**Mark Schmanko**

"No one supreme state of mystical awareness exists toward which all practices strive; rather, multiple modes of extraordinary consciousness are produced by a variety of techniques, each of which is deeply rooted in the unique soil of a distinctly psychological, cultural, and religious context." K Bulkeley

 [Gail Lake Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/gail.schmanko) Absolutely !

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 

[Alexandra Rusu](https://www.facebook.com/alexandra.rusu.927) yes!!!

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 

[Jody Radzik](https://www.facebook.com/jodyr) But there is only one nonduality.

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[Todd Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/todd.schmanko) Absolutely!

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 

[Paul Kocum](https://www.facebook.com/paul.kocum.3) Mark, this is way TOO HEAVY to comprehend. I really need you to explicate this concept.

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[Kultsár Lilla](https://www.facebook.com/Lilla.01) one nonduality that is different for everyone.

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 

[Jody Radzik](https://www.facebook.com/jodyr) One nonduality that covers all difference.

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 

[Kultsár Lilla](https://www.facebook.com/Lilla.01) perhaps so. i'm not an absolutist, cannot say.

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 

[Jody Radzik](https://www.facebook.com/jodyr) Maybe it's that there's one nonduality, but our histories as individuals has resulted in the creation of the myriad of lenses through which it shines.

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[Jody Radzik](https://www.facebook.com/jodyr) IOW, one nonduality that is known as one nonduality, but noted cognitively by whichever modalities we have at our disposal, those being various due to individual differences.

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 

[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Yes, I disagree with the quote if it is attempting to include nonduality, or enlightenment, under the term "supreme state of mystical awareness." But I agree with it if it is referring to nonordinary states that can be "produced," as it says, through various practices. Huxley's (and Wilber's) colonialist perennialism may have whitewashed important cultural and philosophical differences among various Eastern paths, but it at least honored the core truth posited by any number of nondual (advaya/advaita) traditions--namely, that there does exist a singular, supreme mystical state of awareness. By swinging to the opposite extreme, into pure postmodern cultural relativism, one ironically (where this topic is concerned) disparages the essence of the various cultural viewpoints one is attempting to honor.

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 

[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) [Tom](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom), [Jody](https://www.facebook.com/jodyr), let the debate begin! The author of the quote above probably means to include nonduality or enlightenment, or whatever we call the One - beyond coming and going, beyond differentiation, the great ungrund that is nothing and everything at once. Admittedly, the author is quoted out of context here, and fyi he's quite the reductionist (part of the nuero-cognitive camp reducing all to one form or another of materiality). The problem, as I see it, is not swinging between perrenialism and cultural relativism, but in overlooking the sphere between these two, not in terms of what is produced (which itself is a duality) through some technique psycho-empirically understood, but what both exists (i.e., can be discovered) beyond our time-space radars, and is generated through different radical processes of transfiguration and zapping it up, so to speak. What is nonduality? Literally, it means 'not two.' That's all. So when nonduality becomes ontologized - that is, it's made into something we strive toward or speak reverently about - then: we introduce duality (as in AC's being and becoming split, which is really a causal level realization in aqal terms) as if there were conditions that remove the awareness of IT; we tend to associate certain psychological or phenomenological characteristics as consequences or attributes of that nondual experience/reality; and, on a slightly different but critical point, we tend to presume that that mass of oneness-consciousness is innately good, intelligible and trustable, which can lead to a lot of problems for sincere folks tapping into that one and justifying their authority on that basis. As a result we have all kinds of dual responses and convictions in the name of the nondual, by throwing out words like nonduality and enlightenment as if they had a univocal meaning, referring as such to some massive homongeneous ball of goodness and totality at the core of the core. Even if in theory one is proclaiming the nondual and even if one is experiencing (don't ask who is experiencing it!) that nondual, in practice the separation between the mundane and the exalted is instantiated from such nondual discourse, and that's a paradox to be reckoned with. Also, nonduality talk runs into the grave problem of overlooking (or reducing the significance of) the tremendous complexity, energy, multidimensionality, fragility, and potentiality of immanence (what some of us refer to as kosmos with a 'K'), and all that that entails. The bottom line is even if saying it's all one is true (both experientially and ultimately), affirming all that constitutes that one is an altogether different matter. Here, if we take science as our sole source of determining the known kosmos, and a perrenialist nondual stance as the sole source of proclaiming the depths of existence, in my opinion we're liable to throw out a lot of babies with bathwater. This is why sophisticated folks like Nagarjuna simply turn to ineffability. Fair enough. Such a condition is ultimately ineffable. But when it comes to our lived reality and our articulation of what matters most to us, these days I'm captivated by all that that overflowing multidimensional plurality and potentiality entails, whereas words like nonduality and their subjective experience are but a mere point of entry for demonstrating who, what and how we are what we ARE

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 

[Jody Radzik](https://www.facebook.com/jodyr) Phew! I just want to hold it down for attention falling on awareness without objects. That's my definition of an experiential reckoning of the nonduality of normal consciousness, and while this can often be preceded by manifestations of subconscious phenomena I like to call "weird shit," attention on awareness w/out objects is wholly in its own category as a phenomenological experience, IMNeverHumbleO.

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 

[Robert Michael](https://www.facebook.com/bfcoursewool) There is no "one" beyond duality, because a "one" implies finitude, limitation, singularity, a figure against some ground. In short there is no "one" without "two", and so "one non-duality" is a self-contradicting notion.

The tathagata is neither one nor many.

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 

[Robert Michael](https://www.facebook.com/bfcoursewool) And not only that... but if there WERE a "One" beyond duality, some "higher level" which grounded the finite and the infinite (samsara and nirvana), then there would just be a NEW duality between that One and the two opposites which it supposedly grounds.

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 

[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) I agree completely, but after inquiring into the subject of nonduality for the past two decades, I am sure that there are some fairly universally agreed-upon interpretations of its meaning and significance when translated into relative human terms. The most obvious is simply "liberation," or freedom/relief from being entirely enmeshed in the confusion of the relative world. And the subjective, human, emotional consequences of that recognition can range, at times, from equanimity and blissful detachment to ecstasy and existential joy. Any number of scriptural testaments to that fact can be found, cross-culturally, in the writings of Advaita, Zen, Dzogchen, Kashmir Shaivism, Tibetan Mahamudra, and various other traditions (Western ones included). But all that this is saying is that recognizing the Absolute can free you from being wholly mired in pure relativity; it is not saying anything about how to \*live\* in the world of relativity. It's on that point, I think, where all the trouble--and real philosophical and cultural differences and religious disagreements--begin. Plato explored the relation between Being and Becoming in the Timaeus, and the precise relation between the Absolute and the relative (once a "relation" is even posited, as you said) is a philosophical battle that will probably be waged forever. But it is not an irrelevant one, because even admitting the fact of an Absolute will always have profound ontological/philosophical and existential implications (just as denying the Absolute will, as well).

In terms of interpreting the nature of that relation, Nagarjuna's "thesis of no-thesis" has its merits, but so does Charles Fort's logic: "If there is an underlying oneness of all things, it does not matter where we begin, whether with stars, or laws of supply and demand, or frogs, or Napoleon Bonaparte. One measures a circle, beginning anywhere.” Nonduality is nonduality, and hence should be inclusive of all things and all no-things, encompassing everything relative and absolute.

You said, "nonduality talk runs into the grave problem of overlooking (or reducing the significance of) the tremendous complexity, energy, multidimensionality, and potentiality of immanence (what some of us refer to as kosmos with a 'K'), and all that that entails." True, it can. But I think this is where Integralism, with its built-in Middle Way epistemology, is potentially very helpful, and I also think the anti-world bias you refer to is more the influence of Western distortions of Eastern traditions rather than something deeply inherent to the Great Nondual Traditions themselves, especially not in pre-Colonialist texts (before bad Western interpretations distorted Indian and Japanese philosophies for even the Indians and Japanese themselves). Advaita Vedanta, for instance, is commonly said to dismiss the relative world as an irrelevant illusion, nothing but maya. Andrew Cohen used to say this all the time in an attempt to distance himself from his own tradition and to bolster his new evolutionary interpretation of enlightenment. But Shankara didn't exactly dismiss the reality of the world; that's a simplified and one-dimensional misreading. Following Nagarjuna (and Gaudapada), he simply said the relation between Absolute and relative was ultimately ineffable, like trying to discern the ultimate nature of a dream from within a dream, and he affirmed the reality of the world as a manifestation of Ishvara (the Lord) for anyone who hadn't yet attained moksha. After moksha, the world was seen to be nothing but Ishvara. So for both the ignorant and the enlightened, the world is real, but seeing it as separate from the Absolute is mithya, a false perception. Shankara also agreed with the Madhyamakans that the relative world has no discernible origin in "relation" to the Absolute (i.e., is not "caused by" the Absolute), believing, like Plotinus, that the appearance of the relative world is simply a natural byproduct of the overflowing of the One, as the One:

"It is all-pervading like ether, possessed of infinite power, the Atman of all.... This is the Evolver of the unevolved name-and-form merely by being existent since It is possessed of inconceivable power." (Upadesasahasri, Mayeda trans., II, 2, 18)

Also, the vast bulk of Christianity, with its afterlife-only soteriology and future-focused eschatology, could easily be argued to have a stronger anti-world, transcendent bias than, say, Mahayana Buddhism, given Mahayana's not-so-subtle emphasis on compassionately and endlessly returning to \*this world\* to help all sentient beings. I think Western critiques of Eastern mysticism's Oneness-bias are not entirely well founded, and stem more from Christendom's technocratic colonialist arrogance than actual dispassionate inquiry.

Put more simply, I think any nondual tradition worthy of the name has to account for--or at least acknowledge--the beauty, complexity, and endlessly evolving wonder of the manifest, relative world. And I think many of them, contrary to popular opinion, actually do:

“You are the dark blue butterfly, the green parrot with red eyes, the thundercloud, the seasons, and the seas. Without beginning you simply \*are\*, pervading all, you from whom all worlds are born.”
--Svetasvataropanishad, ch.4, verse 4

By their art shall you know them. Look at Zen, Sufism, Vajrayana, or Vedanta. If the aesthetic line is highly developed, then it could be safe to assume the manifest-bias--or a love of the Absolute's creative outpouring \*as\* relativity, Eternity being in love with the productions of time--may be somewhat developed as well.

(The first full English translations of the Tantraloka, by the almighty aesthetician-cum-philosopher-sage Abhinavagupta, with two versions coming out in the next few months from two independent translators, should drive this fact home even further.)

I also think that Adi Da and Ken Wilber have likely done more harm than good in trying to parse all of this apart, as some have astutely observed ([http://integralpostmetaphysics.ning.com/prof.../blog/list...](http://integralpostmetaphysics.ning.com/profiles/blog/list?user=33jwlrg0u0323) and, specifically, in essays like this: [http://integralpostmetaphysics.ning.com/.../on-the-term...](http://integralpostmetaphysics.ning.com/profiles/blogs/on-the-term-sahaj-samadhi)).

I don't agree that Andrew Cohen had a "causal-level realization" as opposed to a "nondual realization," for instance. I think his eventual interpretation of enlightenment, bisecting absolute and relative domains a little too strongly in order to drive home his "evolutionary" agenda, can be seen as dualistic (compared to a more Tantra-inspired Daism/Wilberism, which, in Da's case, was purely theoretical, as he was as otherworldy-biased as they come), but Cohen taught Soto Zen shikantaza as a primary practice, which, in my opinion, is as "nondual" as spiritual practice can be (other than, perhaps, doing no practice at all). And the Being/Becoming split was simply the ancient Absolute/Relative split, redux--and, in its actual pragmatic exhortations, nothing but a modernized interpretation of the Mahayana Bodhisattva Vow ("sentient beings are numberless, I vow to engage in the evolutionary upliftment of them all"). By the same token, I also don't agree with the notion that enlightenment is a special or nonordinary state of consciousness, and I think this myth is the biggest misunderstanding ever to arise in the East-meets-West dialogue. We must strive to correct the mistakes of our overzealous boomer elders (and their Huxley/Isherwood forebears), starting by trying to understand the Great Traditions on their own terms, and not only in terms of overeager orienting generalizations...



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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Also, Mark, you said: "Even if in theory one is proclaiming the nondual and even if one is experiencing (don't ask who is experiencing it!) that nondual, in practice the separation between the mundane and the exalted is instantiated from such nondual discourse, and that's a paradox to be reckoned with."

