

# SCIENCE AND GNOSIS

from *The Mystic's Vision* by Swami Abhayananda.

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## I.

The word, *science*—from the Latin *scientia*, as well as the word, *gnosis*—from the ancient Greek, mean “to know”, but the knowledge each describes is different. Each kind of knowledge has a long and well documented history: Science has developed over the centuries through the positing of rational theories and the rigorous accumulation of physical data, modifying its position as reason, observation and data dictate. Gnosis is also based on experience, but it is experience that is extra-sensual, supra-rational, and wholly subjective, or personal. Science is confirmed by evidence derived from empirical observation; gnosis is confirmed by evidence derived from introspective revelation. Science pertains to knowledge of the gross, material world; gnosis pertains to knowledge of the subtle, spiritual foundation of the world.

Scientists, for example, have determined, through theory, reason, and observation, that the universe of time and space began as an immense burst of high-frequency energy, referred to as “the Big Bang”. Scientists have determined over the past century or so that at some point, about 14 billion years ago, an enormous amount of energy suddenly appeared, expanding and transforming into mass-bearing particles that collectively formed our phenomenal universe. Those scientists have even determined the temperatures and rate of acceleration of this energy in the first few seconds and minutes of its release, and they have cataloged the material particles which were created as this energy cooled and solidified. They are also convinced that, prior to this “big bang”, nothing else existed—not space, not time, not matter; but only this concentrated (electromagnetic) energy in a potential and pre-material state. It was only as these highly energized wave/particles of light interacted and collided, that they were transformed into material wave/particles, which then became the fundamental components of the universe.

Physicists and cosmologists have further determined that, approximately ten billion years after the ‘Big Bang’ (four and a half billion years ago), remnants of an exploding star, or supernova, within this expanding universe, condensed into our solar system; and that sometime during the next few hundred million years, single-celled organisms bearing a molecule called DNA emerged on planet Earth; that these microbes then evolved, resulting in a prodigious display of living creatures, including *Homo sapiens*, who emerged fairly recently, that is to say, in the last 200,000 to 150,000 years. To this broad scientific theory, gnostics (mystics) have no objection, as it is consistent with the knowledge obtained through gnosis. But it doesn’t go far enough if we are interested in knowing the true beginning i.e., where did this initial energy come from? Science is forever barred from providing an answer to this question, as science, by definition, is limited to empirically demonstrable or replicable (material) phenomena only. But gnosis is able to provide the answer to this question; for gnostics have “seen” that the Source of all energy is noumenal—that is to say, ‘of Mind’. “Noumenon” is derived from the Greek word, *Nous*, “the Divine Mind” of Platonist philosophy, and was later defined in Kantian terms as “a thing in itself, unable to be known through perception, but postulated as the intelligible ground of a phenomenon.” That intelligible ground is unknowable by science, but knowable by gnosis. Gnosis alone is capable of determining the reality of the Divine Mind (*Nous*) from which all noumena and phenomena arise.

Gnosis is possible only with the elimination of the ego-mechanism by which a person’s awareness is limited to that of a separate individual identity. This ego-mechanism is a subtle mental obscuration that structures a (false) identification with the biological and psychological processes of individuation. Thus, instead of being aware of the real I-identity that is universal Consciousness, one is restricted to a false artificial identification with the individual’s biological and psychological processes. The eternal Consciousness, which is essentially one, thereby becomes perceived in the awareness of the individual as a separate ‘me-identity’ integrally associated with a specific material body. However, this ego-mechanism, present in all beings, may be dispelled in humans by an interior revelation that we can only regard as ‘divine Grace’. It is a sudden interior illumination that reveals to the human awareness that it is part and parcel of the one eternal Consciousness, the origin and substratum of all individuated consciousness.

This ‘mystical’ experience of expanded awareness has occurred in numerous individuals throughout history. Some of the best known in the Western

world are Jesus, the Buddha, Plotinus, Meister Eckhart and John of the Cross; but there are many more. They have described this experience of the revelation of the one eternal Consciousness variously as “the union with God”, “the extinction of the ego (*nirvana, samadhi*)”, “enlightenment”, “the entrance into the kingdom of God”, or the “mystic marriage of the soul and God.” However, all these experiences are synonymous and identical. The accumulated evidence for the occurrence of such a transcendence of the ego and the subsequent emergence into the awareness of and universal identity with the eternal Consciousness is overwhelming. It seems to me that it is time for science to acknowledge the existence of such “revealed” knowledge, and to accord it the status of *gnosis*, while attempting to reconcile its own findings with the view of reality put forward by the gnostics.

Little can be learned objectively about the obscurative and limiting ego-mechanism under which we all suffer, for its proper means of study is subjective. The elimination of the obscurative and limiting effects of the ego-mechanism can only be accomplished by an introspective focus – whether by means of a dualistic devotional practice or by intense self-examination. Examples abound of representatives of both introspective methods having obtained the ego-transcending results, revealing to them the Divine Mind, or God, through divine Grace.

But science, to its detriment, does not acknowledge this fact; indeed, science does not even acknowledge the possibility of gnosis. Whatever is outside the purview of empirical science is regarded by its representatives as either nonexistent or simply unworthy of study. This is where the difficulty of reconciling science and gnosis begins. It is much like the position of some Middle Eastern countries who hold that reconciliation with the country of Israel cannot occur since they do not recognize the right of Israel to exist. If there is to be reconciliation between science and gnosis, gnosis must be acknowledged as a specific and valid means of human knowledge.

One has difficulty imagining that scientists will ever accept the declarations of mystics as science; and they needn’t. But as human beings interested in comprehending the whole of reality, they would do well to accept them as gnosis, as providing information through an alternate and complementary mode of knowledge that is essential along with science to a complete understanding of reality. The alternative is to remain forever locked in the mystery of a partially known and wholly incomprehensible universe. Both of these two areas of knowledge, science and gnosis, must be acknowledged

as valid means if we are to have a comprehensive overview of reality. As Albert Einstein once noted, “Science without religion [gnosis] is lame; religion [gnosis] without science is blind.” This is more than merely a vague platitude; it is an insightful recognition that there are two distinct modes of knowledge, each of which, without the other, is incomplete, and both of which are required in order to comprehensively describe all aspects of the total reality.

