating insight meditation as a thought experiment.

The *mahasiddhas* and masters of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition have told it: the *ultimate* nature of this all too real *relative* self-ego-I is a mind-created illusion to which we desperately cling, lest we cease to exist. It seems we are bound by an atavistic onto-pathological terror of nonexistence, which has become the dominate trope of our mortal physically embodied lives, ruled by this unruly, all too real fearsome self-ego-I. Yet, before we were born, no problem at all. An old Zen koan: "Who were you before your parents met?" No self, no fear. No fear, no anger. *Wisdom mind no-self is a peaceful refuge for stressed out self-ego-I—when we remember. No self, no problem.*

Self-ego-I: in its actual true nature it is not a permanent, singular, independent, solid or ultimately real entity. Well, what pray tell is it? Where is it? Who is it? "Hey, it's I-me, this body and mind, right here!" And who is that, other than an empty name and a physical bag of bones with a brain. But where in "I-me" does this mystical self-sense abide?

Self is not findable by neuroscience, nor physics, nor psychology. To paraphrase Leibnitz, if the brain were as big as a mill one could walk in and search for days, but never find a trace of any self-ego-I. Self is nonlocal and non-physical. No physical nor mental location nor local place of any self in brain, nor heart, nor gut, nor anywhere else has ever been discovered. Therefore self-ego-I cannot be body, brain, nor the central nervous system. It is utterly unlocatable and undiscoverable!

Moreover, no entity, no physical nor mental phenomenal structure that controls the presumed self has ever been found. There exists no independent, permanent ego-I that continues through all of our moments of consciousness (the "binding problem" for philosophers of mind). Our sense of self is not a singular independent entity, but a veritable committee of selves. For Buddhists, self is an interdependent continuity of

countless previous causes and conditions (dependent arising/*pratitya samutpada*). The self-sense with its desires, thoughts, emotions and judgments is evanescent and impermanent with no purely objective reality at all. Yet, this mysterious apparitional non-entity that we have come to know and love is right here, an all too relatively real phantom—illusory on all accounts—no more real than a series of fleeting thoughts. Self and no-self; strange bedfellows indeed!

This Buddhist view of no-self/*anatman*—the ultimate emptiness of appearing reality and of a permanent observer-independent separate self to perceive it—is shared by modern physics. As Albert Einstein told, "All of spacetime reality is an illusion, albeit a very persistent one" (Boaz 2021a).

Thus, from the nondual (subject-object unity) *ultimate* view, self-ego-I does not exist! Still, here we are, an all too real *relative* illusion, a mind created proto-religious mystical belief system with not a whit of inherent or ultimate objective existence. Yet it utterly controls our lives! *Kosmic* irony indeed.

The way out of this conceptual conundrum is the way in to trans-conceptual *shamatha*, mindfulness meditation. The *objective* logical syntax of language largely precludes *subjective* knowledge that is *ipso facto* beyond its dimensional reach. This inherent limit of objective conceptual human cognition is only a problem if one insists that the vast boundless whole that is reality itself in whom this all arises is exhausted by mere objective conceptual thinking. Are we not more than that?

How is it that we may come to know this? Thus are we led by time and circumstance to explore hitherto unknown dimensions of our human cognitive awareness-consciousness continuum: to wit, cognitive state 3)—trans-conceptual contemplative, and even state 4), perfectly subjective nondual—as we have seen above.

It is mindful meditative stability that finally establishes an empowering perfectly subjective *certainty* as to the actual illusory nature of self-ego-I, thereby lessening its destructive grip. Ironically, it is this rational "explanatory gap" between the fearsome conceptual uncertainty inherent in self, and the quiescent trans-conceptual reality of no-self Presence, that finally results in nondual noetic (body, mind, spirit unity) certainty.

Some of our wisdom tradition masters have named this paradox the "wisdom of uncertainty"—which is the resolution of the pernicious "paradox of seeking" the happiness that is always already present as our innate, indwelling love-wisdom mind Presence, by whatever name, concept or belief.

Such love-wisdom clarity gradually deconstructs the destructive thinking and activity of narcissistic ego-I. And this requires considerable "ego strength", self-confidence, conceptual intelligence, and yes, courage. It requires a bit of courage to deconstruct this *fantasque* non-entity that we have come to know and love as I-Me-Mine.

Moreover, we are told by the wise that it is an error to make the *goal* of meditation practice the dissolution or destruction or transcendence of the ego-I. Buddha told it well—self and no-self function together as cooperating complementary opposites. A Faustian bargain with the devil? Recall, Buddha's "*Sabbe dhamma anatta*." All phenomena are no-self/*anatman*. In the subtlest, highest ultimate view no-self love-wisdom mind

(*buddhajñana, buddhadhatu*) embraces and guides self, like a loving mother corrects her child. The odious false dichotomy of *either self or no-self* is dead. Self and no-self are a prior and present complementary unity. And now we can see it.

But wait! If there is *ultimately* no self, who is it that creates karma in the *relative* world of time and space? Who is it that practices *bodhicitta* conduct for the benefit of non-existent beings? Who is it that acts out all these nonexistent nouns? Who is it that experiences happiness, liberation, enlightenment?

Relatively construed it is self-ego-I. Ultimately viewed it is no-self—our selfless love-wisdom mind Presence of the unborn, unceasing vast boundless formless whole itself in whom this dimension of spacetime form arises and is instantiated. Again, to awaken to our indwelling no-self wisdom Presence we need a healthy, fluent, intelligent sense of self. Ultimate nondual no-self already embraces and subsumes this conceptual duality of self and no-self, well beyond dense "thicket of views" about self and no-self; beyond the skeptical demand of concept bound self-ego-I.

Thus it is, this false dichotomy of self and no-self is fabricated by the infernal machine of obsessively objective human concept mind—unbridled "wild horse of the mind". In the subjective meditative quiescence of trans-conceptual *shamatha/sati*, there is no such problem. Wisdom understands this truth. As 20th century Zen Master Suzuki Roshi told, "No self, no problem".

In such a unitary view, opposing opposites are always dialectically complementary. Light and darkness, existence-nonexistence, life-death, true-false, good-evil, matter-spirit, particle-wave—our dualistic realities require both poles of every dilemma. There is always a plurality of levels of understanding within each pole of a dilemma. Course mind grasps at and defends its singular biased view. The natural holistic cognition of the yogi/yogini's mind sees a greater syncretic truth in the all embracing whole.