I agree, generally, but I don't think that's necessarily true in all cases. Zen, in particular, takes great pains to continually emphasize the nondifference between so-called mundane versus exalted states of being--"chop wood and carry water," etc. That is just one of the reasons why, if I had to put money on any religious tradition's future longevity, Buddhism--and Zen in particular--would top my list (after, perhaps, the broad body of traditions called "Hinduism," which has a unique transcend-and-include adaptive capacity that may allow it to persist for eons to come, weaving even Christ, Moses, Buddha, Lao Tzu, and Mohammed into its colorful avataric web).

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[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) Tom, that's a beautiful and very full and sophisticated response. I'm going to have to wait until the weekend to reply in full, and I very much look forward to continuing the exchange. Please stay tuned!

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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Thanks, Mark. I had some time on my hands today.

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[Jody Radzik](https://www.facebook.com/jodyr) Taking the dust of everyone's feet!

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[Sridhar Pingali](https://www.facebook.com/sridhar.pingali.5) Well said Tom. There is also the not unimportant matter of lived experience in these many-faceted traditions as worked out over many, admittedly apparently latterly interrupted, centuries. What is the face of pluralism - from within - in such an epistemological, ontological and realization context? There is much to ponder in "quiet recollection" here. This goes well beyond cognitive recognition and suggests that claims to universalism and multi-perspectival insight into the interiority of other cultures endemic in the Integral world need to be carefully examined (self-examined?).

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[Carter Phipps](https://www.facebook.com/carter.phipps.9) Mark said.... So when nonduality becomes ontologized - that is, it's made into something we strive toward or speak reverently about - then: we introduce duality...as if there were conditions that remove the awareness of IT; we tend to associate certain psychological or phenomenological characteristics as consequences or attributes of that nondual experience/reality; and, on a slightly different but critical point, we tend to presume that that mass of oneness-consciousness is innately good, intelligible and trustable..." This is very interesting. I won't try to speak to Tom's point about anti-world bias being overblown, but I there is a tendency to relate to non-duality as in some sense a aspirational goal for the personality, and wow, that gets very tricky and dangerous very fast. I think Tom agrees on this. So yes, there may be a non-dual experience, insight, truth, realization, etc. that perhaps we could say is in some sense more primary, more fundamental, foundational, , but not more "supreme" because that presumes something about it's impact (and a function as a sort of aspirational state) in the world of duality that can't be presumed--and is probably dangerous to do so. Anyway, my brief two cents...

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[Hal Blacker](https://www.facebook.com/hal.blacker) If I may enter this very interesting discussion.....going back to the issue of one kind of nonduality: in my experience people tend to define nonduality in at least 2, and perhaps 3, different ways. So it's good to know what we mean when we use that term, to begin with. It is a very interesting experiment to ask your nondual-oriented friends to define "nonduality." Many, being Buddhist-influenced, say something to the effect that it means interdependence of all beings and phenomena; i.e. everything is connected, part of one super-organism or web of being, or such. Some, perhaps influenced by Nagarjuna, may or may not accept the latter definition, but say it is non-conceptuality, avoiding the dualistic extremes of existence and non-existence. But Vedantins, while not rejecting the validity of the latter two perspectives with respect to the phenomenal and transactional world (vyavaharika), in the order of reality called mithya (dependent reality), define nonduality very differently--it is one without a second. From a Vedantin p.o.v., Buddhist interdependence is not really nonduality at all, as there are still many things that are interdependent. And avoiding the extremes of existence/non-existence is the correct way to describe the relative or dependent order of reality (mithya) but not necessarily the ultimate reality, which is "sat-cit-ananda." It's good to know "which" nonduality we're talking about when we talk about nonduality. Just saying.

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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Yes, I agree with Carter's point, but think the ancient ocean-and-waves metaphor applies here too: What is the benefit for the individual wave of realizing that it is not ultimately different from the ocean itself? Is realizing one's oceanness the "purpose" of being a wave? Perhaps not. Acting as a seemingly individualized wave may have its own relative purposes. But would realizing one's inseparability from the ocean--and ultimate identity with all other waves--confer \*some\* benefit or understanding onto a wave, such as making it a bit humbler, more compassionate toward other waves, freeing it a bit from the terror of its own dissolution, etc.? I can't see why not.

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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Sure, Hal, but I do agree with Ken Wilber in his broad contention that the difference in "nondualities" (say what?) has been greatly exaggerated by academically fashionable cultural relativists, who, following Kant, privilege epistemology over ontology. The means differ (tremendously), of course, and the interpretations differ (also tremendously) for sure, but Reality doesn't ultimately differ--because if it does, all nondual paths are automatically invalidated by their own logic. Either that, or if one nondual path is claiming to be "more nondual" than another, then it usually tends to boil down to good ol' religious fundamentalism.

As Abhinavagupta put it, "the doubts some learned people have are unsound, namely, that a diversity of means necessarily implies a difference in the (forms of) liberation (they lead to). Although the causes may be various the result, namely, the destruction, disappearance and removal of impurity (mala) and the power that brings it about are, nonetheless, one. Just as any inert object, such as a jar, can be destroyed (in many ways)." (Tantraloka, ch.1, 165-66, Dyczkowski trans.)

Generally, overlooking a myriad of cultural and semiotic differences, I think the "nonduality" in both Madhyamaka-inspired Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta is \*essentially\* resolved by all of the Buddhist traditions that made "emptiness" into a noninvolved, Atman-like substratum of pure awareness/mind/rigpa/buddha-nature (cf., Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche's "undivided empty cognizance")...even if the "qualities" of Svabhavikakaya and Satchitananda (or Dharmakaya and Shankara's Witness) differ in the fine print. In other words, even in Indra's vast net of dependent origination, the Upanishadic ocean and the waves analogy tends to apply for all ontological intents and purposes, with \*more\* similarities than clear philosophical deviations:

"In nonduality, object and mind are released as one; whatever emerges out of unitary sameness is a unitary field; all created qualities are the existential ground; everything whatsoever, liberated without deliberate action, is a matrix of total freedom.”
--Garab Dorje

“This is not unchanging, yet it is not moving. It has never been void; there is no question of inside or outside, no separation of absolute and relative. Realize that this is your own original face: even if it appears as ordinary or holy, even if it divides into objective and subjective experiences, all comes and goes completely within it, all arises and vanishes herein. It is like the water of the ocean making waves; though they rise again and again, never is any water added. It is also like waves dying away; though they die out and vanish, not a drop is lost.”
—Zen Master Keizan, Denkoroku

"Just as an ocean takes the form of waves, the Self, limitless Awareness, takes the form of the whole universe.”
—Adi Shankara (attributed), Aparokshanubhuti

And Nagarjuna put it best, not knowing what the fuck everybody's arguing about, and--coupled with Lao Tzu's nameless Name--inspiring generations of Zennists to come:

"The magnanimous have neither thesis nor contention. How can there be an opposing thesis to those who have no thesis?"

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[Hal Blacker](https://www.facebook.com/hal.blacker) [Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom)--I agree! --as to the nature of reality and what these folks are talking about. That's why I can comfortably be a Vedantin, Mahamudran, Dzogchenpa, Shentongpa sunyavadin and lover of Buddha-nature all at the same time (and am probably not unique in that regard here). Some Buddhists and Vedantins do essentially agree on the nature of reality and nonduality, too, although few will admit it. But some Buddhists (hard-core prasangikas, some strict Theravadins, Steven Batchelor, others, e.g.) would strongly disagree. (and they generally also don't like ontology anyhoo). And many folks who i.d. with nondualism (and may not know the meaning of these esoteric terms and schools) are also not really clear on what nonduality refers to. It's a matter of defining your terms--if you define them clearly, a helluva lot of arguments get resolved.

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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Also, I do tend to consider this more in terms of ontology than epistemology or soteriology. So the differences between how we can "know" the Absolute (or "attain enlightenment") and the differences between various interpretations of the benefits, results, and purposes of moksha/nirvana/awakening are whole other matters...touched upon here, but my own bias is clear...

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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Definitely, Hal! In the words of one of Carter's favorite quotes, said to be from Voltaire: "If you would converse with me, you must first define your terms."

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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) [Sridhar](https://www.facebook.com/sridhar.pingali.5), I agree: there is much yet to be explored, and more Westerners getting over their holier-than-thou positioning in relation to all other cultures will be a nice place to start. Traveling to the places where these sacred traditions originate and studying original texts (ideally, ultimately, in the native language) would be another...

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[Linda Ceriello](https://www.facebook.com/LindaCeriello1) ah, so i'm guessing it was you who recalled The Wondering Brain, then?

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[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) Nope. Got it from Parson's book

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[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) Tom, here's a belated view on some of the matters raised in your comments above (please excuse any repetition). I agree that many great traditions are lost in translation through modern appropriations, and I appreciate what you and Shri are calling attention to, while still retaining a universalist spirit. Still, each of these traditions is very different, and, as I see it, such differences go beyond mere language and culture. They are religious differences, deep and subtle ontological differences of the entire religious matrix and process of such worlds. They are different in every way except the Way that all expression falls utterly short of communicating. So the differences need to be communicated with radical sensitivity and based not only on careful examination and practice, but also deference to those who represent such traditions or paths. We'll see what can come of certain kinds of learning, collaboration and cross-pollination. But until then, I hesitate in confidently asserting (superimposing) the universalist discourse. Quietly it may be so, but in practice this often stymies or silences what's happening on the ground and wherever else the mystico-magical dimensions of the universe are wanting to bleed into time-space.

At the end of the day, I can't help but say that figures like Abhinavagupta, Nagarjuna, Rumi, Hafiz, Dogen, Lalleshwari, whoever else – these are remarkably different beings, in all kinds of subtle and obvious ways. Some ultimate ontological level may be underlying all variety, but its expressions are different in culturally, metaphysically and transformationally significant ways, such that in the long run (deep time), despite our best intentions and sophisticated cosmopolitan sensibilities, our universalist proclamations are liable to do a disservice to such traditions and miss out on or trump the treasures of such distinctions. Think of the example of placing a little device on the ground, charging it up with energy, and letting it travel in one direction for, say, 15,000 miles. Even a centimeter of initial adjustment, to the left or right, will make a huge difference in terms of where that device ends up.

Wave and ocean is a good metaphor. But I’m particularly compelled by the space between wave and ocean, and how we become title waves in service to the ocean and waves in their manifold relations and actualizations. Thus my emphasis away from perrenialism. Again, I’m not talking merely about culture and interpretation on one side, and nondual realization or mystico-unity on the other. Cultural, semiotic and historical factors are critical in terms of enactment and understanding what it means to be human, for sure; but there is a lot more happening in subtle spheres, so to speak, which needs breathing room and which, moreover, is underdetermined in light of our overdetermined perrenialist hymns. Carter, you hit the nail on the head with these words: "So yes, there may be a non-dual experience, insight, truth, realization, etc. that perhaps we could say is in some sense more primary, more fundamental, foundational, , but not more "supreme" because that presumes something about it's impact (and a function as a sort of aspirational state) in the world of duality that can't be presumed--and is probably dangerous to do so." Nothing more to add to this.

Consider Wilber’s critique of green meme. This is a critique of nullifying verticality, or development, what he calls flatland, as many of us are all too familiar with, which has its boomeritus consequence. Well, he basically flatlands the depth dimension of the universe; that is, what Wilber may not realize with aqal is that he does a very similar thing with states or mystical realization that cultural relativists do with development, reducing the significance of all depth to the nondual, even though acknowledging the “subtle and causal” spheres. Instead of a boomeritus syndrome occupying a flat universe, we get perrenialism with its own rampant form of reductionism. The result is that many dubbed nondual folks know a lot about the gross empirically verified world, on the one hand, and then skip right to the lofty nondual on the other. One precedent for this, affecting many of us, is the desire to satisfy scientific discourse and culturally sophisticated (so called ‘cutting edge’) trends. The kw mystical superstar aspiration syndrome, if you will, wanting to be scientifically savvy and nondually liberated, and missing a whole lot of the Jamesion More in between.