The question then arises, “who speaks for gnosis?” or “what statements constitute true gnosis from among those statements by the many pretenders to gnosis?” And this is, perhaps, where the true difficulty lies. The answer is that it is the true mystics who speak for gnosis; it is the statements by those who have truly “seen” into the noumenal reality that constitute gnosis. And how do we separate out the true visionaries from the pretenders and from the many vastly diverse belief systems which presently circulate? Unfortunately, there is no easy or foolproof answer to that question. But, in gnosis as in science, there is a consensus among recognized authorities (mystics) on which we may rely. In my book, *History of Mysticism*, I have discussed the views of many such recognized mystics and shown that, despite the differences of language and culture, mystics throughout history have unanimously agreed on the elements of the noumenal reality.

For so many centuries, science and gnosis have remained exclusive of one another, and have tread separate paths, scarcely acknowledging one another. And yet there must be an end to this divisive isolationism. How long shall scientists pretend that the subtler mode of knowledge simply does not exist? In the past, religious faiths have often been in doctrinal opposition to the conclusions of science and have had to adapt over time to the scientific view. The Copernican revolution, Galileo’s observations, the Darwinian revelations, and many other scientific pronouncements, were resisted by the establishments of religious faith, and were many long years in being accepted and assimilated by them; but gnosis has never had a quarrel with science. It has simply not been acknowledged as a means of knowledge existing apart from religious faith.

How can the revelations of Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, John of the Cross, and others in the Western mystical tradition simply be ignored? These few have been greatly multiplied and fortified by the addition to our knowledge of the lives and teachings of the great mystics of the Eastern traditions. Have they not all taught of the noumenal Source? And have not all, after their linguistic differences were accounted for, presented identical accounts?

These two camps, science and gnosis, have vied with one another over the centuries for the mind of the populace. And, for the past several centuries, science has been in the ascendancy in this war of ideals and has dominated the attention of all within Western civilization. While I acknowledge the necessity of both of these two modes of knowledge, and have a deep love for science, I am a gnostic, not merely by conviction, but by experiential familiarity; and so, I have long felt it necessary to clearly present the knowledge I have obtained through gnosis in a way that is beneficial to everyone dedicated to the discovery of the subtle foundations of existence.

## II.

The basic elements of the Eastern worldview are also those of the worldview emerging from modern physics. ...Eastern thought—and, more generally, mystical thought—provides a consistent and relevant philosophical background to the theories of contemporary science; a conception of the world in which man's scientific discoveries can be in perfect harmony with his spiritual aims and religious beliefs.

-- Fritjof Capra, 1975

When Fritjof Capra's book, *The Tao of Physics*, was first published in 1975, many found the above statement an amazingly encouraging and promising insight. Conservative scientists, however, found it hogwash. The idea that mystical vision (gnosis) bore any resemblance to the findings of empirical scientific investigation, or that the two could in any way be reconciled was, to these scientists, a laughable proposition. I think that position needs to be reexamined. Science needs gnosis, and gnosis needs science.

Gnosis is generally regarded as belonging to the province of religion. But it is important to distinguish between 'religion' and 'religious faith'.

"Religion" is a word derived from the Latin *religare*. *Ligare* means "to tie or bind"; its meaning is reflected in such derivatives as "ligament" and "ligature". It is interesting to note that the word, *yoga*, "to yoke", has a similar meaning. *Religare* means to "re-tie, re-bind." The word, *religion*, which refers to 'the re-connecting or re-uniting of the soul to God', is in fact the inner realization or experience of the inseparable unity of the soul and God, the knowledge (*gnosis*) of the truth that "I and the Father are one." Religious faith, on the other hand, is nothing more than a belief possessed by a group of individuals that certain premises are true regarding God, His

human historical representatives, and His purposes. Religious faith may be possessed by anyone, but religion—in the sense of the realization of unity—is something that is attained by only a few spiritually gifted souls. True “religion”, therefore, is a spiritual revelation that comes only to those few who earnestly seek union with God; it is a gift of Grace. It may be called “enlightenment,” “the mystic marriage,” “the vision of God,” or any number of other words or phrases. It is recognized by all religious faiths as a supernatural revelation of Truth that goes far beyond any and all doctrines or beliefs of religious faith.

Religious faiths are many; they are based for the most part on ideational interpretations of historical events. Religion, in the sense of *gnosis*, is neither ideational nor historical; it is beyond both time and the vagaries of the mind. Religion, by definition, seeks only the realization of one’s unity with God, the revelation of the Eternal. Religious faith seeks intellectual certainty and temporal satisfaction, and always falls short of both. *Religion* brings certainty of the Truth; religious faiths bring conviction, but they are fallible, each one contrary to another. See how the various religious faiths hold disparate views, each holding its own founders as well as its followers to be uniquely endowed with a cosmic and historical significance. Jews consider themselves to be “the chosen of God”; Christians regard their founder to be “the Son of God,” and themselves to be “saved” by that irrational belief. Muslims regard Muhammed to be “the Messenger of God,” and his written words to be unerring and sacrosanct; Hindus regard Krishna to be an incarnation of God, and honor as sacred the rituals handed down in the Vedas; Buddhists worship the Buddha and his teachings as the preeminent and exclusive guide to enlightenment.

These are all examples of religious faith. Each is contrary to the other, and each regards its own followers as the only “true believers.” However, among the followers of each of these religious faiths, there are a few who have known “religion” or *gnosis*, i.e., who have experienced the unitive reality, and known their identity with the One. Such seers have existed and exist today among each of these religious faiths, attesting to a true “religion” that transcends as well as includes all religious faiths. Religion always fosters compassion, forbearance, and the recognition of the interconnected unity of all life. Religious faith is capable of promulgating absurdities; it is susceptible to ignorance and is capable of fostering activities directly contrary to the teachings of religion. In these recent days we have seen just

how far afield such activities and absurdities can lead the followers of the religious faiths.

