

## ... are we here yet?

Tom Ransom

The last door opened in the grand pantheon of Religion was Zen, and it turned out to be an exit.

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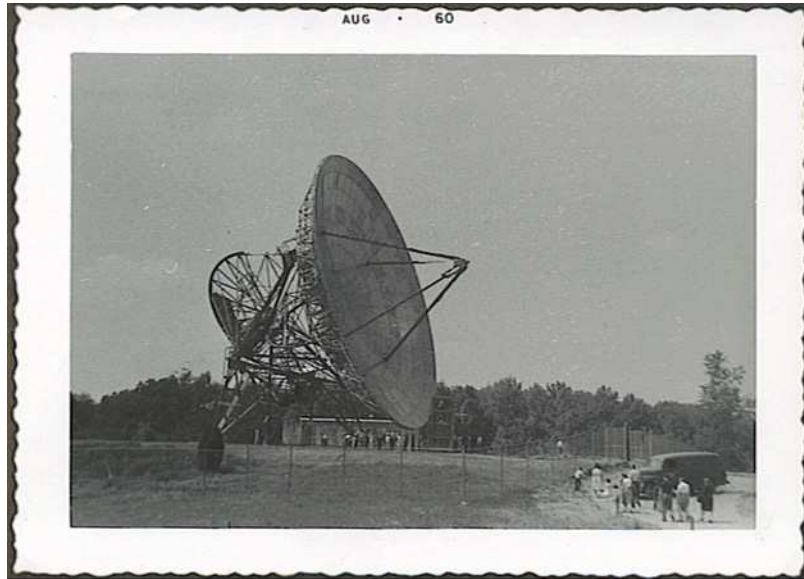
My father was a Methodist minister. Following his Dr. of Divinity degree he went on to earn a second doctorate in Education – counseling and guidance. That's because he believed the Gospel was less about divinity, salvation, and the hereafter, and more a guide for how human beings might best live with one another while here on earth. His was a 'liberal' theology; his ministry a call to progressive social action. He was an engaged participant in the civil rights movement and the anti-war uprising in the 1960's, and later an advocate for gender rights issues.

There was little religious mysticism in my upbringing, not only because of my dad's humanist preference, but because religion was what he did for a living. Church was where he went to work. We saw behind the scenes – the steam boiler in the subbasement and the attic above the social hall where for years a college student was hiding away. Sitting around the dinner table after services we'd hear things like "Carl Quigley slept through the sermon again" and "we got confused about who was supposed to do the 'call-to-prayer' today". Once we heard the babies cried during baptism because an usher had filled the baptismal font with chilled water from the hallway cooler.

The most mystical church got for me was when the back hallway door was opened to the organ-pipe room high above the altar and choir loft. In this remote recess were hidden a hundred round metallic and square wooden pipes, from pencil to column size, stationed adjacent to an able accordion bellows. It was the commanding consonance coming from *this* secluded room-unseen that was the Invocation of the Holy Spirit for all who entered the vast King James sanctuary on Sunday morning. And visible just past these majestic pipes, outside a concealing limestone lattice, as close as one could get, was the visual focus of the entire church, a take-pause brilliant, twelve-foot-round stained glass window – the inspirational portal to a spiritual world beyond.

The truly mystical moments of my youth were experienced outside any traditional religious context. Two were transformative; the first really did take my breath away. It occurred on a Sunday family outing when we visited the University of Michigan radio telescope on Peach Mountain. I'll never forget that long forested first walk up, turning as the winding road cleared the trees and seeing – *feeling* – the immediate presence of that immense parabolic dish poised on earth's horizon. The entirety of its intent was directed into *outer* space!

It was the most impressive instrument I'd ever seen – a scientific 'temple', an expression of the highest aspirations of mankind, purposely designed, assembled and dedicated to searching for and channeling a *greater* source unseen ...



The second awakening was more cerebral and down to earth, but no less memorable. I was working one summer with the city parks department on a crew tasked with filling cracks in the airport runway when I was struck by the realization that this long broad stretch of pavement in the middle of a field, with its painted markings, was without meaning or purpose in the absence of aircraft! It only made sense by implication of a greater dimension unseen – an airspace with airplanes. And was this not a transcendent metaphor for our circumstance on earth? For we briefly find ourselves *here*, on a rotating *biosphere*, eight minutes from a *star*, one of countless in a *galaxy* of stars... to what meaning or purpose! Being here implies something Greater. The profundity of this creation has mystified every people of every time and place; call it religious, spiritual, a 'meta'physical intuition – we share a common *transcendent awareness*: we 'sense' there's more to all this than meets the senses.

Then there was an adult Awakening, a transformative realization born of the 60's, when those of us exploring this transcendent potential were tuned into the "consciousness expanding" channels of the time – Eastern philosophy, meditation, rock music and psychedelic drugs, the last a potent catalyst for existential angst.