On a personal note, Abhinavagupta and the particular Shaiva-Shakta text traditions out of which he flourished have been my main source of inspiration and contemplative practice since 2002 (when I first started reading Dysckowski’s translations, which blew my mind). I’m super psyched to see you engaging his work! I would go so far as to say Abhinava and company are a rare example of a kind of nondual realization that is qualitatively different than many of the sages you’ve mentioned, not just because he was a polymath and interdisciplinary master in ways unprecedented to the history of medieval India, but also because he makes a strong argument for the supremacy of the Trika-Shaiva path over the competing schools of his time, going so far as to hierarchically organize all others underneath his tradition, fitting their realizations and injunctions here and there under his vision of the universe. It’s true that there is arguably a foundationalist or perrenialist stance to Abhinava not unlike yours, one that is articulated in beautiful statements like the one you quoted, which refers to the path of no-means (anupaya), beyond sequence, and constituting an identity with all things as infinite consciousness; yet such proclamations, which are compatible with your universalist stance, are surrounded by all kinds of nonarbitrary distinctions, modes of practice, and a radically immanent articulation of manifestation and its panentheistic (feminine) nature, overflowing with power, intelligibility and intentionality in and as all things … this and other complicated things considered make his world feel and look like an apple to Shankara's pear, or Dharmakirti's lemon, and Abhiniva would most likely agree. In other words, while Abhinava says there is only one ultimate, that ultimate is the Trika-Shaiva ultimate saturated with a distinctive spiritual perspective, not the Buddhist, the Vedantin or Yogic perspective and path. But Abhinava’s presence are beyond the scope and relevance of this thread! Here's an article-blog by a brilliant philosopher of religion and scholar of Sanskrit and Shaivism that speaks to this, which you may enjoy: <http://them.polylog.org/4/fld-en.htm#s5>
thanks for the engagement, [Tom](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom)!

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[Bruce Alderman](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14) Beautiful testament, brother M!

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[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) Thanks [Bruce](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14)!

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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Awesome, Mark! I agree with everything you said, and love what you expressed about Abhinava's view, which I am only just beginning to explore compared to your obvious depth of study but have also been blown away by the dude. My own perennialism or universalism--if it even can be called that, since I am no Huxleyian or strict Wilberian--is \*mostly\* ontological, as I said above (and focusing on only one "ultimate" level of ontological propositions at that), and not really epistemological (the various means by which we can come to know a nondual reality/absolute) or soteriological (how we can become enlightened and everything that may or may not mean for human life and culture). When it comes to those things, I tend toward postmodern multiculturalism and believe that far more than just superficial cultural details are at risk of being lost through the many bad translations/Westernizations of Eastern traditions (and bad translations of Western traditions, for that matter, like the many questionable interpretations of the Gospel of Thomas, or Pauline Christianity's dubious historicity recently highlighted anew by Reza Aslan's "Zealot"). So I think we're definitely on the same page in terms of honoring the multifaceted distinctiveness and crucial, valuable differences of all traditions, and recognizing that they all say completely different things about how recognizing the Absolute translates into, or transforms (or doesn't), human life and culture.

But I am a Wilberian and neo-perennialist to the extent that I think some degree of universalism and sympathetic commonality is important for postmodern multiculturalism (and humanity in general) to acknowledge, and all the more so where discussions of nonduality or the absolute are concerned. If \*no\* universal common ground can be found, then it's all apples and oranges: true interfaith and intercultural understanding is impossible; the postmodernist dream of one global-yet-beautifully-diverse human family is impossible; and, more to the point, certain Eastern traditions' own truth-claims regarding one Truth or one nondual Reality can be written off as just purely relative mythic cultural narratives, lovely and well-meaning, exquisite in their wondrous diversity, but not \*really\* applying to all people at all times like those nondual traditions themselves claim. In other words, if you think that Vedanta and Taoism are actually pointing to different Absolutes, then you've just refuted the truth-claims of both traditions simultaneously, because both traditions posit that there is only ever one Absolute, referred to by many names. Even among those traditions where there are marked differences in what they mean by "the Absolute," as in Abhinava's critiques of Vedanta, or Shankara's critiques of Madhyamaka, those critiques tend to be about differing methodologies, levels of human attainment, and metaphysical postulates regarding the characteristics of the Absolute (is it Satcitananda or is it Siva-Shakti Citananda?). They are not refutations of the singularity or existence of the Absolute, which is why Shankara can discount "the Buddhists" as nihilists while still assuming that their emptiness and his Atman are attempting to refer to the same reality. This was the problem I was responding to in the quote that began this thread. (But \*how we can know\* the Absolute, the \*qualities\* of the Absolute, or \*what that knowledge means\* for human life and culture are entirely separate issues, and where all the valid and very important differences and competing/contradictory perspectives enter in.)

This is why a broad Integralism, in the Wilber/Beck/Gebser sense, is necessary, in my opinion, as a rational dialectic to help re-legitimize Traditionalism, or so-called Mythic Religion and Mythic Culture, in a post- or trans-Modern world. Otherwise, we end up with lots of arrogant Western postmodern academics actively denying the core truths of the very traditions they're ostensibly trying to honor, falling in love with individual trees but, due to runaway relativism, discounting the existence of the One Forest that the trees themselves worshipped (from all of their genuinely different and distinctive vantage points--differences that we can, in fact, see and appreciate thanks to a "universalist" post-mythic, post-sectarian lens). This is also why Wilber says, in "Integral Spirituality," that postmodernism has been potentially a bigger cause of Godforsaken Western secularism than scientific materialism has. I know you are not at all advocating this yourself, and I don't think that you and I really disagree at all, but I am just restating my case for why, exactly, I beat the universalist drum so insistently. Acknowledging the truth of One Absolute (and the universality of that basic meta-contextual and metaphysical truth) has big implications for our understanding of absolutely everything, and denying it has big implications too (and those affirmations and denials can, and do, ripple out in a thousand different directions). Also, it is the basis for the possibility of multiperspectivalism in the first place; you can’t really have equally legitimate seats at the table for “different views” if there isn’t one table around which all of the viewing is happening. Otherwise, they'd be different views on what, exactly?

I just think it's one thing to say that Wave X is more in touch with the Ocean, or more fully reflects the beauty of the Ocean than Wave Y, but it's another thing entirely to deny that they're both waves of the same exact Ocean. "Knowing this," says the Avadhuta Gita, "one never says that the yogis have any particular path. For them it is the giving up of all duality. The supreme attainment comes of itself." The fact that identical statements can be found in Soto Zen, for instance, is not an accident--and actually helps to prove that all relative perspective, religious or otherwise, "nondual" or otherwise, are only ever relative windows onto one Reality. And that all-inclusive fact is not a small or incidental point, but the Point of all points, a common Fact apart from which all relative perspectives lose their meaning and become, at best, solipsism (or, collectively, extreme cultural relativism) and, at worst, nihilism. Even mathematics would not work if there wasn't a common ground underlying all seeming quantity and abstraction, and scientists would all be up a creek without a paddle if they weren't studying, or at least seeming to study, relative aspects of \*one\* Uni-Verse. And since lots of traditions posit an awakening to that deep singularity as a supreme mystical attainment to trounce all other attainments, I refute the charge that "No one supreme state of mystical awareness exists" toward which many, though yes, not all, traditions strive. Plus, the singularity of reality is self-evident in every moment to everybody anyway, whether they deny it or not, whether they worship it or not, whether they aspire to "attain" it or couldn't care less about it. I suspect that Reality actually doesn't care about anybody's perspective on it, whether those perspectives belong to atoms, acorns, or evolving apes. And obviously, all of my own arguments here can be easily broken down on close inspection, because the Absolute is, of course, ultimately unspeakable in relative terms, and therefore all traditional explications of its nature \*are\* very different. But we apes are talkers, so this is how we keep ourselves entertained.

“The mystics’ words appear in a hundred different forms, but if God is one and the Way is one, how can their words be other than one? They do appear in different guises, but in substance they are one.”
--Jalal al-Din Rumi, Discourses

“Some people call it mind, or nature, or substance, or God, or self, or Buddha, or soul, or spirit, or consciousness. But originally that point has no name and no form because it is already \_before\_ thinking, so opening your mouth to call it anything is already a big mistake.”
--Zen Master Seung Sahn, The Compass of Zen, p. 29

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[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) Hi [Tom](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom)! Hope I'm not too late here. Two points I'd like to make. First, I sympathize with the logic and ethical argument you express in terms of universal grounds for commensurability as vital to our cross cultural endeavors. However, that argument may not be all that important. There are other ways of identifying commensurability that are unquestionable, for instance, like having bodies, co-inhabiting a planet, being human, breathing, and so on. In and of itself this kind of commensurability does not do too much (without accompanying factors like crises, economic motivations, ecstatic states, etc.), that is, it's basically neutral; as I see it, the same applies to an abstract principle of universality in considering an underlying ontological identity or unity with all. The main problem here has little to do with unity or commensurability. It's what we do with it, how it impacts (as Carter pointed out) the unfolding myriad things, beings, and processes. Second, you seem to be missing one major point I mean to make. This has to do with a kind of pluralistic multidimensional ontology that leaves space for the More, for thick and altogether alternative differences, for integral revelations, as it were. And here I don't mean imbibing the perspectives of multiculturalism (though that's included), marxianism (though that's included), or science, I'm talking about the .... ☺

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[Valerie Dunnigan](https://www.facebook.com/vdunnigan23) God love you Mark! I wish I could understand what that means... Sounds brilliant!!!!

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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Thanks for the reply, Mark! Well, we can just agree to disagree. As I said in an earlier post, determining the universality of an ontological Absolute isn't merely an exercise in positing an irrelevant conceptual framework; it's an exercise in striving to understand humanity's diverse approaches to fathoming reality by searching for universals and commensurability. If physicists in England and physicists in Japan are drawing similar conclusions about the nature of reality from their experiments, we tend to trust that they're likely exploring the same reality, even if their conclusions differ in the details, and those similar conclusions therefore become very interesting to anyone interested in learning more about the reality they're exploring, as do the differences. But both are important. Glossing over surprising universal truths (like, say, the apparent universality of God/Tao/Brahman/Emptiness) in favor of local narratives is certainly what keeps academics in business, but it isn't necessarily going to help a secular world to regain confidence that reality isn't \*entirely\* culturally constructed by human beings, and that there is a dimension that transcends the finite stories we tell ourselves--a dimension that may perhaps always be ultimately Unknowable, but gets just a little clearer when we see the remarkable consistency of stories told about it across cultures. And other dimensions of it get clearer, too, when we appreciate the wide-ranging differences in the stories told about it as well (something that modernity, perennialism, and KW integralism hasn't done so well at, which is why a true integralism needs a healthier universalist/relativist synthesis that has yet to be seen except in fits and starts, as KW has been hellbent on fitting the universe into his little mental map).

You said, "Second, you seem to be missing one major point I mean to make. This has to do with a kind of pluralistic multidimensional ontology that leaves space for the More, for thick and altogether alternative differences, for integral revelations, as it were."

I think I'm acknowledging it but just countering it by saying that plurality, by definition, is relative or relate-ive (even if you're suggesting ontologically distinct Gods, Systems, or Worlds, they are still all united by a common plurality or multiplicity--Indra's Net), and I was talking about the nondual Absolute, which, by definition, is the ultimate transcender-and-includer of all relative differences without remainder. There is no more "More" than Infinity, if you'd prefer those terms. Anything less than infinite is finite, and a plurality of infinities is still infinity. I'm just saying that throwing out the ocean in favor of the beauty of distinct waves--or in favor of the way different waves reflect the ocean more fully or intricately--doesn't make any sense. The forest is beautiful \*because\* of the diversity of trees; there is no need to deny that there is only one forest, and it's also not an incidental point. I've gathered that you're reacting to a kind of nondual-reductionism popular in "integral" circles, but I am not advocating this. Nonduality does not obliterate distinction; it justifies the possibility and veracity of distinction, revealing, among other things, that all distinctions are co-dependent. And that's why it's important to acknowledge. It goes deeper than a "shared humanity," and it goes deeper than "we are all made of stardust." It's the ultimate common ground that allows for radical differences without engendering radical separation--including, especially, differences of opinion.

The following passage from an earlier post of yours seems to be the "major point" you're referring to, I think. But my reply to that was a wholehearted agreement with the sentiment. I just take issue, for a variety of reasons, with the idea that there are, ontologically, "multiple" Absolutes or nondualities running around. Manmade interpretive differences epistemologically, pragmatically, socially, philosophically (including ontologically)? Of course. But in reality, as the Absolute noumenon-in-itself? No, because that don't make no sense. And this is relevant and not just hopelessly abstract because: I use this "one Absolute" as the basis on which to argue that common patterns found in supposed manmade differences \*can\*--at times, but not always--be evidence of deeper unity and philosophical agreement. Reactionism against perennialism does not by itself invalidate the core truth of the perennialist perspective. One can easily go hyper-relativist and find plenty of incredibly nuanced justification for denying universalism, but one has to be careful to not slide into the equally dangerous extreme of hyper-academic, hyper-relativist nitpickiness, like in Robert Forman's "The Problem of Pure Consciousness" book...which is a good and relevant example, because from the experiential "perspective" of the pure formless consciousness the book's essays explore, that book (or any book) makes no sense, as the distinctions do not compute. So it may be good for cultural or religious studies, but maybe not so much for phenomenological or ontological ones--let alone soteriological pursuits.