Scientists generally do not acknowledge that the noumenal Source of all manifestation is knowable; but there have been gnostics—myself among them—who have testified to their direct experiential knowledge of the noumenal Source, which they declare to be eternal. When the Eternal is revealed, they say, it is as though a grain of sand had shed its “grain-ness” and become aware of its “sand-ness”. “I am sand,” such a grain might proclaim; “I cover all the shores of the world.” Or, it is as though a speck of foam, thrown up by a crashing wave, suddenly shed its identity with its tiny form and became aware “I am the vast ocean. I am the fathomless deep!” When a man searches deeply enough within himself, his identification with a single form dissolves away, and he realizes his universal identity: “I am all life; I am all this universe!” And then, focused intently upon this new vision, he sees even more deeply into himself, and he realizes that he is the formless and eternally living Consciousness which, while remaining unmoved and unchanged, continuously whole and unaltering, spews forth all this moving, changing panoply of universal form, as a man’s mind creates a fantasy dream-world within itself.

Throughout history there have been a few who have declared that they have obtained mystical vision. Their testaments have been remarkably similar and explicit regarding the ultimate Source of the manifested universe. Among these few, the most authoritative on the subject of cosmogony (the origin of the universe) are the authors of a number of Upanishads, the author of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Shankara, Plotinus, and Meister Eckhart; although there are many others who may be considered authoritative regarding other specific aspects of the mystical vision.

The mystic is gifted with a visionary experience that comes to him without his knowing how. His consciousness is elevated during a rare moment of contemplation whereby his awareness reaches to a noumenal level beyond his normal experience, and at once he is privy to an egoless state in which the transcendent reality becomes evident. There are a couple of levels to this mystical experience: at first, he is aware of the absence of ownership of his body. The previous sense of an individual identity is gone, and he sees that his body is not the possession of an individuality, but belongs to the one current of existence which is universal, an ocean of conscious energy in which all things and beings exist. He sees his body as a wave on that ocean,

as a configuration of energy within a sea of energy, related to the universe as a pebble is to stone, as the mountains and valleys are to the earth.

He feels that, in being divested of an ego—that is, of an individual identity, he is now seeing himself and the world correctly for the first time; as though the veil of an illusory ego had been lifted, and now he is seeing truly and without the obfuscation of an erroneous orientation. He is like a wave on an infinite ocean, or like a golden trinket melted in a vat of gold. For a wave, the subsuming reality is the ocean; for a golden trinket, the subsuming reality is gold; for the individual consciousness, the subsuming reality is the one all-pervading Consciousness. No longer separate, his identity is merged into the larger substratum. If he entered this state from a state of prayer, there is no longer a deity, no longer an “I”; for, without the duality of “I” and “Thou,” neither exists. He sees that former dualistic relationship as a product of the ego-mind’s duality-producing habit. But now, all dualities are vanished. Not only is there no “I” or “Thou”, neither is there a now or then, for time is also transcended in this eternal state.

Dualities are judgments from a distinct individual reference point, and without that egocentric reference point, dualities do not exist. Without the ego, there is only the timeless universal sea of existence, a vast ocean of conscious energy. Without the ego, where is love and hate? Where are peace and unrest, the heights and the depths, weeping and laughing? Without an ego, there is no life and death, no night or day, no music or silence, no motion or stillness. These all require a point of identity, and without that illusory perspective, there is only the one universal existence. When what *is* is the one divine energy doing everything, where is pride or regret? Furthermore, where is the distinction between body and soul? There is no division in this one conscious energy; it is homogeneous. There is only one. And this one existence is conscious, autonomous, and integrally coordinated.

This is the first stage in the mystical experience. When the ego-sense falls away, one is aware only of the creative energy that manifests as the phenomenal universe and all its constituent parts. The mystic witnesses this revealed universal energy, not as a subject perceiving an object, a second; he perceives it as himself. There is only One, and It is I. And as this awareness increases, a new clarity dawns as he reaches the second and ultimate stage of this introspective journey and realizes: ‘I am not just this creative flux; I am the Source of this creative power. I am the eternal Consciousness from which this outflow of energy is born.’ This eternal Consciousness is primary

to the creative energy, lying just above it, and is its Source. There is no higher. And It is known as one's true Self, the one transcendent and noumenal Reality behind all universal manifestation.

That Self is Eternity. It is perfectly alone. It is perfect Consciousness and Bliss. There is nothing one can predicate of It. Yet, from that eternal Self a creative Energy fountains forth; from It, time and space and the endless universe pours forth and returns in the same manner as breath flows out and returns in the case of a human being. It is a cyclic ebbing and flowing of the creative energy of the One which bursts into being like an exhaled breath, expanding and spreading, only to be reversed as in an inhalation, extinguishing what had previously been produced. The mystic experiences this as occurring from himself, since he is united, at one with, the One.

My own mystical experience came suddenly, opening to me the initial awareness that I, my bodily self, was integral to the universal ocean of energy which is this cosmos. (For a description of the circumstances leading to this experience, please see my book, *The Supreme Self*.) I realized that I was not a separate being in the world, but a wave on that ocean of God's activity, and belonged to Him (the one Existence) and existed in Him. My sense of an individual identity (the ego) had vanished, and I was seeing my existence from the true perspective of one without a separate and distinct vantage point amidst the vast creative flux. As my vision expanded, I became aware of my deeper identity as the unmanifest Source of all manifestation, the one Consciousness, the sole Origin of all being. Whatever separate identity I had when I entered that experience had become transparent and vanished in the dawning awareness of myself as the eternal Consciousness Itself. I knew my true identity as the original One from whom all is derived; I was the unchanging and eternal Consciousness. Yet I was also aware of the cyclical outflow from Me of the universal array, in a motion similar to the exhalation and inhalation of a breath. From the vantage of Eternity, it seemed that the creation and dissolution of the universe took place in the space of a leisurely breath. And its expansion and contraction could be seen in its entirety, as one might watch a balloon repeatedly expand and contract as one breathed into it.