As is said: 'One can't be found until one is lost'

December dusk  
Hope lost of ever comprehending  
To whatever Greater might exist  
I gave up. I let go, of *everything* ...

... and there was *nothing* there!  
No message, no content, no 'God'

Just silence ringing, and *This*  
This omnipresent moment ...

... and the profound sense I'd never been here before.

It was a singular collapse – a discontinuity – one of those distinct 'before and after' events. It so blew my mind that I'm still there; this moment is that moment. There has forever and only ever will there be *This* moment...

"I have realized that the past and the future are illusions, that they exist only in the present, which is what there is and all that there is." Alan Watts

The brilliant totality of this realization eclipsed my free-fall and with beginner's devotion I set out to rediscover what this 'new world' was all about. I turned first to the far East, reading the likes of Lao Tzu and Buddha, and the contemporaries – Meher Baba, Krishnamurti and Kirpal Singh: "you are drops in the ocean of all consciousness". Then there were the resident writers such as Aldous Huxley, H.Hesse, Watts, Alpert and Gaskin, and then there was Zen – D.T Suzuki, *Zen Flesh-Zen Bones*, and Suzuki Roshi: "Zen mind is beginner's mind".

More a utility than a religion, Zen is the formal practice of arriving fully in this moment, intent upon the Now as the proverbial archer is an arrow to his target. By sitting in attentive meditation and dismissing the incessant agency of the self, over time, the simple fact of just *being* becomes front and center. Zen melds the mystical with the immediate by identifying This illuminated instant as the Source of all existence. The clarity of this singular focus returned me full circle to that initial moment of Awakening, thus completing a decade long inquiry seeking religious correspondence.

And yet, that abiding intuition that there's more to all this than meets the senses remained. Consider the instance of this emergent Now, which, though vanishingly brief, none-the-less exhibits breadth and depth. Reality has bandwidth. In fact, 'microscope' and telescope have fathomed some forty orders of magnitude revealing a world within nearly as 'far away' as are the stars. Alas, all but the surface is beyond the range of our given senses! Fortunately, just as Zen practice can be applied to arriving fully in this moment, the *arrival* of the moment itself can be apprehended using the practical methods of Science.

The scientific method is an empirical instrument designed to interrogate nature. It systematically investigates the breadth and depth of the causal matrix of events we call "reality"; an exploratory vehicle sent out to discover what 'all this' is really all about. And so it was that my suspended inquiry was redirected from religion to natural philosophy, mathematics and physics. First I read the transitional books bridging religion and science like *The Tao of Physics*, and *Dancing WuLi Masters*, and then the more scientific such as *From Physics to Metaphysics*, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, the books of Carl Sagan, B.Fuller, Davies and Hawkings, and eventually the founding sources themselves – Aristotle, Galileo, Newton, Einstein, Schrodinger, Feinman and others.

Indeed, there is far more to this moment than meets the senses, much of it as mysterious as that of any religious mysticism. High-energy physics is parsing the causal path of the present all the way 'down' to the nexus of its initial emergence. Astrophysicists are analyzing cosmic radiation as old as the Universe itself, and gathering data from distant galactic interiors where massive "black holes" reside. When theory and observation converge the results are integrated into a theoretical "Standard Model", under continuous experimental and mathematical scrutiny, that justifiably explains how and why what we are experiencing appears to be as it is.

Though science thus provides an understanding of our place in the universe ever more informed than that of preceding generations, contemporary religions continue returning to their ancient manuscripts for knowledge and for truth. While these sacred testaments may indeed convey timeless truths, they also ostensibly serve to confer and confirm the professed spirituality of their Sources, even though the stories of these illuminated lives, projections of the world-view of the time, have been relayed to us by generations of messengers, each relay refracted by the conscious intent and context of its time.

The Divine attributions assigned all these remote inspirational sources, therefore, become articles of faith. Yet unlike science, faith isn't required to answer its skeptics; religions need only serve as conduits of continuity connecting communities of believers with their shared traditions and beliefs. And because religion so often defines the existential core of one's identity, devotees are given to contest and defend their variant beliefs. As most everyone assumes the various religious identities of their families, it's reasonable to conclude that a 'spiritual commons' will never emerge from the world's religions.

Yet as conscious human beings we share a common transcendent awareness; have we not all stood beneath the cosmic vault in wonder? If the Gods of Religion have become too contested to serve as One, is there anywhere else we might look for a universal 'supernatural' Source? Well, although Zen is agnostic regarding God, its singular focus on the present does inform the question, for if everywhere and anywhere, then surely God is here and *now*; access by ancient text shouldn't be necessary. Traditionally, "finding God" has meant transcending one's immediate senses to search beyond the surface, which also happens to be the purview of scientific inquiry, inviting the question: has the quest for a theoretical Standard Model discovered a Universal Source?