Suzuki Roshi on Zen Mind/Wisdom Mind: "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few". The red flag of cognitive bias is, in this regard, an unmistakable feeling of ego defensive affront in the bald face of any kind of challenge to one's well defended personal opinions and belief systems—collectively, our "global web of belief (Quine 1969). To paraphrase Zen Master Hakuin, "A teaching that provokes one's ego defenses is probably a good teaching".

Therefore, let us henceforth view these two conceptual dimensions—relative spacetime form/self, and ultimate formless emptiness/no self—as an ontic prior, yet epistemic present indivisible nondual unity. And when we forget, let the discomfiting red flag of ego bias come to your cognitive rescue.

"Form is empty; emptiness is form". From the metaphysical ontology you choose, arises the phenomenal reality you deserve.

My own cognitive biases being as they are, let us now very briefly revisit the Buddhist view of this curious complementary duality that is relative self and ultimate no-self; our reentry into the Buddhist Mahayana Two Truths dominant trope, namely, Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*), formless, trans-conceptual, nondual primordial

awareness-consciousness ground, unbounded whole in whom arises the spacetime dimension of Relative Truth (*samvriti satya*), the $E = mc^2$ of physical and mental form.

Self and No-Self: The Buddhist View Revisited

In Mahayana/Vajrayana Buddhism—Sutra, Tantra, and *Dzogchen*—the prevailing view as to the *ultimate* existence of self is this: no-self, non-self, not-self, selflessness, *anatman* in Sanskrit, is the absence or emptiness of an enduring, permanent, continuing singular *Atman-Self*, soul-self, "Higher Self". This is the ultimate truth of the "no-nature" of self-ego-I.

This is perhaps the main difference between the *Buddhadharma* and the Hindu *Sanatanadharma* whose view is that ultimate self is a permanent and eternal, reincarnating *Atman Self* that is one with infinite *Nirguna* Brahman, absolute Ultimate Reality itself that transcends but includes, and is the formal and final Creator First Cause of everything that exists. This dualistic theistic Parabrahman ontology parallels theistic God the Primordial Father—*Yahweh* of the Judaic-Christian tradition.

We find the *anatman* no self view well developed in Middle Way *Madhyamaka Prasangika* of Nagarjuna's great 2nd century *Mulamadhyamakakarika*; and as well in the 5th century *Yogachara* School of Vasubandhu. We also find, to the surprise of some scholars, early proto-Mahayana *anatman* in *Dhammapada*, and in other *Pali Canon* texts.

Hence, narcissistic ego-I, our self-sense, is alive and well in the dualistic, objective spacetime cosmic dimension of Relative Truth—the world of Suzuki Roshi's "Small Mind"—even as it is absent and empty of intrinsic existence in the Ultimate Truth *kosmic* dimension that is Roshi's all-embracing "Big Mind".

The *Pali Canon* Hinayana Theravada tradition view of self differs from the Mahayana view of self. Broadly construed, for *Pali Canon*, in this realm of local spacetime Relative Truth, we must not deny or repress or suppress self-ego-I, but wisely and skillfully lift, correct, and work with it. Self and no self must enter a relative dialog and work together toward the ultimate happiness of compassionate enlightenment (*bodhi*), all the while maintaining an acute awareness of ego's subtle duplicity. Self and no-self are already a complementary unity. This was Gautama the Buddha's teaching (Boaz 2020).

Therefore, as we have seen, it is an error to denigrate, deny, or try to transcend the ego-self. After all, it is the anxious ego-I that *chooses* to establish a freeing mindfulness meditation practice in the first place.

Again, in the clear words of the Buddha, "*No-self is the true refuge of self*". No-self love-wisdom mind Presence already embraces the separate self-ego-I. It bears repeating, in the ultimate view, form/self and emptiness/no self are a prior inseparable present unity.

In all the Buddhist canons—*Pali*, Tibetan, Chinese—luminous Presence of no-self—ultimate happiness of That—arises in and through kind, generous, compassionate thought, intention, and action for the benefit of sentient beings. Indeed, on the accord of the masters

and *mahasiddhas* of our wisdom traditions such a life style is the very secret and primary cause of human happiness.

Self and No-Self: Review of the View

Self-ego-I is really real in the dimension of Relative Truth (*samvriti satya*), but does not *ultimately* exist in the timeless perfectly subjective dimension of nonlocal nondual Ultimate Truth (*paramartha satya*)—Suzuki Roshi's "Big Mind" that transcends yet embraces the local dualistic spacetime realm of "Small Mind" Relative Truth. Yes, self is relatively really real, yet, as Middle Way *Madhyamaka* Buddhist founder Nagarjuna told, it is "empty of any shred of intrinsic existence".

Self-ego-I is, for Middle Way Vajrayana Buddhists, but a *relative* conceptual imputation, a concept-mind reification and elaboration of an *ultimately* empty illusory non-entity. Such is the Buddha's Two Truths View—Relative and Ultimate—as to the nature of *atman*/self. Yet, this self-fabricated "I" is all too real in the relative conventional world.

Contemplative practice reveals the true nature of self as non-conceptual "innate intrinsic awareness" of indwelling *buddic* Presence, our luminous innermost love-wisdom mind itself. Self arises from, and is always embraced in That. So, while relatively unruly and narcissistic, ultimately self has never departed the vast Buddha mind in whom it arises. Please consider this teaching of the Buddha when feeling down about yourself, or others. Recall this wisdom truth touchstone: "*Let it be as it is and rest your weary mind. All things are perfect exactly as they are*". That is the ultimate truth of the matter, after all.

Essence of self is then selfless fearless no-self wisdom. This selfless wisdom Deep guides self-ego-I to choose, continue, and complete the practice of the Path—all the way to the end of it. Wisdom mind Presence is always a *choice* of physically embodied ego-I, until relative ego self and ultimate no-self are recognized, then realized as a noetic nondual unity. Or so we are told by the subtlest trans-conceptual nondual teaching of the masters of the Mahayana, the Vajrayana, Theravada *Pali Canon*, and indeed of most of our Great Wisdom Tradition (Boaz 2020a).

The practice of the path recognizes, then realizes that this consciousness processional of the *relative* spacetime and the *ultimate* transcendent dimensions that are the ageless Two Truths of reality are now and forever a prior and present complementary unity, indivisible, inseparable, like a golden thread of the invariant *one truth* that pervades and traverses the fabric of all that arises and appears from the primordial *dharmakaya* ground—nondual unbounded whole itself (*dharmadhatu*).