Reflecting on this experience, it was clear that while the Eternal, the transcendent Absolute (which we will hereafter refer to as "the Godhead") is, in Himself, beyond all activity, while His Creative Power (the Divine Mind, or *Ishvara*) produces a universe of form and activity. The Creative Power of God (called in other traditions *Nous*, *Logos*, *Prakriti*, *Maya*,

*Shakti*) is not different from God. It is His Power of Creation and is in no way separate from Him. While He remains entirely alone in His transcendent purity and unchangeability, He projects the cosmic drama by His own inherent Power.

When we try to imagine such a dual state of being, we cannot, because, for us, such a paradoxical state is unimaginable. But, for the divine Self, the absolute Ground, or “Godhead”, such a paradoxical condition exists. In Himself, He is empty of thought or activity, pure Consciousness unmarred; and yet, He effortlessly “projects”, “emanates”, or “breathes forth” an *Energy* which transforms itself into an inconceivably complex universal drama in which stars explode, civilizations rise and fall, and human beings evolve to know within themselves their own Source and Creator. And then, the entire expanding cosmos reverses its expansion and is drawn back into its unmanifest state, once again residing as pure potential in the pure Energy of the Creative Power of God. This cycle of creation/dissolution repeats itself endlessly. Yet, throughout this cosmic evolution and involution, He remains One, eternal, in His own Bliss.

While I have seen most clearly that the universe is “breathed out” by the great Consciousness, I have not seen into the particulars of it, but have seen only the wholeness of it from the perspective of Eternity. In that vision, the expansion and contraction of the universe occurs in the space of a breath. All those billions of earth-years required for the genesis, expansion, and subsequent reabsorption of the universe are crammed into an eternal overview which does not observe the tiny interactions of small particles, but rather sees the entirety only as a momentary universal expansion and contraction. Individual lives are not seen; the rising and falling of civilizations is not seen; the nativity and death of stars is not seen. From the vantage point of Eternity, it is like watching the spraying out of a breath, and its subsequent withdrawal. The details of its enactment are not seen, but only its broad-scale occurrence.

So, clearly, I cannot explain in anything remotely similar to scientific language the details of that appearance and disappearance of the universe. Its Source is, of course, the one eternal Consciousness (which we may refer to as “the Godhead”). He is eternal (He does not live in Eternity; He *is* Eternity), which means He is beyond time and space; and yet, He produces a universe of time and space, which, though it is not Himself, is a product of Himself, as our own breath is a product of each of us. It is a universe produced from Himself, since there is nothing else besides that One from

which it could be composed. This universe, of which we are a part, appears to us as substance, but, as science has shown, it is a tenuous substance at best, made as it is of God-stuff, of divine Light. It is produced from the one Eternal, unmanifest, absolute Consciousness, and has but a transitory existence. After it is reabsorbed back into the Eternal, it is sent forth once again in what is apparently an interminably repeated cycle of becoming and dis-becoming, expanding and contracting.

My ultimate vision was one of identity with the Eternal, the original transcendent Source and ultimate being. I was able to see also, as mentioned above, the outflow and influx of the universal cosmos, but nothing of its manner of evolution. Some others may have direct knowledge of the subtle realms proceeding from the Creative Power of God, which in turn produces the material universe; but I do not. I wish very much that I could provide some insight into the process of this activity, but I cannot. His secret method will have, for the time being, to remain His secret. I can shed no light on the transformation from God-energy to formative “matter”, and so I am unable to definitively deflate the pride of the present-day physicists, with their hadrons and leptons and quarks of many colors.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that, ultimately, all must be traced back to Him. Is it His play? His compulsion? His involuntary reflex? I cannot shed any light on His motivation or his purpose; except to say it seemed to me to be an expansion of His love or joy. I only know that I am His appearance, made of His light, and, for one brief space of time/eternity, He revealed Himself to me, and made me know that my existence is His existence. That is all I know, and probably all I shall ever need to know.

## NOTES:

1. In recent years, after this article was originally written in 2006, I have speculated in various writings that the divine breath of the Creator became manifest in time and space as a ‘Great Radiation,’ a sudden powerful burst of high frequency electromagnetic radiation—at frequency levels in the *gamma* range or above—an occurrence which scientists refer to as ‘the Big Bang’. That high-frequency electromagnetic radiation, or light, then spontaneously transformed into wave-particles that in turn aggregated to produce all the material forms that constitute our universe. This theory seems to me much more likely than the theories of a material origin of the universe put forward by

contemporary science. It is explained at length and in detail in several of my later articles and book publications, including ‘The Phenomenon of Light’, ‘How God Made The World’, ‘Recent Theological Developments’, and ‘First Light’—all of which may be found in my collection of articles entitled “The Mystic’s Vision” at my website: [www.themysticsvision.com](http://www.themysticsvision.com).

## How Science Got It All Wrong

Though it may be surprising to some, there is no scientific theory of the ultimate source of the universe. Science, and in particular, that branch called ‘physics’, takes an ‘I don’t know’ attitude to questions about an ‘ultimate source’, and holds that nothing is known about what happened prior to ‘the Big Bang’ of fourteen billion years ago heralding the ‘beginning’ of time, space and the material universe. As to what sparked (caused) ‘the Big Bang’, there is no consensus theory among scientists; but there is a tacit assumption by the scientific and academic community that, whatever it was, it was solely ‘material’; and that from that material source all else spontaneously evolved. ‘All else’ includes all life, human consciousness and intelligence, and all things mental—though no one has suggested any possible manner in which any of these could have spontaneously evolved from matter. Despite the many inconsistencies and overall implausibility of Science’s assumptions, its materialistic bias has permeated our secular society, and greatly molds and influences the ideology and temper of our times.