As always, I side in the end with Madhyamaka, the Middle Way between all extremes...

Again, you'd said, and I agree with:

"It’s true that there is arguably a foundationalist or perrenialist stance to Abhinava not unlike yours, one that is articulated in beautiful statements like the one you quoted, which refers to the path of no-means (anupaya), beyond sequence, and constituting an identity with all things as infinite consciousness; yet such proclamations, which are compatible with your universalist stance, are surrounded by all kinds of nonarbitrary distinctions, modes of practice, and a radically immanent articulation of manifestation and its panentheistic (feminine) nature, overflowing with power, intelligibility and intentionality in and as all things … this and other complicated things considered make his world feel and look like an apple to Shankara's pear, or Dharmakirti's lemon, and Abhiniva would most likely agree. In other words, while Abhinava says there is only one ultimate, that ultimate is the Trika-Shaiva ultimate saturated with a distinctive spiritual perspective, not the Buddhist, the Vedantin or Yogic perspective and path."

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[Bruce Alderman](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14) Thanks to everyone contributing to this discussion, which I'm quite enjoying. I've explored these themes -- the one and the many, universalism and pluralism, etc -- in relation to emergent integral thought in several recent writings. One "middle way" approach to question of the professed universality and apparent plurality of spiritual "absolutes" that has caught my attention recently is the family of perspectives being articulated by the so-called polydox theologians (for the most part, post-Whiteheadian thinkers). Drawing on Whitehead, Deleuze, and Nancy, among other post/modern thinkers, as well as Nagarjuna, Abhinavagupta, Bruno, and various Trinitarian or perichoretic theologians, they argue for a multiplistic conception of the absolute: divine multiplicity, the divine manifold, the "being singular plural" of Elohim, etc. The aim here is to allow for an integral plurality of absolutes that recognizes a shared common ground across and among traditions without reducing differences among various apprehensions of the absolute to merely (intervening and distorting) epistemological factors. In other words, and using Integral language, one could say that they aim to invoke and enact an integral ontological pluralist conception of the absolute (where integral suggests deep-relation and unity, and pluralism of course invokes multiplicity or irreducible differentiation -- the nondual Many-One).

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[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) Amen, Bruceji!

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[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) [Tom](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom), [Bruce](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14), you two live near each other. In fact, we were all at a party together about a year ago at [Wombacher](https://www.facebook.com/michael.wombacher.9)'s hosting for the celebration of the ICE. You two, you MANY, should get together, get messy, and get multidimensionally productive!

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[Bruce Alderman](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14) Thanks, Mark-ji -- nice idea!

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) Really appreciative of everyone's devotion to the "truth" here; [Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) 's view, I believe, draws on much more sophisticated epistemic tools, a more expanded awareness, and offers more degrees of freedom. The difficulties here stem from arguing out of a dualistic-dialectical metaphysics \*from that tradition (the limitations of language and using the framework of the perennial philosophy). [Bruce Alderman](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14) highlights those philosophers who are working to create new forms for addressing post-dialectical views.

Some of this can be teased out by making distinctions (as noted above) between self-state experiences and the ontological status assigned to them. There is also the phenomenon of "the ontological dimensioning of reality" which is a specific and important type of human experience. This category of experience happens at different stages and within different contexts. It is the phnomenon of something "in time" but experiencing it \*as if\* it were always already the case. And this occurs spontaneously at different times in our lives.

When, for example, we first reach the level of concrete operations -- this is when we "discover" object constancy -- you know, those great videos that show the transition when the toddler "knows" the bottle is still behind the column even when she can't see it -- the toddler screams in delight.

But the toddler doesn't experience this \*as if\* objects just gained their constancy. The toddler experience this \*as if\* objects always already had constancy -- she just didn't know it.

When we first become aware of the "subtle ground" of experience, we experience it the same way -- not \*as if\* we were witnessing the "coming into being" of something new, but \*as if\* the subtle ground of being were already always the case, we just had never experience it before.

The famous physicist Roger Penrose had this same experience with numbers. When he was in school learning calculus, he had this experience that numbers were always already (not constructions of human cognition) and that numbers precede the physical universe.

So when we have a non-ordinary experience of "the causal" (which is a category of experiences), we have this same experience of the ontological dimensioning of reality.

Now what I want you to see, is that these are all the same category of experience, with different content. There is, in truth, no end to the infinite series of "deeper and deeper ground" to the dialectical mind. There are two key features of the dialectical mind (Gebser's Mental structure of consciousness) -- 1) the movement toward higher synthetic reasoning which subsumes (sublates) what had previously been dualistic contraries and 2) the movement toward deeper expanding ground. These two moves are responsible for all the reasoning patterns of the Mental structure of consciousness.

When only the synthetic phase of the movement is recorded, we get a mono-valent transcendence. When only the grounding phase of the movement is recorded, we get a mono-valent immanence. Furthermore, the mono-valent transcendence is associated with the psychological apprehension of a future state (like an evolutionayr trajectory toward an omega point) and the mono-valent immanence is associated with the psychological prehension of the past (like satchiananda).

When recorded toegether, the temporal distance collapses, and we arrive at the ontological dimensioning of reality. THis is what Gebser refers to as the achronon -- the concretization of time-- the a- wareness that the temporal framework of our metaphysics is responsible for the way we make concrete-ness out of transitory phenomena -- how we subsitute permanence for change, and "ontologize" state experiences.

For the dialectically constructed mind, there is no end to the creative invention of higher states and their associated deeper ontological grounds. The only way "forward" is to adopt a whole new mind. A whole new architecture of reasoning. And this requires new langauge.

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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Bruce, it’d be great to meet up in person sometime, as Mark suggests. A few of us integral/evolutionary-minded types out here have a monthly philosophy group you may be interested in, usually convening in Oakland. Next one is tomorrow, so message me privately if you may be interested in joining that or a future date.

The approach you outlined sounds very promising indeed, and similar to something that Steve McIntosh is currently working on. I am all for finding new forms of Christianity, in particular, because I am an ardent believer in the global necessity of some form of Ken’s Conveyor Belt concept being actually implemented in our lifetimes. Any of the great traditions will benefit tremendously from any attempts to legitimize them in a modern/postmodern/integral world, without any of the “differences” among traditions or views suffering unwarranted and damaging reductionism (spiritualized or otherwise). But a key phrase you used is all I was advocating for: “apprehensions of the absolute.” “The” being the crucial term there. If you posit many Gods, you invalidate any Christian path that I’m aware of. If you posit one God, you find a core commonality pervading them all—and the capacity to find that core commonality is, in my opinion, one of the most important contributions of modern universalism, postmodern multiculturalism, and integral aperspectivalism.

Finding differences can be easy; mythic fundamentalisms have been excelling at that long before any Western 21st-century intellectuals came on the scene. The contemporary penchant for difference-over-similarity is, in my opinion, an important reactionary dialectic in response to the perceived abuses of an overreaching modernism (i.e., early Deficient Mental), but it runs the risk, especially in discussions of “the absolute,” of becoming a hyper-relativism that invalidates the very propositions of the traditions it is attempting to legitimize (namely, those progressive traditions that say “there is only one absolute, known by many names”). That’s all I’ve been trying to say here...

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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Bonnitta, thank you for commenting here and issuing an all-out Gebserian reframing. I largely agree with your perspective, as best as I understand it, and I also acknowledged here the limitations of my (and our) Mental dialectics when attempting to speak of an absolute, invoking Zen and Nagarjuna for philosophical backup. All Mental posturing fails before Reality, no matter how many words or ideas (or artwork, or music, or dance, or gardening, or other “ways of knowing”) one throws at it. Even a hundred million years of evolutionary progress (or mutations) from now, I doubt that Hyper-Supermental Uber-Omni-Aperspectival “re-presentation” will still not fully encompass simple presentation, or the unfathomable Presence of reality as it is, because all representations will always still be parts of that infinite Whole, or waves of that boundless Sea, even as they help to express its nature with ever-more goodness, truth, and beauty.

In terms of states (and stages) revealing and then reifying ontological structures, it’s true, but I wasn’t positing the absolute as a “state” or something revealed by a state. States and their revelations come and go in space and in time. This “state” interpretation of spiritual enlightenment is a Wilberianism and Westernism that I take issue with, as certain mystical traditions, such as the ones I am most schooled in, Soto Zen and Advaita Vedanta, argue strongly \*against\* such interpretations of the absolute and its human apprehension (enlightenment, moksha). That’s why Zen asks whether the dog has Buddha-nature or not. Humans may be able to apprehend the truth, which can be called enlightenment, but is the truth really nonexistent for beings that haven’t yet apprehended it? Is the bottle really not there when the toddler doesn’t perceive it? If a tree falls in a forest…

This is how Mental gymnasts make fools of themselves in the eyes of God. Integral gymnasts make fewer category errors and put on a good show, but still fall short of a perfect 10. Mythic gymnasts, on the other hand, tend to at least perform with appropriate reverence.

Plus, an interdependent process perspective, such as that articulated by Gebser in his writings on aperspectivalism (where both epistemic and ontic structures are \*understood\* to always be in a state of mutually co-arising temporal transition), is, in my opinion, the strongest rational (or Efficient Mental) argument that can be posited for the existence of the absolute as the very \*fact\* or \*process\* of change and relative relation-ing itself. It is sunyata, the emptiness of static and independent forms, and emptiness cannot be captured in time-bound, space-bound, or dialectical ways of knowing—and has nothing more to do with “deeper-than-deep” future-unfolded mystical states than it does ordinary states of being, even though altered states can indeed help to disclose the impermanence and transitory nature of conditioned structures (such as what can be revealed by a tab of LSD, or nirvikalpa samadhi). So, yes, new language is needed. Or, perhaps, all language fails. Or maybe old language is needed…as certain Sanskrit terms, I believe (Mark would have more insight into this), already round out English’s built-in oppositional and transactional dialectics…a handy resolver-of-black-vs-white-paradox that Nagarjuna made liberal use of in developing the Buddhist Madhyamaka.

Again, I am fully sympathetic with an ontologically pluralist and epistemologically developmentalist view, such as Gebser’s or, to a lesser extent, Wilber’s. And I agree with everything Mark has said about the importance of honoring the very real differences of all traditions, which expand outward, in human terms, in every imaginable and significant way, particularly when viewed through an “integral” lens, with no end of potential height and depth in sight in a presumably infinite Kosmos. I am merely suggesting that even the Deficient Mental’s abstract universalizing capacity isn’t entirely useless—and may actually play a crucial role in important geopolitical and ethical ways as humanity, and the great religious traditions in particular, strive to better understand one another.

Ignoring core common truths and universals runs the risk of legitimizing mythic fundamentalism (overly honoring the truth-claims of many “one true ways”), which seems ethically dumb at this point in time…something fine for Ivory Tower (or Facebook) academia, but not so much for enacting real multicultural sympathetic understanding in the real world. If the Christian God and the Muslim God cannot be seen to be two different ways of understanding a singular Divinity, the leap to a higher transmodernism or honoring-the-Spiral-ism (as Don Beck might say) seems impossible. I personally \*prefer\* to engage in exploring religious diversity over “interfaith” universalism, but I understand the developmental importance and usefulness of that modern/postmodern approach to reconciling differences.

On a related note, these Gebserian/Wilberian/Gravesian developmental schemas always run the risk of privileging the “top” levels of those hierarchies/holarchies, which is common in “evolutionary” and “integral” arenas (I speak from ample firsthand more evolutionary-than-thou experience) but I don’t think is in the aperspectival, integrating-all-perspectives spirit that Gebser intended. They also risk privileging Western (white masculine, phallogocentric) perspectives on Eastern traditions, cultures, and perspectives in ways that may be not only inappropriate but just plain wrong (as Rajiv Malhotra argues in books such as “Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism,” which I’ve just started reading). Western Mental and Eastern Mental might not be sequential or even corollary “stages,” with the idea of “evolutionary history” (or the "mutational record"?) being itself an act of Mental over-universalizing, even as it tries to point out the potential pitfalls of such linear trajectory-making (and make no mistake, Archaic-Magic-Mythic-Mental-Integral is a temporal-linear sequence applied universally, or at least to all humans). So using developmental theory to counter a universalist argument seems iffy. A toddler two thousand years ago would probably not squeal with delight at the apprehension of a hidden bottle if they didn’t know what a bottle was; the same deep neuro-cognitive structures may have been there, but the surface details vary dramatically and change over time, and where to draw the relative/universal line can be tricky. But I generally agree with everything you laid out nonetheless and agree that it’s important, because the universal I’m speaking about (the absolute) is not merely one among many of the developmentally disclosed ontological dimensions you referred to, but the very real (unqualifiably, im-mediately, tacitly real) nature, substance, suchness, or substratum of all ontologies and epistemologies and developmental stages, axiomatically. Not because I say so through adamantly asserted Mental concepts (though I’ve been doing more than my fair share of that), but because reality (or the absolute, or the infinite) is not a “thing” to be posited or denied—and yet people still deny it, so I posit it, for dialectical fun. Hence, Dogen (when not writing his 1000-page philosophical tomes):

“Awakened, the one great truth:
Black rain on the temple roof.”