I shall here reaffirm that our human cognitive awareness-consciousness continuum of understanding has roughly four dimensions or strata: 1) pre-conceptual ordinary direct perception; 2) exoteric objective, discursive, semiotic conceptual cognition; 3) esoteric, subjective, contemplative, mostly non-conceptual cognition; and 4) innermost esoteric or "innermost secret" perfectly subjective nondual cognition—direct *yogi pratyaksa*. These four are an always already prior and present unity. The Buddhist, Hindu, or Taoist meditation

master experiences this unity, more or less continuously. For the rest of us, "post-empirical" mindfulness *shamatha*, mantra, and deity practice offer glimpses, "brief moments many times" of this luminous fourfold unity.

If this all seems a bit obscure, let us recall that our binding "mind-forged manacles" (William Blake) are cast off through *shamatha* or "mindfulness of breathing". There remains within this peaceful quiescence of the mind a trans-conceptual, numinous innermost awareness Presence that is always present throughout all of the thoughtful machinations of obsessively thinking self-ego-I. Knowing this we may conceptually unpack our love-wisdom mind gifts and integrate them into our always evolving materialist cultural "global web of belief" (Quine 1969)—perhaps with some cognitive and emotional growth. It is here that self and no-self begin their fruitful dialog on the path to a happy reunion.

Being In Time: How Real is It?

Philosophers, physicists, and Middle Way Buddhists agree, being here in time requires the *relative* presence of a spacetime existing conscious observer-experiencer self. Absent such a conscious self-presence, who is it that could witness and verify a local real existing spacetime? Just who is it that is being here in time? An observing self is *relatively*, conventionally required. But must this self be *ultimately* existent? Theoretical physicists and Middle Way Buddhists say no. How shall we understand this?

The view of reality that holds phenomenal appearance to be ultimately real/existent is known as Greek Representative Realism; in the West it is Metaphysical Local Scientific Realism, ontic handmaid of the prevailing cultural metaphysic that is Metaphysical Scientific Materialism/Physicalism. Such ontic views of the ultimate nature of reality—whether realist or idealist—are "metaphysical" because they admit of no physical, scientific, empirical, observer-independent proof. Such reality statements are rather, observer-dependent. Their logical status is necessarily that of an opinion, or of a metaphysical (literally beyond physical) presupposition.

Ironically, the semiotic/linguistic conceptual structure of the human mind precludes deductive logical proofs of its own existence! For absolute certainty we shall have to leave our state/stage 1) and 2) cognitive dimensional comfort zones and penetrate state/stage 3) and 4). A "leap in fear and trembling", to be sure. This requires a bit of emotional and cognitive courage. We have plenty of cognitive biases to discourage such a scary leap.

That appearing *relative* spacetime reality was *ultimately* illusory was the view of Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg, and Schrödinger; and it is the view of recent relativistic quantum physics and cosmology, which unwittingly point to the great Buddhist truth of the *ultimately* illusory nature of an all too *relatively* real objective self-ego-I, abiding in a

spacetime objectively "real world out there" (RWOT). Einstein told it well, "Spacetime is an illusion; albeit a very persistent one". Said the Buddha, "Form is empty; emptiness is form".

This cognitive state/stage 3) and 4) trans-conceptual, even nondual timeless dimension of Buddhist emptiness/*shunyata* transcends, embraces, and subsumes our global materialist/physicalist web of concept and belief—our cognitively confining, not so comfortable comfort zones brimming with all this objective material and mental stuff that bestows upon us a really RWOT, and a self to experience it. Is our beloved RWOT really "empty of intrinsic existence", as Buddha told?

Let us probe a qbit more deeply into the cognitive protocols of our much valorized 20th century physics and cosmology knowledge paradigm.

Local General Relativity Theory, nonlocal (not limited to the velocity of a light signal) Quantum Field Theory, and nonlocal, nondual Mahayana Middle Way Buddhist emptiness (*shunyata*), Taoism (*Tao-chia*), and Hindu *Advaita Vedanta* ontologies (ontology is concern with what *ultimately* exists; epistemology is how we know it) all tell us that appearing time and space arising as $E=mc^2$ —even though *relatively*, conventionally "real"—are *ultimately* but a timeless illusion (*avidya maya*).

For recent physics matter/mass is the relative existence of particle-fields participating in the ultimate "vast implicate order of the unbroken whole" (physicist David Bohm). Middle Way Madhyamaka Buddhists call it *dharmadhatu*, or even *dharmakaya*.

For recent physics local particles and their diaphanous non-objective nonlocal fields are *ipso facto* inherently insubstantial and immaterial. Neither relativistic physics, nor quantum physics, nor Buddhist ontology can find any ultimately, absolutely existing, objectively real physical or mental foundation for such embodied being in time. (Boaz 2021a Ch. VII, excerpted at davidpaulboaz.org)

We have now seen that such a complementary view as to what exists, and how it exists, is known to Mahayana Madhyamaka Middle Way Buddhists as the "Two Truths"—objective, conventional spacetime Relative Truth, and perfectly subjective selfless, nondual (trans-conceptual) Ultimate Truth in which, or in whom this all arises, abides and passes away (Boaz 2020a). This perennial ontology pervades our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition, including recent physics and cosmology.

We have seen that post-Standard Model physics and cosmology (Λ CDM), and much of our premodern Wisdom Tradition—Mahayana Buddhism, *Advaita Vedanta*, *Tao-chia*—denies a permanent absolute or ultimately existing spacetime reality, including the existence of an *ultimately existing* independent self-ego-I, though in the dimension of spacetime Relative Truth, this self in time is all too real—that is to say relatively, observer-dependently real, but not observer-independently, ultimately real.

In this perennial nondual view human being located in spacetime is "*ontologically relative*", dependent upon the presence of a cognizant embodied observer-self which then imputes, reifies, names, and designates its own relative-conventional reality. Not exactly a permanent, solid, ultimately existing "real world out there" (RWOT).

The really good news? This *fantasque* apparitional self is already utterly pervaded with the selfless, luminous, numinous primordial imprint or aspect, or Presence of the

ineffable boundless whole in whom it arises and participates. "As above, so below", as ancient mystical Hermetic Kabbalah/Christian wisdom tells. Ultimately, there is not an iota of separation, although to the suffering separate self it sure seems so.

Thus it is, self and no-self are always a prior yet present indivisible unity. Again, as Buddha told, "No-self is the true refuge self"—selfless all-embracing primordial ground itself. How shall we know this great truth? Contemplative meditation practice makes it so. It is this love-wisdom mind Presence, by so many names, to which we awaken through the assiduous practice of the Path. That is human Happiness Itself, always right here now. As Buddha told, "Leave it alone and let it be as it is....This cannot be told in words".