Mystical Theology, in opposition to Science, holds that the fundamental origin of this universe is the universal Consciousness, or God. In fact, mystical theologians say, it is not possible to conceive of a universal beginning without the original existence of that beginningless Consciousness. Nothing could exist or come into existence, they say, without a Source that is capable of creating and containing all matter and all energy, while transcending these in Itself. Nothing in this universe could exist or come into existence, they say, without a Source that is capable of creating and encompassing both time and space, and yet is itself neither. And while Science’s materialistic account of the universe’s origin does not provide for the sudden spontaneous production of life and human consciousness, Mystical Theology’s account does.

Before ‘the beginning’ was The Beginningless. That eternal Consciousness produced from Itself a sufficient amount of form-producing energy (at the

Big Bang) to fashion an expanding and evolving universe containing many worlds; and all were made of and contained in that one Consciousness. Life, human consciousness, and intelligence arose therefore quite naturally within this living, conscious, universe. And, since all is made of Consciousness and all is coordinated in one conscious Whole, all things move together of one accord; and assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain. The quantum interconnectedness evidenced throughout the universe is clearly explained in the account of a universe of Consciousness proffered by Mystical Theology, and though this phenomenon of interconnectedness is recognized by the representatives of materialistic science as “entanglement,” there is no plausible explanation for it in their scientific account of reality.

Let us hope that, in future years, the current advocates of materialistic Science begin to consider the possibility that the more plausible Theological paradigm is the correct one, and some of their current mysteries and conundrums will be immediately solved thereby, and the universe as it truly is, will begin to make sense to them.

## **Mystical Experience As Future Science**

I find it interesting that the mystical realizations that occurred to me in 1966 are now showing up in Western civilization’s developing scientific view of the universal reality! Here are a few of the revelations in that mystical experience that are presently being formulated as emerging elements of the scientific paradigm:

### **I. Complementarity Of Identity**

The term, *complementarity*, as coined by Niels Bohr, refers to the wave-particle duality of quantum physics: that light/matter may appear as either wave or particle, depending on the experiment designed to measure it. It appears now as a wave, now as a particle—but it does not appear as both at the same time. And yet, to frame a *complete* definition of the structure of light or matter, both wave and particle are required. Thus, they are considered *complementary*. This characterization is carried over in the definition of the absolute Consciousness, as It contains a similarly dual nature. It is revealed in mystical experience that, in a manner very similar to the complementarity of wave and particle, the universal undifferentiated Consciousness (God) and the individual mind/body (Soul) are complementary states of the same indivisible reality. In other words, we—

you and I—are both the one universal Consciousness and the limited individual consciousness; we can experience ourselves now as one, now as the other—but not both at the same time. Mystical experience is possible only because of that complementarity, as mystical experience is nothing more nor less than the transition from one state of consciousness to its complementary state.

This nondual view of the one reality is solely a metaphysical one at this time. It has long been a feature of Eastern metaphysics, but it seems certain that, in the course of time, this view will become accepted on a broad cultural scale, even in the sciences. Mystical experience is the empirical (albeit subjective) proof of this complementary view. It is the experiential basis for the Vedantic expression, “I am That”, and, once experienced, is the foundation of certainty in the mind of the experiencer. In my own case, this experience began with the realization that:

O my God, even this body is Thine own!  
 Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,  
 Even I who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy waters—  
 Even I am Thine own.

Does a wave cease to be of the ocean?  
 Do the mountains and the gulfs cease to be of the earth?  
 Or does a pebble cease to be stone?  
 How can I escape Thee?  
 Thou art even That which thinks of escape!

...I am the pulse of the turtle;  
 I am the clanging bells of joy.  
 I bring the dust of blindness;  
 I am the fire of song.  
 I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil;  
 In pools of clear water my image is found...<sup>1</sup>

## II. The Inseparability of Mind And Body In The One

In the clarity of that mystical revelation which I experienced, *I* (the one Consciousness) was aware that *I* pervade all existence: “I am in the clouds, and in the gritty soil.” In addition to this, I was unable to discern any categorical separation of my mind and my body. It is a common convention that the body is ‘the temple’ in which the spirit (mind or soul) resides. But, from the vantage of that integral Consciousness, I could see no separate soul encased in a body. “Where is the temple?” I exclaimed; “Which the Imperishable? Which the abode?” But there was no duality. It was clear that body and mind were not two realities, but one—like a figure in a dream, or a mentally projected character in a fantasy, consisting of a unified mental and physical reality. This is not only counter-intuitive, going against our religiously inculcated bias concerning the separation of soul and body at the moment of death; it also denies the conventional Cartesian duality that constitutes the Western philosophical rationale for our conceptual separation of mind and body—and, by implication, our separation of consciousness and matter on a cosmic scale. Clearly, from the vantage point of phenomenal existence in time and space, the body and soul are separable and distinct. But the mystical experience reveals that, in the eternal Divine Spirit, in the nondual Reality, these two are inseparable, indistinct. How is this possible?

It is possible because the Divine Spirit, as universal Consciousness, constitutes all individualized souls, and, as the Creative Power, constitutes the entire universe of forms, including all bodily life-forms. All souls and all bodies, therefore, are constituted of, and are indistinguishable in, the indivisible One.

For long it had been assumed by psychologists that consciousness was an epiphenomenon of the evolving complexity of matter; but eventually the illogic of that assumption became apparent. Today, precedence is being given to the consideration of the supposition that Consciousness is the primary Essence in which and from which the entire universe of Matter evolved. Many theoretical physicists are now convinced that these two long-divided categories are in fact integral.