Outside my window, the leaves on the lemon tree sway in the cool afternoon breeze, as I end my latest Mental-gibberish rant and savor the Mythic mystery of the Lord’s benevolent miracles, counting Facebook and our ability to have discussions (and monologues!) like these among them.

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[David Marshall](https://www.facebook.com/david.marshall.10) Only deep paradox will answer this question in a satisfying way. If we land on either side of the paradox (emphasizing universality over relativity or vice versa), I think we will be missing some important truths. I know it's fashionable to regard Wilber as a "perennialist," but the fair and accurate interpretation is that his view is paradoxical. For example:

"The main argument between postmodern and modern/premodern epistemologies concerns whether the weight of truth is to be assigned to relativity or universality -- or, which amounts to the same thing, whether interpretations or facts are most fundamental. The very form of that argument itself, however, demonstrates that it has taken place almost entirely within a first-tier paradigm (i.e. first-tier injunction data machine) -- the argument has been between blue fundamentals, orange universals, and green pluralisms, with one of them taken to be true and the others false. A second-tier paradigm discloses, on the other hand, a more fruitful way to move forward by highlighting the partial truths in all of those claims. . . . In doing so, we will see that the argument is not between facts and interpretations, but instead involves understanding how both facts and interpretations are integral dimensions of this and every moment." (Excerpt A, p. 66-7).

So unless we are going to lurch all the way to the relativity side of the paradox, we need to integrate some measure of modernist universals. I don't see how a bare-bones "unity" or "nonduality" should be that controversial, if integrated paradoxically with all those particulars. There is strong cross-cultural evidence for this, as Tom has suggested. The alternative would be a fundamentally fragmented Kosmos or one superficially unified with some concept like "everything is relative" or "the only absolute is that there's no absolute" or Indra's Net.

This isn't to say that every path is the same or necessarily leads to the same goal as in the perennialist narrative. As Aurobindo (another who has been mistakenly put in the perennialist camp, including by Wilber to some degree) put it:

"In the spiritual domain the essence is always one, but there is yet an infinite variety and, at any rate in the integral Yoga, the rigidity of a strict and precise mental rule is seldom applicable; for, even when they walk in the same direction, no two natures proceed on exactly the same lines, in the same series of steps or with quite identical stages of their progress." (Synthesis of Yoga, p. 145)

It's just a bare-bones universality, nothing more. This is not something that postmodern philosophy has disproven in any way, as Tom pointed out and Mark agreed to, at least to a degree. This is a point Wilber made in Sex, Ecology, Spirituality:

"We can translate languages because, even if all contexts are situated, a great number of contexts are similarly situated across cultures. 'Context' does not automatically mean 'relative' or 'incommensurable.' It often means common: hence the existence of real transcendental signifieds. Even Derrida concedes this elemental fact. . . .

"Those not-merely-arbitrary worldspaces anchor the validity claims of any communicative act, and prevent contexts from spinning out of control endlessly . . . and meaninglessly. And if these extralinguistic or transcendent (or transcendental signifiers) factors function even in common everyday communication and everyday experience (as Habermas maintains and Derrida concedes), then we transpersonalists don't have to defend mysticism as being somehow exceptional and in need of any special defense in this regard." (SES, pp. 629-30)

Some things actually translate perfectly from one culture to the next. Consider the Olympic games. In many events, we will see athletes who don't share a common language. Some of the athletes are so young that they probably haven't begun to study another language. Yet there is 100% agreement on the rules of the game. They may disagree about what the rules should be (as the Olympic rules for their event might differ from other rules); they might disagree on judgment calls by the referees; they may have very different ways of interpreting the meaning of the games or winning and losing. But they are in 100% agreement about the rules, as long as they have been taught properly and learned well.

So in principle the idea of common contexts or a universal substratum among different cultures is not inherently problematic. Whether it is really true is another story, but one, again, that has strong cross-cultural evidence to back it up (in a modest, bare-bones way).

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[David Marshall](https://www.facebook.com/david.marshall.10) The common contexts are developmentally common, but some of the referents subsist in lower levels, other species, etc. For example, the squirrel may not know he depends on atoms for his gathering, but nevertheless he does. So may be the case with nonduality, even if sectarians or postmoderns disagree.

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[Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) Agreed! Just be careful, David. Bonnitta threw down the Gebser gauntlet, calling into question the very structure of such reasoning and the spatial/objective facts it discloses (like your "squirrels" and "atoms" and my "absolute"). Dualistic dialectics can revolve on themselves endlessly, while still operating only within the Mental sphere, which is why Gebser liked Zen koans and saw such trans-dialectical paradigms as evidence of his "Integral" emergence. In other words, once the limits of Mental language and reasoning have been reached (or declared in a FB discussion), we need to either switch to a verb-heavy, process-oriented, enlightening fusioning of, say, German and Sanskrit (now there's an idea), operating in the ever-expanding framework of a Dynamic Intuitive Aperspectival Methodological Pluralism (DIAMP), or...contemplate the Buddha's Flower Sermon in humbled silence, as Wittgenstein essentially said in the Tractatus. I vote for the latter, for cognitive dialectics are indeed endless.

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[David Marshall](https://www.facebook.com/david.marshall.10) Oh, I agree, Tom. We won't ultimately find greater depth in philosophy of any kind, though we should continue to refine our conceptual views since they will always have an impact on the unfolding. I don't think we avoid dualisms in process-oriented philosophy or language, though, because objects are implied in a process-oriented view. It's kind of like an attempt to realize nonduality through concepts, like emptiness logic.

But I think transcendentally there is more depth in what we might metaphorically call a "process" view. That is, there is less reification of self, other, and Absolute at our own unique versions of Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, and Overmind, so those realizations are better described metaphorically as a process inclusive of object-perspectives rather than the static-Now, Being/Nonbeing metaphors of "nonduality" or "emptiness."

But we have to differentiate that "process" metaphor for vertical realizations of deeper subtle energies/cognitions from process philosophy. Process, objects, and interpretations are snapshots we could take at many levels (alone or together). And then Koans would fall under the rubric of spiritual injunctions, whether horizontal or vertical.

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[John O'neill](https://www.facebook.com/john.oneill.5851) I'm loving this conversation. Just a little quote to add, from Raimon Panikkar's essay - " the Invisible Harmony, A Universal Theory of Religion or a Cosmic Confidence in Reality" in which he comes down in favour of the latter:
"no need for me to understand what the animist or the Hindu or the Christian ultimately mean when they voice their respective worldviews. We may somewhat enjoy the beauty of the symphony, the inexplicable concord out of so many dissenting voices.Pluralism tells here that one should not assume for oneself ( person or culture) the role of being the conductor of the human and much less of the cosmic orchestra. It is enough with the music (divine), the musicians ( the human) , and their instruments ( the cosmos). Let us play by ear!"

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[John O'neill](https://www.facebook.com/john.oneill.5851) This conversation could be heard as part of the Kosmic jam session!

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[Bruce Alderman](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14) Here's a long, but hopefully relevant and engaging, quote from the emerging Polydox / process-pluralist tradition: "The spiritual impulse to become multiplicities, then, arises from a transformation of oneness-into-manyness. Its conviviality becomes possible when we let go of any presupposed static and world-capturing sacred totality and its corresponding isolating contextualism of a oneness-without-manyness. In this transformation, we activate the enfolded multiverse that always surpasses itself, that unfolds differences in becoming and asks us always to enfold its community anew. Within and between Wisdom traditions, we risk the adventure of seeking the sacred interactvity in, between, across, and beyond those very traditions. But in invoking process folds of the divine, or of the sacred in multiplicity, we do not envision yet another -- a "better" -- religion. In the light of the war-ridden exclusivities of simple identities that create sibling rivalries between the self-designated "great world religions" and the primordial ways not even recognized as religions, the appeal to become multiplicities within diversity and entanglement takes on an incarnate urgency.

As we envision this embodiment of relational and differential multiplcity, we affirm also that the sacred or divine in multiplicity can never be reduced to only one kind of experience and understanding. This is not just a matter of ecumenical generosity. Rather we may understand the sacred or divine in the Wisdom traditions to reveal itself in an irreducible polydoxy. Because it is the very sacred or divine activity of enfolding, this multiplicity will allow us to discern it not only in multiplicity, but also as sacred or divine multiplicity. With Whitehead, we suggest that, "the actuality of God must also be understood as a multiplicity of components in the process of creation." And with Deleuze, as he muses on Whitehead, we affirm that the sacred interactivity is not that of "being a Being," but that which "becomes Process." Desiring this divine in multiplicity inherently directs our pluralistic gaze toward a trust no longer driven by fear of becoming, difference, and flux, but filled with anticipation of the mutual embodiment, of the inter-carnation, of encounters, conjunctions, and interferences of Wisdoms. Whether we evoke the plurisingularity of Elohim or the manyess-in-oneness of the Christian Trinity or the sacred intertwining of samsara and nirvana in Buddhist "co-origination" (pratitya-samutpada) or th complexity of the trickster of native religions, we prehend the sacred folds of multiplicity. "S/He/It," we might say, not only insists on multiplicity but becomes as its very interactivity -- not as the one, not as the many, but as the sacred or divine (in) multiplcity...

Multiplicity as mutual interdependence, as articulated in the (Buddhist0 upaya, resonates with Whitehead's conviction that any conceptualization of "ultimate realities" demands a creative process of healing by which it "converts the opposition into a contrast." Multiplicity as mutual interdependence of part and part is clearly reflected in Whitehead's profound contention that every happening (as it gathers itself from its relations) "repeats in microcosm what the universe is in macrocosm" such that it, at the same time, "pervades the whole world." Multiplicity as mutual interdependence of part and whole reflects Whitehead's contention that, since there is no absolute context, there are no absolutely separated contexts either. Hence, the very environment of a polydox articulation of the sacred or divine (in) multiplicity must be polyphonic in nature, in order to be healing from occupations and separations. The world as a "whole," as Whithead says, "is a multiplicity." It is, in other words, a "community of actual things" in "an incompletion in process of production," a process that is healing because in it "no two actualities can be torn apart: each is all in all." Such a relational complex meets the heart of the healing process of multiplicity: Polydoxy demands polyphilia and polyphilia releases polydoxy...

As this healing mutuality releases the sacred or divine into the finite processes of becoming, the upaya of the infinitely many buddhas reveal only one truth: Their infinite multiplicity can become healing only when they skillfully direct us toward a polyphonic harmonics of the mutual embodiment of the sacred or divine with and within multiplicity. And enfolding the multiplicity of Wisdom traditions in their respective mystery, we may be surprised by the "one" truth of the Lotus Sutra -- the healing character of the manifold...

The process pluralism we suggest here is an enfolding and unfolding pluralism, a relational and differential pluralism in a process of ever-new constellations of complication and uncertainty -- an uncertainty that is complex because it names a mystery that cannot detect the sacred without an inherent love for the manifold in which it is enfolded. If this process pluralism is not to devolve into the piracy of a mere raid on whatever exotic differences globalization has not yet exhausted, then the emerging complexity remains, always, a work of self-critique -- always a suspension of our presumptions that serves as a constraint on a pluralism that intends to be a healing event. Only in this manner does the value of multiplicity activate an ethics and spirituality of radical interdependence." (Keller and Faber, Polyphilic Pluralism, 2014)

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[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) Bonnitta, you’re hitting something on the head. One of my mentors used to speak of logocentrism as a kind of enduring linguistic monarch of history, enabling the blinding and hegemonic forces of globalization, oppression, colonialism, smearing of indigenous wisdoms, patriarchy, etc., not unlike your pointing to the limitations and issues of dialectical language. You speak of a new way of languaging, he speaks of new ways of being; if the former is injunctive yet processual it could throw light on the latter, and we may begin seeing a new dawn. I know with your work on pedagogy you’re moving in that direction. Bravo!