Moreover, our goal is not happiness in some enlightened future mind state. For the wise the goal is the practice of the Path itself, each moment here and now. We cannot *become* happy in the future. But we can *be* happy now! Past and future are elsewhere. Happiness happens only now. The present moment now is when everything happens. As great gravitational physicist John Wheeler told, "Our notion of time (past, present, future) is how we keep everything from happening at once".

Well then, what *is* ultimately real for we honored guests of the relative phenomenal world? In this nondual fruitional view heady ideas of self and no-self are not the real. Soteriological (salvation, liberation) concepts and beliefs *about* future enlightenment miss the point of wisdom Presence now. Only the quiescent mindful breath; non-conceptual feeling-knowing *direct* yogic experience (*yogi patyaksā*) of our now present "supreme identity"—bright Presence of That—is finally and ultimately really real. In awakening to this aboriginal truth it furthers our human conceptual cognition to radically surrender itself to this atavistic theme. As Jesus told, "The rest shall be added unto you".

The Neuroscience of No-Self

I, Me, Mine! We've seen that for both neuroscience and Mahayana Middle Way Madhyamaka Buddhist metaphysics the perceived self-ego-I is nonlocal; it cannot be located anywhere in the brain, nor anywhere outside the brain. It exists only as an adventitious concept! So, self is intrinsically absent and empty of any solid, permanent absolute or ultimate existence. But, may I say it again, ego-I is all too real in the dimensional realm of relative everyday existence—our *fantasque* being here in time. Indeed, the narcissistic destructive self is often construed by thinking folks as a big problem for our species' continued tenure upon this pretty little planet. Let us then penetrate a bit more deeply into the neuroscience and metaphysics of this diaphanous self being here in spacetime (*Ch.1, "The Neuroscience of Meditation"*).

Remembering the Buddhist Mahayana Madhyamaka Prasāngika Middle Way Two Truths trope, self-ego-I is absent in the nondual reality dimension of Ultimate Truth, but abundantly present in the dualistic world of Relative Truth. Well, *who is it* that experiences all this stuff? It sure *feels* real. How shall we understand this perceptual and conceptual incongruity?

From an evolutionary perspective, patterns of our prodigious self-sense have permitted *Homo sapiens* to survive long enough to pass on our genes, and become our earth's "dominate species" (not that other species will agree with such an impudent presumption). Thus does self-ego-I still arise under certain conditions: 1) existential threats (avoidance), perceived or otherwise; 2) opportunities for desired stuff (approach) essential or otherwise; and 3) desired relationships with other human beings (attraction), or 4) hostile relationships (aversion).

The two defining characteristics of self-ego-I are then, desire (attraction, greed, pride) and aversion (fear, anger, hostility, hatred). This is the Middle Way Buddhist View of self-ego-I.

This mixed bag of qualities permit us to eat, procreate, and make war. To be sure, these evolutionary patterns possess their respective "neural correlates" in physical brain. But such neuronal activity demonstrates no unique privileged pattern, quality or location relative to other neural processes (the "binding problem"). Prior to the arising of the self-ego-I in one of our above defining conditions there exists no experiential or neuroscientific evidence of its existence, as we have seen above in our rather spooky thought experiment. But within a half second of a perceived threat or insult, or strong desire—*voila*, here is ego-I in all of its narcissistic urgency. In this way do attraction/attachment and aversion/hostility give birth to an adventitious, otherwise non-existent self-ego-I existing in an all too real RWOT.

Thus is this non-entity I call myself—I, me, mine—in the nondual ultimate view, an illusory phantom. Perhaps we take it too seriously. Perhaps there is a bit of self-correcting humor extant in the entire absurd endeavor that is self-ego-I. The cognitive stress of this absurd human predicament may, I hope, be lightened by a bit of self-effacing humor. Cultivate it your "self". It's wisely delightful!

Thus again, for both neuroscience and Buddhism, self-ego-I is utterly absent and empty of any intrinsic, essential, ultimate, logical or scientific objective existence. And for Mahayana/Vajrayana Buddhists, neither does the ostensible objective reality that the self desires or avoids possess "any shred of *intrinsic* existence", as second century Buddhist master Nagarjuna told. Yet, here it is, in all of its vainglory. So, *who is it* after all that denies or affirms all of this appearing urgent self-existence? Who is it that knows?

No Time, No Self: $E = mc^2 = \Psi$, But Who Is It That Knows?

Buddhists of all stripes, and relativistic physicists agree: there exists in spacetime nor in mythtime, no substantial, observer-independent self. Well then, just who is it that experiences this empty absence of a self in either an illusory relativistic objective spacetime; or in the perfectly subjective space of *dharmadhatu*? Who is it that feels the subtle bliss of our always present, utterly selfless love-wisdom mind Presence? Please consider this wisdom koan:

Who is it that desires to know
and to be happy?
Who is it that is afraid and angry?
Who is it that is born suffers and dies?
Who is it that shines through the mind
and abides at the heart of all beings
already liberated and fully awake?
—David Paul Boaz Dechen Wangdu

Western relativistic physics simply declines to address its metaphysical assumption of this absurd absence of an objective observer-self in an illusory dualistic spacetime reality; let alone any trans-conceptual subjective love-wisdom Presence that embraces it.

For Einstein, time is but a "persistent illusion". No explanation other than this was ever offered by the great physics master, nor for that matter, by recent instrumentalist, antirealist relativistic quantum physics, who paradoxically, requires an objective observer-self to observe the results of its measurements. The physics operationalist rejoinder to such metaphysical questions may be summed up thusly: "Don't ask impudent questions; just do the calculations".

Recent modern science conspicuously avoids metaphysics, even its own hidden metaphysical presumptions and cognitive biases, to wit, the following unproven and unprovable but still unquestionable "scientific" principles of: 1) Physicalism; 2) Objectivism; 3) Material Substance Monism; 4) Reductionism; 5) Local Universal Causal Determinism; 6) The Closure Principle; 7) Methodological Universalism. (*Appendix D "Idols of the Tribe: The Metaphysics of Modern Science"*)

Given our human propensity to cognitive bias, and Science's "taboo of subjectivity", perhaps it's better to allow questions that can't be answered, than to allow answers that can't be questioned.