### III. The Cyclic Universe

There has been much speculation and inference in recent years concerning the origin of the cosmos, but little in the way of scientific evidence, or certainty. In recent years, Cosmologists have proposed a theory sometimes known as the ‘Cyclic’ or ‘Oscillating’ Universe Theory. A number of scientists, including Albert Einstein, were enamored of this theory, but it eventually came to be regarded as flawed. This was because the theory posited by physicists was a purely physical system, governed by purely physical laws required to restart the ‘Big Bang’ after each ‘Big Crunch’. But, of course, the Source of the universe is not physical, but noumenal, not to mention omnipotent.

The Divine Mind is not limited to a reliance on the laws of physics to recreate the universe; It creates in accord with Its own will. That Divine Mind is alive and conscious throughout the universe and beyond the universe; and It remains so when the universe is withdrawn. It is not some insentient mechanical force. It is the Inventor of mechanical force; and It is the Intelligence of which our own meager intelligence is but a limited facsimile, possessing but a hint of the power, living clarity, alertness, and efficacy of the universal Mind. It is He who, of His own will, breathes forth an immense and brilliant light capable of becoming a universe of form.

The vision of the repetitive nature of universal creation in a cyclic, breath-like manner was first depicted in the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Bhagavad Gita* (Song of God) was written ca. 500 B.C.E., as part of a larger work, the Mahabharata, (reputedly by the legendary sage, Vyasa), as a dialogue between Krishna (an incarnation of God) and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. And it is Krishna who, speaking as the Divinity itself, teaches to Arjuna the perennial philosophy, explaining that in His Divine unmanifest state He manifests the entire universe, which he describes as his ‘lower’ nature;<sup>2</sup> and He manifests this ‘lower nature’, the material universe, in a cyclic fashion, periodically creating, then dissolving it:

At the end of a cycle, all beings, ... enter into My *Prakriti* [Creative Power], and at the beginning of a cycle, I generate them all again. Controlling My own *Prakriti*, I send forth, again and again, all this multitude of beings, helpless under the sway of maya (the power of illusion).<sup>3</sup>

My own acceptance of this cosmic scenario did not come about from the theories of physicists, nor from the Hindu scriptures, but from my own indubitable vision, a vision granted me by the Divine Self. In the transformed state of consciousness during which I experienced the integral Consciousness as my own, *I* (Universal Consciousness) exhale the universe in the manner of an expanding breath alternating with an inhalation in which the universe is then withdrawn back into its source. While immersed in this clear awareness, I stated: “I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged, and set in order once again. A million worlds begin and end in every breath, and in this breathing, all things are sustained.” I regard these as the authentic words of God.

#### IV. Non-Locality

The common-sense view of the world accepts the principle of *Locality*: this means that objects are only directly influenced by their immediate (local) surroundings. This includes the possibility that an action at one point may have an influence at another point, if something in the space between the points, such as a field, mediates the action. To exert an influence, something, such as a wave or particle, must travel through the space between the two points, to carry the influence. But *Non-Locality* is a developing scientific view that has come about through the hard-won conceptual battles between the great intellects of the twentieth century, Bohr, Einstein, Heisenberg, Born, Schrödinger, etc. My ‘mystical’ realizations, on the other hand, were the result of a direct clarified *perception* of reality itself. In that direct clarified perception, it was perfectly clear to me that “all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.” I saw, in other words, that all that is in the universe is integrally coordinated in and by a single will, so that ‘all things move together of one accord’. This view of physical reality, translated into the terminology acceptable to the scientific community, states that there are no independent causes or effects occurring solely in a local setting, but everything is interconnected, coordinated universally—that is to say, non-locally. Here is a particularly well-expressed version of that understanding presented by David Bohm and his co-author, Basil Hiley, in a 1975 article:

The world which we perceive cannot properly be analyzed into independently existent parts with fixed and determinate dynamical relationships between each of the parts. Rather, the ‘parts’ are seen to be in immediate connection, in which their dynamical relationships

depend, in an irreducible way, on the state of the whole system (and indeed on that of broader systems in which they are contained, extending ultimately and in principle to the entire universe). Thus, one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existent parts. We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent ‘elementary parts’ of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather, we say that inseparable quantum interconnectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality, and that relatively independently behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within this whole.<sup>4</sup>

...Ultimately, the entire universe (with all its particles, including those constituting human beings, their laboratories, observing instruments, etc.) has to be understood as a single undivided Whole, in which analysis into separately and independently existent parts has no fundamental status.<sup>5</sup>

The question of the existence of non-local causation originally arose from the thought-experiment outlined in the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) paper in which Einstein entered into his historical debate with Neils Bohr in 1935 in the attempt to prove Quantum Theory incomplete. However, the technological means to actually perform the empirical tests needed to determine the scientific basis for non-locality, proving Bohr correct and Einstein incorrect, did not present themselves until long after Einstein had passed away. In 1964, the theoretical physicist, John Bell, and experimenters Alain Aspect, in 1982, and Nicolus Gisin, in 1997, conclusively proved both by theorem and by empirical methods that “non-locality” is a scientific fact, and this fact has been universally accepted by the community of physicists throughout the world.

Nonetheless, there remains a wide gulf between the direct ‘mystical’ knowledge of reality and a conceptual scientific knowledge based on empirical proofs. The mystical experience is a direct revelation of the living Self who is the source and director of the universal array. It is not a

linguistically framed theory of universal mechanics, but rather a living confirmation of the one Divine Mind who both contains and *is* everything that exists, including all of us. No amount of familiarity with or proficiency in the understanding of the theorems of quantum physics is capable of producing that direct knowledge.

The scientific principle of *Non-locality* simply expresses in an oddly roundabout way the fact that has been known for millennia by the faithful of all religions that we exist within a ‘reality’ imaged forth by the one Divine Mind, and in which everything that occurs is His doing and occurs within Him according to His omnipotent Providence. Of course, the activities taking place within the universe are not dependent upon ‘local’ causes; there are no local causes or effects. Causation begins with Him and extends in an infinite network of effects throughout the universe to bring His purposes to fruition. We creatures are simply His eyes and ears, His instruments of knowing and exultation, His singers and worshippers, His imagined others. We too are non-local, rooted in the infinite and eternal Cause, and extending throughout the expansive universe as wave-particles of the one living Being. Halleluiah!