Tom, categorically speaking, I’d say that what Bruce brought to attention (in his first post – I wrote this after his second) was a good way of promoting his own camp (just kidding!), no, really, what he brings to attention does justice to the distinction of the More and the real concerns of perrenialism I’ve been emphasizing here. However, putting into concrete practice one’s position in such a polydox landscape is nothing I’ve witnessed as yet, particularly given the hyper-abstract propositional form of such a philosophical theological orientation (a point I’ve complained about in many a conversation with Bruce). Bruce, how concretely enactive are these folks of the polycamp, in your view?

As far as the Ultimate as encompassing the More and its plurisingular horizon and as somehow invaluable for our growth and goodness, well, for over a decade I would have identified with you almost word-for-word, Tom. While you’ve clearly been grilling on these matters in deep and subtle ways and while you bring a flavor of sophistication and sensitivity that's made this thread very productive, I've become much more cautious and reserved these days, and your words here only strengthen my stance (particularly in light of ethical, political and developmental/pedagogical considerations), which I hope I can communicate with some measure of clarity and impact below.

When you write: “All Mental posturing fails before Reality, no matter how many words or ideas (or artwork, or music, or dance, or gardening, or other “ways of knowing”) one throws at it. Even a hundred million years of evolutionary progress (or mutations) from now, I doubt that Hyper-Supermental Uber-Omni-Aperspectival “re-presentation” will still not fully encompass simple presentation, or the unfathomable Presence of reality as it is, because all representations will always still be parts of that infinite Whole, or waves of that boundless Sea, even as they help to express its nature with ever-more goodness, truth, and beauty.” This is a solid and well expressed point, but it’s no less paradigmatic of a perrenialist stance (one that is overdetermined in the crowds we’re familiar with), and, as I see it, this is a moot and almost irrelevant point with respect to ethical (in terms of politics, pedagogy and developmental theories) considerations and it's a sort of truism with respect to inquiries related to the plurisingular More apropos the polycamps and our discussion above.

Again, the problem is not so much in affirming that there's an ineffable and pervasive dimension that somehow intimately connects and makes possible all differences, but in communicating and valorizing such an Ultimate on normative and ethical grounds is a real problem to me; knowing what we know of politics, charisma, power, utopianism, idealism and history—I find any type of proclamation of an Absolute troubling when championed as a orienting basis or guideline for ethical and inter-religious discourse (please correct me if I'm misreading you here). Don’t get me wrong. Such proclamations, of which you are an exemplary vehicle, is absolutely fine and beautiful and perhaps very liberating in certain settings, and for private interior realizations, and for poetic and purely theological elucidations and debates. But recently this post has leaked more into political and pedagogical domains, which serves, incidentally, as a concrete example of why the style and normative dimensions of your approach to an Absolute are so problematic.

On a somewhat related point, you say in response to Bonnitta: “This “state” interpretation of spiritual enlightenment is a Wilberianism and Westernism that I take issue with, as certain mystical traditions, such as the ones I am most schooled in, Soto Zen and Advaita Vedanta, argue strongly \*against\* such interpretations of the absolute and its human apprehension (enlightenment, moksha).”

(This is ironic given the so called Advaita position of ac who was a masterful inducer of states, a pragmatic but no less utopian futurist, and an extreme (possibly abusive) advocate of formal, strenuous, and prolonged sitting (which definitely took/continues to take people into multiple depths of what we call the causal. I’m just not sure how you’re holding your view all together, Tom

Wilber - in theory - articulates just this unspeakable unqualified absolute that neither comes nor goes and that has no reliance whatsoever on a state or altered experience (no matter how profound or infinite-in-feeling it may be through the psycho-physical system). So, in a sense I think you’re misrepresenting him here. What he also does, however, is emphasize (or suggest) the states of subtle and causal awareness are somehow intricately related to the nondual (I say ‘somehow’ because books like SES compared to Integral Spirituality show a different view of states, which then has implications for his treatment of the nondual), and, more importantly, the former end up being associated with the latter in practice, though in theory the latter is beyond all states. In other words, he does something very similar to what you are doing! Positing an Absolute as if it were a state, while paradoxically and reflexively negating it in virtue of saying it’s not a state, but the all and none, the middle way, the paradox of being and becoming, and neither. David Marshal is indeed right that this is about deep paradox. And I get your subtly, and I respect it a la the logic of folks like Nigarjuna, but beyond leading to an intangible (though invaluable) alleged freedom from suffering, clarity of seeing, peace, etc, what I’m arguing here is that this whole consideration is barely relevant or productive to the multiplex grave situation we’re in – navigating the diaphanous borders of differences of all kinds - and applying a critical and enlightening dimension of the spiritual or religious to the contemporary milieu we're mired in, like it or not. We cannot separate the milk (that is, some stainless ineffable purely inwardly realization or shikantazu that paradoxically encompasses and saturates all things) from the water (the multidimensional, flesh-bound and politically thick aspects of being in existence), especially when we are conversing on complex public threads like this. I believe Bonnitta was presuming this.
Furthermore, given the inevitable association/comingling of some ineffable inward realization with lived reality/states/dimensions of being in the world, you yourself, if my assessment is correct, demonstrate a strong iteration of the orientation in the past, that is, that’s your flavor of embodiment (in practice), what Bonnitta calls a disposition “\*as if\* the subtle ground of being were already always the case, (we just had never experience it before)”, and this leads to “the mono-valent immanence (which) is associated with the psychological prehension of the past (like satchiananda)” or in your case the ineffable Middle way that’s all and nothing simultaneously.

It’s true that you’re taking a position that refutes satchitananda (as does Shankara, in that he radically includes satchitananda, but also argues that the Brahman is unqualified), nevertheless, your continual deference to sages of the past (not to teachers in the present), your consistent communicative reminders of the always already unqualified ground that’s neither this nor that, all demonstrate – with or without your consent - a ‘mono-valent’ position, which is thereby tied up with and enabling (not bringing "degrees of freedom" in Bonnitta's words) the state/dimension/dialectic dilemma. Therefore, your very way of communicating itself, that is, the form and transmission of it is enabling the dialectic whereby the realization of what you call the absolute, no matter how sophisticated and qualified and Madhyamika-like, leads to strong tendencies of polarization. For example, many people who agree with your view, and wonder why I'm fussing so much, are probably very perrenialist in terms of their values, practices, and inner spiritual compass or access to realization; this a beautiful and extraordinary position, but in terms of its political and ethical ramifications, I feel its more true (in the here and now) to that very realization to be quiet or imbibing it tacitly (humbly?), and loud with respect to the grave and sobering concerns present in the thick differences and predicaments of our world, in which mystic poems are only just that.

The bind of language, as you point out, is to some extent inevitable in any domain of communication. But the central status of the Absolute in your discourse—that is, what all else seems to orbit around—tends to reinforce a dialectical communication that staunchly supports a neo-perrenialist way of communicating, namely, the “we are all one, everything is essentially united in an ineffable always existing ground” langauging, whose ramifications do just the opposite (by virtue of the dialectic) and, moreover, to return to my earlier statements, such discourse is naïve in light of our shared endeavors to build a robust ethics, politics, and pluralistically informed modes of pedagogy that can really foster growth, healing and freedom from the ground up.

Speaking of which, you write: “Finding differences can be easy; mythic fundamentalisms have been excelling at that long before any Western 21st-century intellectuals came on the scene. The contemporary penchant for difference-over-similarity is, in my opinion, an important reactionary dialectic in response to the perceived abuses of an overreaching modernism (i.e., early Deficient Mental), but it runs the risk, especially in discussions of “the absolute,” of becoming a hyper-relativism that invalidates the very propositions of the traditions it is attempting to legitimize (namely, those progressive traditions that say “there is only one absolute, known by many names”). That’s all I’ve been trying to say here...”

I’m really not feeling you here. The whole cliché (yes, by now, I’d call it that) of the complaint of “hyper-relativism” is minimally important to building a robust ethical and political understanding along with processual injunctions that become exemplars moving forward, or expanding across our divides, ruptures and incommensurate lifeworlds. Hyper-relativism is a major issue in terms of leadership, globalization, economics, and so forth, but not so when it comes to spiritual realization. Communication of your kind (especially the more recent exchange) above lends itself to a conflation of (a naïve) politics with a normative presupposition of development (by normative I mean ethically and politically evocative), on the one hand, and a valorization of monistic universalist proclamations as a justification, on the other.

Consider, for instance, the following hypothetical scenario: we’ve decided we’re going to tell religious fundamentalists or some indigenous community (or a dysfunctional and depressed family) that we are all united in a deathless ground. Perhaps we’ll even bestow (if that were possible) some experience of that (or its distant causal-state ancestors). Would we not be better off if we had enough resources to take them to the moon, providing on the journey a beautiful educational experience regarding the oneness of the planet and humanity on materialist and humanist grounds, as they beheld the breathtaking beauty of one earth, one people? Or, we could bring in an entourage of compassionate and depoliticized therapeutically oriented educators, who could provide resources (gifts) and extensive collective and individual efforts to help these local communities re-grow on their own terms and thus perhaps feel connection and trust in the support of the larger human community. (Of course, this is a caricature of what any particular situation would entail, and issues of enforcement, crime, control, and intervention are wholly other matters, but I simply want to underscore that in many circumstances there are really important ways forward that need not have anything to do with some apprehension of oneness or its poetic hymns or perrenial proclamation; even if empathy and compassion arise from some innate sense of unity, it need not, and in my opinion, ought not be emphasized explicitly.) My conclusion, then, is that expressing the ineffable absolute as common ground is for poetry, certain kinds of philosophical theology, and espousals of self-transformation among certain communities and individuals.

You may respond that altruism, skillful compassionate action, pluralistically informed pedagogy and activism, etc., may be motivated themselves by a fundamental intuition of unity in the interior consciousness of the person. I'd like to agree, but, pause and think about this: even if it were so, such an ontological ground (or especially proclamations related to it) matter way less, if at all, than the demonstration of altruism, the tangible making of education available to the underprivileged, the allocation of resources for the benefit of the suffering and oppressed others, and so forth. The point is that humanism and pluralism PROPERLY included can go a very very very long way in actually triumphing against the 'powers that be', the forces of corruption and greed, and so forth (It was ac’s most tremendous flaw, I believe, to virtually despise and radically demean so-called green, and the result is that many folks under his influence for decades demonstrate symptoms of fundamental misunderstanding and simplicity around what it morally takes to engage successfully and compassionately in a pluralistic setting in conjunction with some kind of spiritual praxis, a process that is so far from realized that your integral cliché talk about cultural or hyper-relativism loses gravitas).

Moreover, to champion an Absolute- in the current milieu - often comes off as misleading or even naïve with respect to the many case studies of current nondual spiritual teachers being a failure on public, interpersonal and especially moral grounds. All this is not about nit picky academic discourse. It’s about conducting a thorough and pragmatic investigation, an all around scrutiny of characters and conditions, leadership, lessons learned, etc, and adjudicating what the actual benefits of folks claiming to realize and valorizing an Ultimate are, and vise versa. The recent historical record of nondual realizers potentially making for good moral and spiritual leaders doesn't look so good. At all. One exception to this would be the Dali Lama. But, really, is he paradigmatic of the kind of liberated mystics of the past immersed in the ground of being and proclaiming the indispensable gift of such realization you've quoted and deferred to here? Is his realization of an absolute a primary or even explicit reason by which his magnanimity is manifest? Actually, he's probably way more interested in cognitive science than espousing an absolute ontological dimension of unity. Or, consider Gandhi, who is probably a way better example? All have issues (that is, the Dali Lama is by no means perfect), but the public impact of such figures in tandem with the fact of their quiet spiritual commitments is very telling … In the contemporary landscape, we don’t just have problems but crises with respect to alleged realizers of the Ultimate, which you and I are all too familiar with. I’m talking about the last 50 years in the West. And turning to earlier times and other text traditions that espouse different compelling versions of an absolute doesn’t help us much here, as we’re the ones endeavoring to enact realization in the here and now, not then or there.

Anyway, when it comes to a publically informed, politically sober and morally concerned consideration of leadership, charisma, the fate of our own species, and re-enchanting the world with devotion to the Good and spiritual attitudes and practices, I don’t see your line of communication and transmission helping too much. Of course, you and I and a mystic-philosopher club discussing these matters over coffee and meditation experiments is a whole different possibility space!! Deeply appreciative of this thread and your voice, Tom!

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) Here's a short but hopefully useful analogy about being able to see what the dialectical mind is doing, when trying to relate to ultimate categories. I am thinking of those cool optical illusions that don't look like anything at first, but when you relax your eyes they become 3 dimensional panoramas. The effect is achieved by painting two exact patterns on both sides of the picture. When we relax our eyes, the brain picks up that there are two exact replicas entering each eye, but because the eyes are out of focus, then either 1) there are two exact copies of something (both figure and abstract ground pattern) on either side of me (one on the left and one on the right) or 2) there is one thing (figure and ground) and they are separated by a spatial distance. Because it is highly unlikely in embodied experience to interact with two exact copies of something, the brain "decides" it is confronted with the latter case -- a 3 dimensional arena.