However, for the pioneers of non-objective quantum mechanics—Planck, Bohr, Heisenberg, Schrödinger, and even Planck's pal Einstein—building upon the broad objectivist shoulders of Sir Isaac Newton and his classical relativistic mechanics, objective time does not exist absolutely or ultimately prior to the "collapse" into real time of Schrödinger's subjective quantum wave function (Ψ) by a sentient observer executing a measurement in Einstein's quasi-real objective time (t). At that instant of "wave function collapse", no one can explain how, an objective spacetime reality—an objective "real world out there" (RWOT)—is almost magically bestowed upon we sentient observers. Inherently vexing "post empirical", post-Standard Model "scientific" metaphysics indeed.

Thus, quite ironically does natively random *subjective* Relativistic Quantum Field Theory (QFT, QED) require an *objective* time and the consciousness of a physically "real" observer-self in order to perform its objective quantum measurements. That's physics's common *relative* view. Yet, *ultimately* considered, physics's objective *observer-independent* self, existing in a putative real time (t) is a quantum entangled "nonlocal" illusion.

Observer-dependent "ontological relativity" takes a more nuanced view. Here we fabricate, impute, then reify our objective realities via our cognitive state/stage 2) conceptual "global web of belief" (Quine 1969). Indeed, this is the Buddhist Middle Way Madhyamaka view and practice. (Boaz 2020a, *The Teaching of the Buddha: Being Happy Now*)

Well, what is the existential status of this quantum ideal observer? If it be a human observer, is he or she objective and local, or subjective and nonlocal atemporal? Middle Way Buddhists will argue that it is both, depending on the view—relative or ultimate. Self and its appearing realities arising from the nondual formless primordial "groundless ground" is ontologically relatively, conventionally existent, yet absent and empty any intrinsic absolute or ultimate existence.

This noetic doublet avoids the philosophical problems of both absolute nonexistence of nihilistic Metaphysical Idealism, and absolute existence of the eternalist substantialism of Metaphysical Realism/Materialism. Is this local-nonlocal existence distinction a false dichotomy? Can spacetime stuff like trees and people and stars exist relatively, yet not exist ultimately? Does this forest of stuff *ultimately* exist when there is no observer present to observe it? We have seen that both the Buddha and Einstein thought not. Yet matter continues to appear to our senses. We shall soon see that some deductive logical systems permit such a paradoxical state of both being and not being in time.

Clearly, 21st century nonlocal, nonobjective quantum theory has some unfinished logical and ontological business to attend to before it may presume to embrace and subsume Einstein's General Relativity Theory. (Boaz 2021a)

Has this illusive quantum observer-self epistemological "problem" presented a logical contradiction that contributes to the inherently vexed theoretical incommensurability of the Quantum Field Theory (QED) and the General Relativity Theory (GRT) formalisms? Indeed it has.

Quantum theory must now begin to explore non-classical, post-Aristotelian alternative formal paraconsistent, three-valued (TVL), or multi-valued (MVL) logical systems which eschew our limiting "truth functional", two valued, true-false, either-or bivalent Aristotelian logic, permitting truth values beyond mere true and false, existence and nonexistence. Indeed, there is a lot of reality between true and false. Such deductive MVL logical systems allow for a proposition to have a consistent truth value that is *both* true and false—just like our everyday reality. The five valued Indian Nyaya logical system is a case in point. The Buddhist Mahayana Middle Way Madhyamaka Two Truths—relative and ultimate—such a case in point.

Recent quantum logic has attempted to accomplish such a multi-valued logic, with limited success. The prodigious proto-subjective quantum theory has engaged itself in the classical truth-functional 26 centuries old logic of Greek polymath Aristotle.

For an exploration of quantum logic and other MVL systems including the Hindu *Nyaya* five valued logical system, and Buddhist Nagarjuna's Tetralemma see Boaz 2021b, excerpted at "Quantum Logic", davidpaulboaz.org.

Therefore, a prodigious logical/mathematical and metaphysical healing is required to accomplish the great physics desideratum that is a unifying Quantum Gravity Theory (QGT)—the unification of hitherto incommensurable QED and GRT. The continued absence of a consistent QGT has utterly stalled the program of 21st century physics and cosmology. What to do?

Super-Symmetric-Super String-M Theory? Loop Quantum Gravity? Alas, no purely objective theory works! Until the quantum folks get their metaphysical house in order and produce a settled quantum ontology, grounded in a paraconsistent quantum logic, and a *Dzogchen*-like panpsychic/*kosmopsychic* view of ultimate reality, a quantized gravity theory is but a pipe dream (*Appendix C*).

What *is* clear is that not even a QGT can produce an objectively certain metaphysical ontology. The propositions of science and philosophy are, *ipso facto*, provisional, fallible, and objectively uncertain (the "wisdom of uncertainty"), always awaiting that next more inclusive, ever incomplete theory. We shall need a bit of spooky esoteric subjectivity to unify our two seemingly incommensurable cognitive paradigms—objective and subjective. Of course, this requires a relaxing of our cultural "scientific" metaphysical "global web of belief" (Quine 1969).

Perhaps physicists and Middle Way Buddhist scholar-practitioners should dialog over pizza and ale, and engage the metaphysics of a "real" nonlocal, observer-no-self presence arising and being here in time; which shall surely illumine the utter mystery of Wheeler's "great smoky dragon"—wondrous gravity—creator and destroyer of worlds.

Is there a correct metaphysical view-belief as to the ontological reality status of an embodied, observing self-ego-I perceiving its appearances? We've seen that there are three ontological options on offer: 1) that an observer-presence is absolutely existent (Metaphysical Materialism/Physicalism); 2) absolutely non-existent (Metaphysical Idealism); or 3) relatively existent but ultimately non-existent (the Buddhist centrist ontologically relative Middle Way)? Quite naturally, such metaphysical questions admit of no purely objective certainty. We require both voices of our innate cognitive noetic doublet—objective and subjective.

What is clear is that our being here in time requires cognizant presence of a sentient consciousness, by whatever name, who experiences something. No experiencing presence; no experience of stuff. Because we do indeed experience appearances of something, this fact adds rational ballast to a centrist Middle Way view.

As to such a self being here in a dubious spacetime—what saith our Primordial Wisdom Tradition? We are perennially told by the wise that this physically embodied self, illusory or otherwise, that we all experience so vividly arises and emerges from—and is not separate from—our continuous trans-conceptual "supreme identity", our nondual wisdom mind ground—by whatever name or form (*namarupa*)—selfless, timeless, already present Presence of That. And That is an instantiation of the great primordial unbounded

whole itself (*dharmadhatu, shunyata, dharmakaya, Samantabhadra, Brahman, Shiva, Tao*)—the very source and nature of mind.