## NOTES:

1. For a complete account of my own ‘mystical’ experience, see my book, *The Supreme Self*, Winchester, U.K., O Books, 2006; or download it from my website at: [www.themysticsvision.com](http://www.themysticsvision.com).
2. *Bhagavad Gita*, VII.5; Swami Nikhilananda (trans.), *The Bhagavad Gita*, New York, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1944, 1987; p. 83.
3. *Bhagavad Gita*, IX.7, 8; *Ibid.*, p.103.
4. Bohm, David and Hiley, Basil, “On The Intuitive Understanding of Non-Locality as Implied By Quantum Theory”, London, Foundations of Physics journal, Vol. V, 1975; pp. 96, 102.
5. Bohm, David, *Wholeness And Implicate Order*, London, Routledge, 1980.

## **Mystical Experience And David Bohm's Implicate Order** **(8-26-2016, revised 1-9-2021)**

### I

Science—empirical observation—tells us that we live in a universe of material phenomena—stars, planets, nebulae, gas clouds, black holes, and all that is manifest to the human senses. But the mystic's vision (Gnosis) reveals that, at a subtler, more primal level, we are living in a universal Consciousness in which every individual constituent is interconnected.

That universal Consciousness is an integral noumenon underlying the phenomenal universe and is the Creative Source and substance of all that we experience as the material universe and its contents, including our bodies and all the objects in our environment.

That universal Consciousness is the sole primary reality, and It is therefore also our primary identity. What we know as the phenomenal universe of time, space, and individual forms exists only as an appearance projected within and upon the one universal Consciousness.

This phenomenal universe, existing as it does, as a projected appearance within the universal Consciousness, is thereby imbued with, permeated by, and identical with the all-pervading universal Consciousness.

Each and every one of the separate constituents of this phenomenal universe are participants in that universal Consciousness and operate in accordance with the will of that universal Consciousness. In other words, as I observed while in a state of union with the universal Consciousness, “All things move together of one accord. Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.”

But for many of us, *reality* is synonymous with the mere phenomenal appearance of the physical universe that we perceive through our senses. And yet, in the metaphysics of numerous sacred spiritual traditions from antiquity to the present, *reality* is understood to consist of at least *three* consecutive layers or levels of subtlety. These metaphysical systems invariably describe the *subtlest* primary level as:

1. **The One.** This is the divine Source of all, the Absolute, the universal Consciousness that we refer to as “the Godhead.” It is eternal, noumenal, inactive, transcendent to the phenomenal creation, undifferentiated, and ineffable.

That is followed by:

2. **The Divine Mind.**<sup>1</sup> This is **the One's** *Creative Power*, and It is integral to and never separate from **the One**. It is the Creator of the universe that we refer to as “God.” Periodically, **The Divine Mind** breathes forth the Light (the Great Radiance or ‘Big Bang’) that becomes manifest as time, space, and the material elements that make up this evolving world of form, including the bodies of all creatures. And then, periodically, after a great period of time has elapsed, the Divine Mind absorbs that Light back into Itself, and that cycle of manifestation and reabsorption continues to repeat itself indefinitely.
3. **Soul.** Plotinus envisioned **Soul** as an emanate of **The Divine Mind**, but **Soul** is in fact the all-pervasive field of Consciousness—**the One**—as It pervades and permeates the forms that have been created within It by Its own *Creative Power*, the Divine Mind. It is **the One** as **Soul** that imparts Its Life and Intelligence to individual human forms by virtue of their presence within It, rendering them composites, consisting of both Matter and Mind/Spirit, both body and soul, both phenomenon and noumenon.

These three levels of subtlety are similarly described in Platonist and Vedic literature going back many centuries,<sup>2</sup> and in each of these traditions, the three levels of are said to exist, not as separate entities, but integrally and simultaneously. We, in our human make-up, are said to be a reiteration of that triune cosmic reality: As conscious beings within the one Divine Reality, our identity consists simultaneously of (1) a Divine essence—thanks to the all-pervasive universal Consciousness, (2) an individualized mind/soul by virtue of the individuation of forms produced by the Divine Mind, and lastly, a physical body. Hence, the universal Consciousness is the ultimate source and core of our being; we are also manifest on a subtle level as souls; and we are manifest in the phenomenal world as separable physically embodied individuals.

In recent times, the twentieth century theoretical physicist, David Bohm (1917-1992), has similarly described the one reality as consisting of these three levels of subtlety, but he does so with some newly coined terms. He refers to the primary divine Source, the universal Consciousness, (“the One” of Neoplatonism, or “Brahman” of Vedanta) as “**the Superimplicate Order**.” The secondary level (corresponding to “the Divine Mind” in the above scheme) he refers to as “**the implicate order**,” and the last, physical level (corresponding to the phenomenal

universe in which souls are manifest as embodied beings), he refers to as “**the explicate order.**”

Bohm approaches this analysis of reality from the perspective of a scientist, a Quantum Physicist, though traditionally, the description of reality as consisting of these three levels of subtlety exists only in the mystically derived *metaphysical* systems. Conventional empirical *science* does not ordinarily describe reality in terms of these three causal levels. To do so would entail the acknowledgment of a Divine Source, a supernatural and noumenal causal agent, which would fly in the face of science’s professed empirical bias.

Physics, as an area of scientific study, delves into the microphysical in the study of Quantum physics, but it has never allowed for the positing of a source of physical reality from outside of the natural (physical) realm; nor does it ever assume a subtle intermediate ideational realm. The suggestion of any such invisible or supernatural causal realm underlying the Material World would flatly contradict the empirical requirements of science.