Now this is exactly what happens in conceptual space. The mind is confronted with two ultimate opposites (many/one ; part/whole; immanence/ transcendenc; emptiness/form) -- and the sophisticated mind "relaxes" into paradoxical unfocus -- trying to solve them into something that is not synthesized into itself one part of a dialectic. But the conceptual faculty doesn't know how to do this, because the conceptual faculty \*is the process of separation\* -- it's what the dialectical mind does, just like what the eyes do is take in images.

So the "brain" decides that yes, they are the same thing (the non dual) but immediately separates them through the concept of time (ultimate ground = ultimate figure) and this is where you get the "ontological now" or the "always already.

So the brain imputes the temporal distance, to resolve the "pre-separated" identity of opposites in the same way that the brain imputes the spatial distance to resolve the "pre-separated" identities of images.

Let me state this again, tho. This is a characteristic feature of a certain type of mind -- the dialectic/dualistic mind that emerged some 2000 years ago.

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) what [Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) wrote reminded me of something I read that made an impression : "interpreting the other either as same (identity) or different, is reductive, and violates the conditions of the I-Thou encounter (true participation).

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[John O'neill](https://www.facebook.com/john.oneill.5851) I had just been reading [Jeff Salzman](https://www.facebook.com/jdsalzman)'s description of his conversation with you, Victor, which sounds timely and fascinating.

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[John O'neill](https://www.facebook.com/john.oneill.5851) Good to see you on this thread.

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[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) It's not enough merely to 'subscribe', Victor! :O)

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) I want to talk some more about the contribution the mind (intellect) has in the state experience or the embodied realization of non-dual, and why therefore any such experience or realization is not an "ultimate" category of reality, but part of a rolling transformation in phenomenal experience.

I will again use an analogy.

Imagine having a cast on your arm for years and years. So long that you forgot about it, and the body has completely adapted to it. Obviously the body has to add effort into carrying the weight of the cast, but this effort is so ordinary, it has become unconscious. You don't notice. You never notice.

Then one day the cast falls off! And the arm starts to rise automatically, like it is weightless! The body-organism experiences this as a great liberation. There is free energy released, and this is tremendously liberating. One might say that you have discovered the natural state of the arm. It is basically a result of subtracting something.

The important thing, tho, is to notice that \*without the prior state of having a cast on\*, there could be no liberating experience of taking the cast off. So this experience of "a natural state" actually has a context embedded in a conditioned state. The natural state cannot be an ultimate state, because it is embedded inside a conditioned context.

So the same-- exactly the same, actually -- with the nondual experience/realization. The dialectic mind (intellect) organizes experience (phenomena) by compartmentalizing and fragmenting. This requires effort. It is the working-capacity of the Mental structure of consciousness to separate. Plato discovered this kind of intellectual "work" and called it diaresis (which means separation).

But you see, when the intellect works in this way, we don't feel the effort -- it arises effortlessly. We are organizing phenomena into categories, and those categories are basically derived from the primary metaphysical contraries (one/many and interior/exterior). Someone like Wilber comes along and mistakes them for deep ontological structures, because he cannot see the contribution that a particular type of intellect (the kind we have that Gebser called Mental structure of consciousness) makes to the experience of all phenomena -- even the nondual.

How does the dialectical mind contribute to the nondual? The same way that the cast contributed to the experience of the \*liberation from the cast\*. If our experience were not always already conditioned by the dialectic-dualistic intellect, then we could never have the liberating experience when the intellect is released.

Therefore, since the nondual experience/realization is dependent upon the prior experience that is conditioned by a certain type of intellect, it cannot be an ultimate or absolute "natural state" of being, as it itself is embedded in a conditioned context.

You will find that all absolutes are similarly embedded in relative context -- Hartshorne's rigorous metaphysics shows us how/why. He identifies all the categories of the dialectical intellect as r terms (relatives) or a-terms (absolutes). He inegrates C.S Pierce's notion of first, seconds and thirds, by demonstrating that all thirds are actually synthetic firsts (thereby showing the iterative and non-establishing nature of dialectical reasoning). However, although all a-terms are found to be embedded in r-terms, the opposite is not true. ANd when we envision r-terms as arising \*from\* a terms (such as form arising from emptiness) we are misplacing concreteness, just as we are misplacing conreteness when we imagine the experience of the always already is the same type of experience as achieving concrete operations, just because both experiences come with this aspect of "the ontological dimensioning of reality". As I explained before, we impute the temporal framework to resolve the intellectual aporia.

Finally, I want to speak of another tendency that gets in the way of disembedding from the limiting metaphysical architecture of the dialectical -dualistic mind. This is the tendency for westerners to impute a christian-style eschatology onto state experiences, and imagine them somehow to ascend "closer to god" such that the nondual (state/experience/realization) is sublty held in a mythic context as the sacred godhead. This is highly problematic. In his book "Sleeping, Dreaming, Dying" the Dalai Lama specifically refutes even the Yogacara's positing an extremely subtle ground consciousness, which means the Dalai Lama is actually more modern than the average integral thinker.

Thanks for the space to speak here.

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[Jean Trudel](https://www.facebook.com/jean.trudel.18) [Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) in 2006 I made this table to make sense of what I was seeing the first time I read Pierce. Would you find this useful to see what you're pointing at?

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) This notion of a-terms and r-terms gives us insight into the hidden metaphysics of the Mental structure of consciousness. The kind of east-west dialogue that has enrichened so much of our understanding by shifting eastern and western perspectives, fails to deconstruct the metaphysical view, because all the indo-european language families have cultivated the Mental structure of consciousness. We can see this structure of consciousness begin in the axial age and spread via the great silk trade routes from the mediterranean and indian oceans up through asia, and japan. By the time WWI rolls around, we have the Kyoto school reading Hegel!

So Hartshorne shows us that the metaphysical foundation of all the categories of rational mind are either r-terms or a-terms. Hegel thought that all a- terms sublated (transcended and included) all r-terms, and this bias is carried over into conventional abstract thinking today. Hartshorne proves that this sublation is only a consequence of the reasoning method, and has no correspondence to reality.

So for example, "red" is an a-term. We can use abstract set theory to imagine that "red" transcends and includes all its members (everything that is red). Because in this imagination, red subsumes (sublates or includes) all the members, it is envisioned as being a higher order. We then go on to misplace concreteness for the abstract term "red". And imagine, because the term sublates the members (set theory construction) then somehow the members "arise from" or "belong inside" the a-term "red."

However, if we want our abstract categories to say something about the world, we see something entirely different. I cannot point to any existing "thing" that is pure red, pure absolute redness. I can only point to members, which are red. SO from the multiplicity of red members, I (my intellect) abstracts the conceptual category "red". But I can only find "redness" inside actual members, I cannot find redness itself.

SO let's take this to look at emptiness and form. Wilber mistakes Nargarguna as saying that "form is emptiness, emptiness is form". Actually this is one of those tragedies in history when the contribution of the master is turned around into its opposite (like history did with orwell's animal farm). Nargarjuna said you can only find emptiness by dconstructing form, you can never find form by starting with emptiness. IN fact, if you reify emptiness as a conceptual ultimate (Nargarjuna's term) then decosntruct it, you will find that emptiness itself is empty. But first you need to reify it as a conceptal obejct which is, itself "form".

This means that (in modern epistemic terms) Nargarjuna saw that 1) emptiness and form were mutually dependent, but 2) unlike Wilber's confusion, they are \*asymmetrically dependent -- emptiness and form depend on each other (mutually) but emptiness depends on form \*in a different way\* than form depends on emptiness.

This means that all r-terms are ontogenetically prior to all a-forms. Which means that there must be "form" prior to emptiness, which requires its deconstruction. All r-terms are ontogenetically prior to all a-terms -- which means that a certain kind of time (not psychological time or abstract time) is responsible for their assymmetry. So the idea of the tetra-arising of the quadrant/perspectives and their absolute symmetry is a bastardization of Nargarjuna, and cannot hold up to modern epistemic analysis.

This more academic/metaphysical/scholastic analysis, affirms my previous analogic post. The non-dual is an a-term. It is ontogeneticall posterior to the dual (upon which it depends), which is another way to say that the nondual is conditionally dependent upon the dual. And therefore cannot be an ultimate metaphysical category.

WHich leads up to the QED: a metaphysical category can be an absolute (a-term) but it can not be an ultimate.

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) BTW, for you philosophy experts-- this same line of reasoning (re)solves Kant's problem with the apriori (a terms) and posteriori (r-terms). We don't have aprioris lurking around, waiting to interpret experience. Aprioris are abstracted from experience itself, and then appropriated as "always already" ideals -- the same ontological dimensioning of reality thing I started with.

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) All of this -- in the final analysis, is a result of taking time out of the architecture of abstraction. We imagine events happening in time, when as Ilia Prigigone demonstrated, time is \*in the events. SOund familiar? We \*abstract\* time (make it an a-term) and then "discover" that time is \*in\* the events (as all a-terms are \*in r-terms). Now I can't go into this now, but it can be shown that this same limiting architecture of the rational consciousness is what "creates the illusion" that time and space are relativized (r-terms) and that speed itself (speed of light) is absolute (a-term).

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[Jean Trudel](https://www.facebook.com/jean.trudel.18) hence the posterior/anterior valence?

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[Bruce Alderman](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14) Bonnitta, do you attribute the Dalai Lama's critique of extremely subtle ground consciousness to his being a (rangtong) Gelukpa? That is my view. As we've discussed on the IPS forum (quite a bit), the rangtong view of emptiness is generally more amenable to a (post/postmodern) postmetaphysical interpretation than the shentong view -- which may be seen as an example of the metaphysics of presence.

Your most recent post on "red" is very timely and syncrhonistic, as it just appeared while I was writing on this very topic. I wanted to remark, 1) how I've noted in the past that Wilber, with his Kosmic addressing system, seems to want to exempt certain spiritual states or realizations (of Spirit, Emptiness, etc) from aspects of his addressing system which (if used) would indicate that these "absolute" realizations are contextually embedded. Specifically, he addresses them with "state" markers but leaves off altitude and other elements, which he insists are essential for a basic Kosmic address. Leaving aside the question of the wisdom and viability of his addressing system, I just wanted to note that this move is problematic (in my view), and is an example of what you are talking about. And related to this, I was wanting to remark, 2) that we can look at the question of universals (like red, or other 'universal experiences' from either conventional or spiritual contexts) in similar terms to Hartshorne's discussion of absolutes (as dependent on, and abstracted out of, particular instances). In this case, in contrast to the view of 'red' as a self-existing (misplaced concrete) universal, trope-bundle theory recognizes red as unique to each actual occasion: always and only found in unique concrete instances. (I talked about this in the 'adjectival metaphysics' section of Sophia Speaks).

Thus, when Tom comments above on the "universality of God/Tao/Brahman/Emptiness," I think we have to ask if something similar is going on here. (I've complained elsewhere about Wilber's problematic loose identification of God with Allah, Tao, Emptiness, etc). I'm not suggesting that there is no commonality between these terms, or the mystical realizations relative to them, but it seems clear (to me) that each also bears an irreducible uniqueness and that they cannot be divorced from their relative contexts (without doing violence to the terms [or related spiritual realizations] and without misplaced concreteness). I follow Panikkar here in locating their 'commonality' or 'universality' primarily in the homeomorphically equivalent functions they play, and qualities they manifest, in their respective topologies or 'worldspaces.'

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) Jean, yes, that is why I added to AQAL flat-land 2d matrix the third axis "anterior/posterior)

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) [Bruce Alderman](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14) - yes, it is very nice that different ways to enter into and express the same situation come together to form a more robust re-examination, critique and reconstruction. THIS trajectory in THIS thread deserves the label "the fourth turning" not WIlber's. But of course THIS group acknowledges that THIS turning is a collective shift, not the personal property of one particular intellect.

And yes, the Dalai Lama says this explicitly -- he does say this is the view from his school/lineage. And he is generous with contextualizing it with respect to other views which are closely similar but not so well (IMO) nuanced.

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[Jean Trudel](https://www.facebook.com/jean.trudel.18) Again, in 2006, a friend and I attempted to develop an application using AQAL. The intention was to take the inquiry to a pragmatic level, guiding the WE to hold this inquiry more whole. Of course that failed. Sometimes I feel you are doing what I wanted to do then. Maybe there is a way. Looking forward to the shadow course. I think we got as close as I have ever been to that architecture. Will try to include the system as an illustration here but it might be too small to read. Falling off...