It is That (*tathata, satchitananda*) *buddic* nondual awareness-consciousness ground, by whatever name or concept, in whom arises all of this embodied beingness participating in quasi-illusory relative space and time; whether or not we, as egos, understand it conceptually, or even believe it. Or so it is told by the wise of the nondual Great Wisdom Tradition of our species.

Here again arises the Mahayana Buddhist Two Truths trope—relative reality arising within the ontologically prior ultimate "supreme source", primordial "groundless ground" itself. Recall, these two reality dimensions are a prior and present one truth unity, invariant throughout the entire consciousness procession of human cognitive experience—1) pre-conceptual direct perception; 2) exoteric, objective, conceptual, physical; 3) esoteric, subjective, emotional, contemplative; and 4) perfectly subjective, "innermost secret" nondual.

This vast boundless whole necessarily, mereologically (part-whole relations) embraces its instantiated parts—trees, stars, and all of us. And these interconnected parts necessarily, interdependently participate in that vast whole primordial ground itself in an ontologically prior and phenomenally present unity. *Tat Tvam Asi—That Thou Art!*

Mahayana Buddhists call this continuous arising of stuff "interdependent arising", or "interbeing" (*pratitya samutpada*)—the emergence of *relative* spacetime form from its formless nondual awareness-consciousness emptiness/*shunyata* base (*gzhi rigpa*), a vast causal matrix of prior causes and conditions. As Buddha told, "Form is empty; emptiness is form". Thus do we receive, experience, and "practice these two as a unity".

On the account of this mythopoetic "logic of the non-conceptual", wonder of wonders, we are never separate from that great whole! We arise, participate and have never departed that vast, unborn, unceasing, unbroken whole. *Voila!* A mereological logical proof for the existence of non-theistic, non-creator, nondual Godhead!

Be that as it may, this trans-rational, trans-conceptual explanation is not at all satisfying to our dualistic conceptual sociocultural "global web of belief", our collective self-ego-I, steeped as it is in its prevailing Greek Metaphysical Modern zeitgeist that is Scientific Materialism/Physicalism. And yes, this Scientific Local Realism metaphysic has now almost entirely colonized the Western mind.

Again, we transcend the inherent cognitive bias of such concept-belief systems via transpersonal mindful breathing practice, quite beyond the realm of mere concept and belief. This is how we connect to our already present no-self love-wisdom mind—numinous Presence of That. Here the conceptual mantra is "*No self, no problem*", or "Self and no-self are a unity", or "No-self is the true refuge of self"—an essential nondual truth of the wisdom Path that demands a bit of conceptual elaboration, as we have just seen.

Following this imperfect continuity of trans-conceptual quiescent wisdom mind no-self experience, arising self-ego-I then bemuses itself by conceptually unpacking the whole shebang so that this prior unity of the two dimensions of reality—1) relative, objective,

physical, and 2) ultimately subjective, emotional, spiritual—might fit our procrustean "common sense" notions (Bertrand Russell's "metaphysics of the stone age") of a purely physical spacetime reality with a solid, objectively real embodied self hanging out in permanent "real world out there" (RWOT). And so it goes—for concept-mind.

The immediate antidote and enduring resolution to such ego-I duplicity is relative self surrender to ultimate wisdom of no-self, that they may work together as a wisdom team. This contemplative dialog is the engagement of post-*shamatha vipashyana*—analytic insight meditation. *We have seen that such a result requires a healthy, secure, flexible, intelligent, courageous and contemplatively trained self-ego-I.*

Our iconic, one-dimensional materialist common sense self is rarely so intelligent. Ego-I is disinclined to recognize, let alone realize trans-conceptual no-self. How so? Self, under sway of popular scientific mass culture denies its spooky ultimate wisdom mind dimension by habitually, conceptually reducing it to the mere gross physical dimension, namely, relative monistic physical brain structure and function. This untidy bit of "functionalist" metaphysical conjuring is known to the philosophy of science trade as "scientific reductionism". So, science is inherently unable to answer our relentless question—"Who is it that knows"?

The task of science is to use its ever incomplete theories as conceptual instruments (Instrumentalism) for making predictions about the physical and mental world of our being here in spacetime; not to speculate about the ultimate nature of that world—as Scientific Realism/Materialism does. *Science tells us what matter does, not what matter is.*

Thus, viewed objectively and relatively, the *ultimate* questions still remain. What is the ultimate nature of mind and the mind stuff arising herein? In whom does this all arise? Who am I in relation to That? How do I connect to That? Who is this ultimate no-self posing as a relative self in illusory space and time? Relative objective conceptual answers are clearly deficient in addressing such ultimate questions. Thus do the wise embrace trans-conceptual, direct yogic experience (*yogi pratyaksa*).

The Hindu tradition bespeaks the great truth: *Tat Tvam Asi!*—That Thou Art; That I Am! Jesus answered the question by invoking Moses and the Prophets: "I Am That I Am". What is the ontic, phenomenological, even soteriological status of this prodigious I Am Presence? *Who is it that knows* this numinous indwelling Presence that I Am? Let us then penetrate more deeply into the very *buddic* nature of mind.

No-Self Help: Who Is It That I Am?

From the view of our innate wisdom mind consciousness—*I Am That I Am*, "innermost secret" love-wisdom Presence, vast boundless whole that is our Heart's desire—that which we constantly seek, whether we know it or not. It is That (*tat, sat*) "supreme identity" to which we aspire; That to which we awaken each moment; each mindful breath. Spooky indeed to self-ego-I's concept-mind, and to our deep cultural background (mostly unconscious) objectivist/materialist/physicalist "global web of belief".

Indeed, there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our conceptual materialist philosophy.

The good news? Self-ego-I, in due course, and by grace, and with a bit of luck, ceases to be a deceiver and obstructor to our psycho-emotional-spiritual growth and becomes a self-interested, but non-judgmental ally in this great process of awakening to our love-wisdom mind Presence. So be kind to this strange guest of your phenomenal world that pretends to be only you. Relate to it and love it as the mother loves and gently corrects the prodigal child. Recall that exoteric ego-self cognition and esoteric *bodhi* mind wisdom mind cognition are not ultimately separate. Self and no-self are a unity.