Right now, the most powerful discovery machine ever built – the CERN Large Hadron Collider, is advancing the answer to that question by probing deeper into the material universe than science has ever gone before. What we know so far is that this emergent moment has its genesis some sixteen orders of magnitude beneath the surface of everything we see. It's here that we find the omnificent "quantum wavefunction", a theoretical "probability oscillator" that "quantizes" nascent matter from a "virtual energy potential" and electronically radiates photons at the speed of light.

The germane feature of these oscillating photon emissions is that as they propagate they generate an "electromagnetic field" which is the actual tangible expression of everything we experience; reality is light made manifest. This electromagnetic force is what impels matter to combine in all its complex variations and is also what sets everything apart. The force field of surface electrons pushing against one another is really all that renders matter its 'solid' look and feel. What's most remarkable about this electromagnetic field is we also know, from Albert Einstein's relativity theory – a Standard Model axiom, that at the speed of light the local laws of physics are in suspension. At light-speed the parametrics of space and time have gone "singular" meaning all radiant events are in an omnipresent state. In other words, from the *field-of-view* of light – from the 'God's-eye' view – everything is happening everywhere at once!

So there is a Universal commons at the Source of the scientific Standard Model – Light – an omnipresent radiance originating simultaneously within everything everywhere and within each and every one of us. Neither particle nor wave yet both, mass-less but kinetic, going faster than is physically possible while really going nowhere at all – light *is* the quintessential, supernatural mystery. The real magic of this miracle, however, is that it implicates *us*, for not only are we part and parcel of an evolving, global, bio-*electric* network, we're becoming evermore *conscious* of it, which opens the possibility that what we call Consciousness, rather than generated by humans being, might be something Greater that we're becoming conscious *of*, as science is discovering the rest of the electromagnetic spectrum. If indeed there is more to light, and us, and the Universe, than just what makes needles jump and trips transistors, then our inherent transcendent awareness – the 'sense' there's more to all this than meets the senses – is apparently how **Life** becomes...

### Enlightened



"God is light." John 1:5

"The spirit of God is within you."  
Romans 8:9

"I simply believe that some part of the human Self or Soul is not subject to the laws of space and time." Carl Jung

"The more we know the more mysterious it becomes that we can and do know. The first order characteristic of this entirely mysterious life is an awareness which develops gradually into comprehension." Buckminster Fuller

"I have a terrible need, shall I say the word – of religion. Then I go out and paint the stars." Vincent van Gogh

## APPENDIX

A set-theoretic approach to considering the nature of "God"

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Given the logical contradiction of "Russell's Paradox",  
when applied to a theoretical "null set": [ ], we ask...

Does the Grand set of [every null set] include itself, or not ?

This question is deemed paradoxal – logically inaccessible – because answering either yes or no negates the subject set as it is: consisting entirely of 'nothings', the Grand null set *is* a null set, yet cannot be included in that set, because then it would no longer be the *Grand* null set.

In this case, however, I submit the paradox can be resolved, and the question answered in the affirmative, by evoking the concept of equivalency. For if all null sets are by definition "nothing" then they are essentially the same – equal and commutative – meaning all null sets for all purposes are *One in the same*.

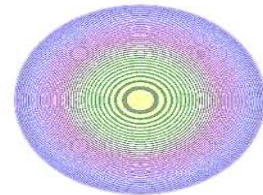
From the notion of nothing to the idea of everything – from one end of the identity-set continuum to the other – we now define "synergy" to be the Grand identity of any associated set of things: the Grand set of [all its parts]. Synergies are thus everywhere and everything: atoms, cells, pebbles, plants, phones, books, automobiles, houses, people, nations, the earth, the solar system. Proposing then a Grand set of [every synergy] we can ask...

Is the synergy of the Grand set of [every synergy] included in that set ?

The answer to this question, again evoking equivalency, is also affirmative without contradiction. For if all synergy sets are defined by their single common attribute: "greater" than the sum of the parts, then they are effectively identical – equal and commutative – meaning all synergies are essentially *One in the same*. Just as in a hologram every pixel is an aperture to its entirety, every conscious human being, belonging to the set of all synergies, is in potential correspondence with the Grand synergy.

"Everyone's in the best seat." John Cage

"When two or more gather in my name,  
I am in their midst." Matthew 18:20



"What is meant by the soul as suchness, is the oneness of the totality  
of all things, the great all including Whole." Ashuaghosha

"Peace comes within the souls of men when they realize... that at the center  
dwells the Great Spirit and that this center is really everywhere.

It is within each of us." Black Elk