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) together, we are forming a community and moving into the unknown. very enthusiastic and grateful for all of us!

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[Bruce Alderman](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14) [Bonnitta](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy), yes, I agree: I think Wilber's "Fourth Turning" unfortunately doesn't really merit the name. It doesn't go far enough. There \*is\* some exciting de/re-construction work going on, though, that is encouraging to me (including in our very circles!). Similarly, regarding your remarks about the beholdenness of East-West and interreligious dialogue to the mental structure, I do see signs of change here, too. Something's afoot!

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[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) Damn, first time I've really settled my attention on the substance of your words, [Bonnitta](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy). Please keep the post rolling! I'll participate when that concrete thing-process called time permits, though I'm reading along (even taking some notes). [Renee](https://www.facebook.com/reneeandabby), you may be interested in Bonnitta's treatment above of the conceptual and nonconceptual in Narguna. It'll be obvious why - in light of your cognitive science focus... In the mean time, understanding this asymmetrical interdependence as such: what impact can a post-dialectical way of perceiving and doing have on the r-terms, particularly those r-terms that are significant to folks like us on this thread?

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) [Bruce Alderman](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14) - yea. I really don't mention this because I want to focus on the "shortcomings" of Wilber, but to encourage the community to explore more recent trends, to think BEYOND what is already given...

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[Bruce Alderman](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14) Yes!

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) So this is the vision. We are creating a post-dialectic (I like to call it "onto-logics" for the logics of be(com)ing" and we have for the first time in 2000 years the potential of world shifting! What I mean by this is that, we the potential of reworking EVERYTHING... from a whole new mind. What we want to do though is make sure our paradigm passes what I call the "4 A's (forays)"

Aligned with our deepest spiritual intuitions
Available to the scientific inquiry (method)
Politically Actionable
Aesthetically Beautiful

So we keep putting candidate cosmologies to these four tests. As a community. Which means we eliminate some constructions "of the truth" and cultivate others.

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) Also, here is a comprehensive list of (all?) the structures that need to be overcome for an adequate paradigm shift to emerge (flourish)

1) a metaphysical framework primarily fixated with static things, 2) a permanent use of figure-ground contrast to organize reality, 3) conceptual metaphors that are constrained by the rules which govern the physical and gross embodied experience, 4) the implicit laws of reality that are transmitted by the structure of language, especially the subject-object (noun-verb) construction 5) cognitive biases of all types, including the split mind, 6) a privileged perspective based on a limited life experience 7) a diminished perspective based on repression of cultural bias and stereotype, the effects of shadow material at the levels of self, culture, species, and biotic community, 9) primacy of operations in 3-dimensional rather than n-dimensional space and 10) an inflexible apperception of time.

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[Bruce Alderman](https://www.facebook.com/bruce.alderman.14) [Mark](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko), you asked me about the concretely enactive work of folks in the polydoxy camp. I'm not sure that what they write is any more rarefied and abstract than what you or I or others in our circle do, but of course the question is a vital one for all of us: where does all this land, how (practically) does it get embodied and expressed? From an embodied-cognition point of view, even such complex philosophical work is a kind of 'dance' we are performing -- a subtle-body rehearsal, so to speak. From what I know of the polydox movement, one of the primary ways this is finding expression is through the university several of them have created, which is designed to be a vehicle for process-oriented interreligious study, practice, dialogue, growth, mutual transformation, etc: polydoxy in action. Through Panikkar this shows up in some very well-worked-out mystical and reflexive constructive dialogical practices. Some folks are also engaged in various real-world activist work, such as Faber with ecological issues or Keller with women's issues, and both with social justice. These are good things. But I think we are all interested in even more: in creating new generative (en)closures to embody these emergent visions.

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[Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) Word UP, Bruce!

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[Joseph Camosy](https://www.facebook.com/joseph.camosy) Fantastic discussion as I'm currently unpacking [Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy)'s 2006 paper "A Process Model of Integral Theory" and was just mulling over the section titled: "The Relationship between the Ontological Dimension and the Epistemological Field."

Some initial thoughts - even though this ontological dimension is the foundation for everything, the minute I think "about" it, or open my mouth, I have instantiated the "epistemological field."

Using an object oriented programming analogy, it's like there exists this ultimate set of base classes. In order for the program to to ANYTHING, including thinking about the existence of these base classes, it MUST instantiate local objects from these very same base classes. This therefore introduces an element of uncertainty as to whether or not one is thinking about the base class itself OR one's own local instantiation or object.

As Wilber writes, the only way to handle this situation is to engage in injuntions which have as their result an EXPERIENCE of "arisings" where the local object (content of consciousness) is seen as the instantiation (manifestation, arising) of the class (consciousness itself). This is called "non-dual mysticism."

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) My own experiments in collective insight practice, suggest that being in collectives where there is an effort in "adjudicating" between structures results in false consciousness (group cohesion, implicit rules of belonging) rather than increase coherence (defined as the ability to receive maximum diversity to catalyze emergent creativity). I applied for a metaINtegral grant to continue this inquiry

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[Ted Saad](https://www.facebook.com/ted.saad) I'm really enjoying this thread! I think there's a book in here already if we copy and paste and someone wants to take on the editorial role!

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) Book? We need a road show

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) Also want to say kudos to [Tom Huston](https://www.facebook.com/kosmictom) and [Mark Schmanko](https://www.facebook.com/mark.schmanko) - their extraordinary scholarship, and depth of intention, invited the energy into this thread.

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[Jean Trudel](https://www.facebook.com/jean.trudel.18) ...and not throw-out the baby with the bathwater...

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) [Trish Nowland](https://www.facebook.com/trish.nowland) are you around?

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) Since I am feeling radical, I will respond to this "not throw the baby out with the bathwater.."

Actually we NEED to throw the old structures out completely. And I will tell you why. With respect to our own (ontological) development, these structures seem like essential pieces of the puzzle. We cannot imagine not going through the dualistic mindset in order to get to the onto-logical mind. Therefore we construe that the latter is somehow predicated on the former. But this is a developmental bias. Yes, the latter has been predicated on the former \*for us\* but if we are dealing with true evolutionary phenomenon, then the new structure can come "wholly formed". How? Because of this concept of "thrownness" (Heidegger). The new generation, if they are born into the new structure-- that new structure becomes ontogenetic, or an a- prior) to them. It becomes part of the thrownness of their existential condition. So this is where educators get it all wrong. They are steeped in a developmental bias. So we inadvertently impose the earlier structures onto the child (how many people are atheistic in their adult years, but feel the need to raise their children in a theistic manner?) only then to teach the child that this is not completely true, there is "more to it."

I always wondered why, for example, we are taught the Bohr model of the atom in highschool and then we are taught that this is not the correct view.

Now, for sure, one of the problems is that we are trapped in hyper-complex thinking, because we attach the new to the old, and then have to argue outside of the old into the new. Someone like Feynman comes along, and this kind of thinking is intuitive to him. So he has a much more elegant way to teach it.

SOOOO.... we need to start thinking of how to teach onto-logics directly, without confusing the next generations who will be born with more and more intuitive idea of it. This is my beef with all these teachers who go around charging money to teach the "lesser vehicles" for 20 years or so, to steep a kind of mythic hook into their students, before they then allow them to "step up to the plate."

We have to be careful. We can see that more and more people are intuiting a different mind. If they go through university, that mind gets hopelessly confused and complexified. We need to introduce something like a "parallel schooling" that can contextualize what bright kids are learning in various schools and sanghas.

Anyway, this kind of thing motivates me endlessly...

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[Jean Trudel](https://www.facebook.com/jean.trudel.18) Yes, and by that I meant that the baby was me. And I'm staying arriving at the beginning.

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[Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy) oh yes, we certainly want to keep those babies!

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[Joseph Camosy](https://www.facebook.com/joseph.camosy) [Bonnitta Roy](https://www.facebook.com/bonnitta.roy), you wrote:
"SOOOO.... we need to start thinking of how to teach onto-logics directly, without confusing the next generations who will be born with more and more intuitive idea of it."

One of the main aspects of this "throwness" of the new generation is what I call "transgressive recontextualization," which the internet is only causing to accelerate. We now have all forms of knowledge at our fingertips and ready to be remixed - music sharing and mixing, instagram, sharing images, linking to images and content within new contexts in order to create new kinds of meaning and discourse, etc...
I would characterize this phenomenon as an expression of imagination unleashed - we are immersed in IMAGES everywhere. We are truly living in the photocalypse.

One reason I bring this up is that typical to most discussions of consciousness is this tendency in some Eastern traditions to marginalize the importance of images as if it were something to be gotten rid of or to get beyond. Iconoclasm lives on, and yet we're swimming in an ocean of images - contexts within contexts of them. Within this context, any attempt to throw the baby out with the bathwater only results in the baby coming back in through the basement as shadow, mean green meme, etc...

What needs to happen is the restoration of an understanding of analogical reasoning vs. analytical reasoning.

Excerpted from: de Lubicz, R A Schwaller. Symbol and the Symbolic :
(next post)

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[Joseph Camosy](https://www.facebook.com/joseph.camosy) An Excerpt From: de Lubicz, R A Schwaller. Symbol and the Symbolic :

"Modern science, particularly subatomic physics, has, as Schwalier de Lubicz points out, expanded its knowledge of matter to the point where Nature must be considered supra- rational (as being beyond the limits of rational methods and formulae). These new discoveries and ideas, he emphasizes, demand a new and as yet unfound vocabulary, as well as a radically different approach to education and knowledge itself. This view places Schwalier de Lubicz at variance with some contemporary writers such as Fritjof Capra who, in The Tao of Physics, contends that we can with our present scientific methods move directly into a science with spiritual dimensions. Schwalier de Lubicz denies this possibility, emphasizing that the achievement of a sacred science requires a transformation of mind which would considerably alter our relationship to knowledge and its expression. It is here that an understanding of the hieroglyphic intelligence of the Ancients may assist contemporary thought in surpassing the intellectual impasse presently incurred by our rational perception and methodologies.

Let us try to clarify the differences in the symbol-making processes belonging to each of these two mentalities, for undoubtedly the underlying theme of the book is an attempt to lead us from reading in our ingrained, logical, sequential manner toward the immediacy and sense of identity available through the hieroglyphic image. It is through the rich and exacting array of ancient hieroglyphic writing that analogical thought is lifted from subjective, poetic or personal insight to a precise, communicable, universal knowledge-activity upon which a science of nature can be founded.

Let us amplify this comparison. With our present form of writing we use groups of arbitrarily formed abstract symbols (our alphabetical letters) which convey memorized sound and visual associations. We are trained to think and communicate through these alphabetical letters—placed in certain (again, memorized) groupings, or words—by reducing these abstract conventions into objective images in our minds. Simply stated, this means that when we read cat, we immediately register the formed image: . This habitual reduction from a nonobjective mental abstraction to a delimited image can be seen as an initially centripetal action, which, subsequently, disperses perception and knowledge into a classification of disconnected facts. We use numbers in a similar way, moving from abstract symbols to quantitative evaluations. But hieroglyphic writing works in the opposite or centrifugal direction. The image, the form, is there concretely before us, and it can thus expand, evoking within the prepared viewer a whole complex of abstract, intuitive notions or states of being—qualities, asso- ciations and relationships which cannot be described or defined but only experienced. A centering sense of unification later results from this inwardly expansive movement of mind.

A method of viewing is required comparable to our hearing faculty: one must learn to listen to the symbolic image, allowing itto enter into and pervade one's consciousness, as would a musical tone which directly resonates with the inner being, unimpeded by the surface mentality. In this moment of inner identity between the intellect and the aspect of the tangible
world evoked by the symbol, we have the opportunity to live this knowledge. "By the hieratic symbolic method the aim is no longer to translate things into sensory terms, but to put ourselves into the state 'magically' identical with the symbol- object, so as to become heavy with the quality of weight, to become red with the quality of redness, to burn with the quality of fire."

These two mental processes then reverse the sequence of centrifugal and centripetal movements. The analytical mode first reduces abstractions to a defined image, followed by a proliferation of disconnected facts. The analogical mode, on the other hand, first expands from the image into far-reaching associations, then inwardly unifies. Lao-Tzu, who also lived in a hieroglyphic epoch, expressed this interplay thus: "In order to expand, one must first contract; in order to contract, one
must first expand."

The outwardly projecting analytical mind, which grasps for fixed and quantified objectifications with relationships depen- dent on equational logic, was also well known to the ancient thinkers, but there seems to have been an effort to restrict its use. "