On the nondual view, exoteric/outer and esoteric/inner understanding—our perennial Two Truths, Relative Truth (embodied self in time and space) and Ultimate Truth (timeless unbounded whole in whom this all arises)—are always already a trans-conceptual, nondual, utterly interdependent prior yet always present unity. Our selfless, nondual, healing love-wisdom mind—primordial nature of mind—already knows this great truth. *Who is it that knows? That is the one who knows.*

As to this profound one truth unity of the Two Truths, Buddha told, *"Let it be as it is and rest your weary mind; all things are perfect exactly as they are"*. Such wisdom expresses the selfless all embracing Ultimate Truth dimension—boundless whole itself—our indwelling love-wisdom mind Presence that endlessly embraces the dimension of Relative Truth, including unruly self-ego-I being here in time. This profound but subtle nondual (subject-object unity) teaching rides each mindful breath. We connect to That upon the *prana* wind of the mantra breath. Lama Professor Anne C. Klein Rigzin Drolma (2006) has told it well:

The unbounded whole is how and what reality is...
Open awareness (*rigpa*, presence), fully present to
that state of wholeness is the knowing of it.

We have seen again and again that this freeing state of knowing-feeling wisdom mind Presence is inherently, always already present each moment now, at the numinous spiritual heartmind (*hridayam*) of the human being. All of the masters of the three times—past, present, future—have told it. This is the nondual "fruition view" that embraces and subsumes the duality of the causal view—cause and effect—be good and practice now in order to accomplish a happy result later, sometimes much later.

The outer, exoteric understanding of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition is primarily causal. "Practice this now in order to get that later". This view is represented in the Buddhist tradition by the *Pali Canon* of Theravada, and by the Two Truths motif of the Mahayana Causal Vehicle. *Well, does buddhahood have a cause?* Relatively, a big yes. Practice of the Path gradually awakens us to our already present Buddha mind. ("Does Buddhahood Have a Cause?", davidpaulboaz.org)

Is Buddhahood conditional, in the future, if we practice real good, and be kind to animals? We have seen that fortunately, the future remains forever in the future as it continuously becomes the present moment. The future is but a present anticipation. And

our past is past; but a present memory. Both future and past are elsewhere. There is only the present moment now. Everything happens now. That's where the real action is. That is where suffering happens. That is where happiness abides. Yet this eternal, timeless present moment now is too brief to grasp. This present moment is already past. So, we have nothing to which we may cling. We surrender our being in time and rest in the timeless *buddic* nature of mind. That's where buddhahood happens. This spooky bit of logic makes our dualistic notions of buddhahood in some ideal future mindstate quite problematic.

We find the resolution of this duality of the cause and effect view of the Causal Vehicle that is the noble Mahayana, and indeed of our monistic panpsychic Great Wisdom Tradition, in the nondual fruitional teaching of Buddhist *Dzogchen*, Essence *Mahamudra*, and *Saijojo Zen* (*Appendix C*). We find it in the aboriginal Tibetan *Bön* tradition; in the Hindu tradition through monistic Kashmiri Shaivism; Tibetan Nestorian Christianity; and in Adi Shankara's nondual *Advaita Vedanta*. This nondual fruitional view is alive and well in *Zohar* of Jewish mystical *Kabbalah*, and in Christian Kabbalistic Hermetic mysticism.

Here, in timeless, eternally present now, the fruition—the awakened ultimate happiness result, our Buddha nature "is already accomplished from the very beginning". Ultimately, we are always already That! Mindfulness meditation awakens us to that great nondual (subject-object unity) truth—step by mindful step.

Therefore, we cannot *become* buddhas later; but we can *be* buddhas now. Paradoxically, dualistic cause and effect dharma practice makes it so. As Guru Rinpoche Padmasambhava told, "You accomplish ultimate truth only through relative truth. Practice these two as a unity".

Through devoted practice of the nondual view the awakening mind, brimming with mindful mantra prayer, has little space for adventitious afflictive thoughts and emotions. We devote our human cognitive semiotic voices—meaning/semantics, logical syntax, and practical pragmatics—to the View, Meditation, and Practice of the Path. In due course, and by grace, we awaken to the primordial ultimate happiness—Happiness Itself. As *Dzogchen* founder Garab Dorje told, "To remain here without seeking is the meditation...it is already accomplished from the very beginning". Then we smile a bit at our stressful, dualistic seeking strategies. We have always known who it is that knows. *Emaho!* How wonderful!

Review of the View

Thus it is, it is our indwelling present, nondual, non-causal, transpersonal, trans-conceptual love-wisdom mind—luminous Presence of That—to which we awaken, breath by breath through life force subtle *prana* wind (*jnana prana*, Holy Spirit) energy entering in upon each mindful breath. Solid self-ego-I here dissolves into no-self—primordial boundless emptiness itself. As the *Prajnaparamita* (Perfection of Wisdom) mantra reveals: "*Gate gate paragate para samgate bodhi svaha*". "Gone gone beyond, gone utterly beyond; now perfect wisdom".

The beautiful *kosmic* irony and paradox here is that in the fruitional view love-wisdom mind Presence is, as we have so often seen in these pages, always already present. "That which you seek is already present within you...and it is spread upon the face of the world, but you do not see it" (Jesus, Luke 17). Now we can see it.

"Mindfulness of breathing" bestows direct seeing (*vipashyana, samadhi, satori*), direct yogic perception (*yogi pratyaksa*)—prior to concept and belief—of that which we seek always here in this very moment now; recognition, then realization of That. It is from this realization that *bodhicitta*, effortless, spontaneous thought, intention and action for the benefit of living beings manifests, however imperfectly, in this sometimes hellish relative duality of self (*samsara*) in relative spacetime *samsara*.

No-self love-wisdom Presence lifts and heals our difficult human lot. Mindfulness meditation, "mindfulness of breathing" as Buddha called it, is the skillful method that accomplishes this miracle (*Appendix A: "Let It Be: Basic Mindfulness Meditation"*).

Self-ego-I lives mainly in the past and the future. This present moment *now* is hard for us. Throw in some self-aggrandizing, or regretful past/future fantasy/reverie, and we have a bunch of dysfunctional human minds. As good a definition of "human alienation"—our painful "human condition" as any. Unhappiness arising as fear, anger, hatred, despotism, war, and the rest are the inevitable result. We now know the way out of this futile cognitive cage. "No time, no self, no problem." Practice that with gentle kindness toward yourself. Watch as this precious *bodhicitta* spontaneously expresses itself through you for the benefit of other beings—human and otherwise. The subtle energy (*la*) of your practice is the power that makes it so.

We've seen that the truth of the matter is that relative self-ego-I and ultimate no-self wisdom mind Presence are a nondual noetic unity. Relative self and ultimate no-self share a relationship of identity or sameness (*samatajnana*). Through the focused power of "placement of attention" we settle in, then rest mindfully in that peaceful space, upon the *prana* wind of the breath, until this life force *prana* energy arises spontaneously, imperfectly as the thought, intention, and action for the benefit of living beings. We have seen again and again that this altruistic precious *bodhicitta* is the primary cause of human happiness. This is called the "bodhicitta of intention". All of the wisdom masters have taught it. Do we not already know this? Let us then accept full responsibility for it, that it may arise as the beneficent *bodhicitta* of action.

We've also seen that our usual seeking quest strategies for human happiness are based in duplicitous, mindless self, the narcissistic separate self-ego-I and its "I, Me, Mine" effort to acquire much stuff, and to control everything, and to gain power over others. Once again, this narcissistic activity of self is known by the lights of the Buddha's teaching as ignorance (*avidya, ajnana, marigpa*). Delusional ego-I is then the root cause of human suffering; not to mention the suffering of non-human beings. The antidote to such body-mind toxicity? Our always present love-wisdom mind Presence, of course. And how do we accomplish it? Mindfulness meditation practice, under the guidance of the qualified mentor or master, of course. So simple. But not so easy. For most people such wisdom action is a fraught low priority.

The great avatars who came to earth to save us from adventitious ignorance have told it well: Said Jesus, "Forget thy self". Such *kenosis* is the "self-emptying" that the great exemplar accomplished, for all beings, and thus for himself. Islam literally means surrender of self. And Buddha, "There is no permanent self....All *dharmas*/phenomena are *anatman*/no-self....No-self is the true refuge of self".

Still, for the Buddha there is a relative conditional self to whom such phenomena continue to arise. So, we tread a skillful middle way between self and no-self. No-self cannot show up for work, nor buy groceries, nor manage the kids. And who is it that chooses to establish a meaningful spiritual practice? Is it not this problematic self-ego-I? For most folks, and even for highly skilled yogis and yoginis, the self-sense is not going to vanish into a puff of primordially pure fairy dust. And if it did, *who is it* then that is happy and liberated? Once again, self and no-self are both in this reality boat together.

Therefore, we imbue this course grasping contrivance that appears here in an illusory time as narcissistic self-ego-I with all embracing great love of our always present selfless love-wisdom mind Presence—like the mother's love that so gently corrects the selfish narcissism of the child.

Please recall, *love* as selfless compassionate action, and *wisdom* as selfless deep understanding are the two limbs of the Buddha's teaching for us.

We "let it be" thus, imperfectly, more or less moment to moment, between endless distractions, upon each mindful breath, and with each mantra prayer, and with each bit of dualistic practice liturgy. It is self-ego-I that seeks and motivates liberation from suffering—Happiness Itself—that is, most ironically, "already present from the very beginning" as our very essential wisdom mind Presence.

In the first few years upon this difficult and joyous Path we need a self-ego-I. No need to deny, transcend, or denigrate yourself; but don't pretend that you can bargain with it for the control over you and others that it desires. Make self-ego-I your ally. Your innate love-wisdom mind Presence is its constant companion and inner guide.

Your outer Lama, or Roshi, or Ajahn, or Rishi mirrors to you that love-wisdom Presence of the "supreme source" that you always already are—your "supreme identity".

Who is it that I am? That I Am! Bright indwelling Presence of That—without a single exception. Know now that "It is already accomplished from the very beginning". Verily, it is this great awakening that is awakening now within you and me upon each mindful breath, and in each mantra prayer, and in each act of generosity and kindness toward a living being. Thus do we "keep the view", even when we forget. And yes, it takes a bit of practiced patience, and a bunch of courage. But that's a good thing!

Historiographical Note: "Truth Is One"

Neither the Buddha, nor Jesus the Christ, nor Mohammed the Prophet, nor Adi Shankara, nor Lao Tzu created a religion. The schools, sects, and cults of organized religion are dualistic human inventions—interpretations of our nondual (subject-object

unity) primordial wisdom (*jnana, yeshe, gnosis*), and bear the limits, distortions, and dichotomies of secondary human gross and subtle ignorance (*avidya, marigpa, ajnana*) as we conceptually and experientially unpack their view and contemplative teachings.

That the greater esoteric "innermost secret" nondual, monistic teaching of *Dzogchen Ati Yoga*—The Great Perfection—is historically associated with Buddhism (it arose with its Buddhist founder Garab Dorje, d. 55 CE) does not mean that this teaching began with, or is limited to historical Buddhism (*Appendix B*).

For example, *Ati Dzogchen* was practiced by the ancient pre-Buddhist *Bönpos* of the indigenous Tibetan *Bön* wisdom teaching tradition; and as well by the prehistoric "Twelve Teachers of *Dzogchen*", centuries before the incarnation of the historical *nirmanakaya* Gautama Shakyamuni Buddha (Norbu 1999).

Just so, Saint Augustine told that the great esoteric mystical teaching of Christianity has its antecedents in prehistory:

That which is called the Christian religion
existed among the ancients, and never
did not exist, from the beginning of the
human race until Christ came in the flesh.

Neither does the historical fact that 8th century CE Buddhist Nyingma school monistic nondual *Dzogchen* teaching was influenced by nondual monistic *Kashmiri Shaivism*, Nestorian Christianity, and by nondual *Ch'an*, nor that Chinese *Ch'an* and Japanese Zen were influenced by Taoism (*Tao-chia*) mean that *Ati Dzogchen* is derived from, or reducible to any of these great primordial wisdom teachings.

As we begin to recover from our obsessively objective linear cause and effect habit of mind we come to understand that each of the nondual wisdom traditions of our great Primordial Wisdom Tradition have arisen, not one from another in a historical cause and effect linear chain, although these influences exist, but interdependently, as a spontaneous nondual wisdom continuum. This indwelling *buddic* love-wisdom mind Presence (*vidya, rigpa, Christos*) arises always from the formless aboriginal ground or base (*gzhi rigpa*), "supreme source"—Ultimate Truth—of all appearing form—Relative Truth—instantiated and participating therein.

These various traditions of the great wisdom tradition of our species all respond—whether through dualistic doctrine and belief, or through nondual direct yogic experience (*yogi pratyaksa*), or both—to this luminous ultimate primordial awareness-consciousness ground of being itself. Each tradition has its names for both the aboriginal ground itself, and for the numinous innermost indwelling Presence of that ground, abiding always at the human Heart (*hridayam*). "What's in a name? A rose by any name would smell as sweet" (Juliet Capulet).

Contemplative meditation practice—upon the *prana*/spirit wind of mantra breath, and deity practice—is our conscious finite portal opening into that infinite ground equally

for all of us, in every tradition—our subjectively certain connection to That. "Truth is one; many are its names" (*Rig Veda*).

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