So, as we can see, science does not provide a clear conception of the original causal Source of the universe, and yet it *does* provide a means for the objective confirmation of its materialist theories through empirical proofs. Metaphysics, on the other hand, with its three-leveled causal progression, *does* posit a plausible Source for the manifest universe, though it does not provide any *objective* confirmation through empirical demonstrations, but only a convincing *subjective* confirmation through what is known as “mystical experience.”

I, for one, having directly experienced that subjective (mystical) confirmation, must side with the metaphysical systems (and with David Bohm) in asserting that there is indeed a subtle ideational level of reality <sup>3</sup> underlying, forming, and supporting the Material World. It is an integral but non-physical continuum, the origin of which is a yet subtler noumenal dimension, a “Superimplicate Order” which we may regard as ‘the transcendent Absolute’, ‘the One,’ or ‘the universal Consciousness.’<sup>4</sup>

If we accept that the three metaphysical levels of subtlety do indeed exist as simultaneous constituents of our Reality, we have to ask, ‘How is that three-leveled constituency compatible with the traditional scientific theory of the origin of the universe by means of the Great Radiance (the Big Bang)?’<sup>5</sup> It is a question that reminds us of the unfathomably complex mystery faced by anyone attempting to comprehend the Divine creation. In the sudden universal manifestation known

as ‘the Big Bang’ or ‘Great Radiance’, God’s inherent Creative Power did not manifest simply as matter-bearing Light but, clearly, was suffused in some manner with divine Consciousness. The fact that Life and Consciousness appears in creatures evolved from that Light gives indication that the wave-particles which constitute the material constructs of that budding universe had to be permeated and ordered by a noumenal Intelligence, a subtle-level dimension, not particularized, but wavular, continuous, and conscious. And yet, how can we comprehend it?

Who indeed can begin to imagine the complex wizardry of the Divine Mind in forming and constituting this amazing extravaganza that is our universe? The poor human mind is helpless to conceive it. In the past, religious writers have suggested that God imparted His breath, and thereby His Consciousness, directly into the mouths of the original humans, thus giving them a living soul; others suggested that it seemed more likely that God’s Spirit was in some way imparted to *all* of Creation. But there has never been a concurrence of opinion as to how this was accomplished.

But here’s an explanation that should be considered: Let us agree to assume that the divine Thought produced by the Divine Mind, which manifested as The Great Radiance—that burst of divine Light which became our phenomenal universe—occurred *within* the all-pervading Consciousness that is the Absolute One. And because that spreading universe is *within* that divine Consciousness, it is evident that the entire universe is thereby permeated and wholly governed by that divine Consciousness, just as the thoughts existing within our own individual minds are pervaded and governed by the consciousness of those minds. Such an evident explanation obviates the need to invent any further machinations by which God may have imparted Life and Consciousness to His Creation. Also, it is a solution that is clearly born out in St. Paul’s statement, “In Him we live and move and have our being.”

We may readily accept and acknowledge that we consist of the above mentioned three levels of subtlety, but it is well known that words do not adequately represent these subtle levels of reality, rather, these realms are to be *experienced* as real conscious states of being, not simply labeled and defined for purposes of philosophical speculation. Whether the subtle ideational reality underlying the physical reality is called “the Divine Mind”, “*Ishvara*”, “the implicate order”, or anything else, matters but little from the mystic’s perspective. What is of importance is to *experience* that subtle reality (*the implicate order*), and to experience firsthand its source, the One, the Absolute Ground (the Superimplicate Order), who is the ultimate Self of all existence. It is only His gracious gift of that

liberating mystical experience that is capable of revealing to us the glorious truth of our ultimate divinity, and of freeing us from the limitations and sorrows attendant upon the false illusory sense of a separate isolated identity.

Having been gifted by God with divine vision and having seen into the hidden realm where all is one conscious continuum, where the only identity is that one all-inclusive Consciousness, I have to declare that, underlying this many-formed world of separate distinct entities and personalities, is a Divine Reality in which nowhere is there any separateness, in which there is only the one 'I' manifest in and as everything everywhere. How, then, can we know It? How can we experience It? This indivisible continuum of Consciousness can be known by our human intelligence only when we are brought by God's grace to a higher subtler level of consciousness. Only then is it possible to perceive It. There is no other way to know It. It has no time-space coordinates but is revealed only in the unfathomably clear depths of the Divine Mind.

## II.

"Relativity and, even more important, quantum mechanics have strongly suggested (though not proved) that the world cannot be analyzed into separate and independently existing parts. Moreover, each part somehow involves all the others: it contains them or enfolds them.... This fact suggests that the sphere of ordinary material life and the sphere of mystical experience have a certain shared order and that this will allow a fruitful relationship between them." <sup>6</sup>

--David Bohm

According to the mystics who have seen into the nature of reality, the one absolute Consciousness is the Source and Cause of all phenomena, manifesting the universe by Its Creative Power in a manner similar to the way an individual consciousness projects a thought within itself. This Divine Thought contains implicit within it the entire design and evolution of the universe, from its initial coming into being to all the refinements and transformations necessary in the process of its ultimate evolutionary development. And since that Divine Thought is projected in a field of Consciousness, that Thought is itself permeated by Consciousness, lending consciousness to all its elements.

Science does not recognize such a scenario as tenable but relegates the visionary knowledge of the mystics to the category of speculative metaphysics. However,

one brave scientist stepped forward to acknowledge the possibility that the mystic's vision could provide a basis for a true and consistent scientific worldview; his name is David Bohm.

David Bohm (1917-1992) was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on December 20, 1917. His father was a Jewish furniture dealer, but David went to college, receiving his B.Sc. degree from Pennsylvania State College in 1939 and his Ph.D. in physics at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1943. At U.C. Berkeley, he studied with Robert Oppenheimer; and when Oppenheimer went to Los Alamos to work on the "Manhattan Project", Bohm remained at Berkeley as a research physicist. There, he worked on the Theory of Plasma and on the Theory of Synchrotrons and Syndrocyclotrons until 1947, when he took a position as an Assistant Professor at Princeton University, working on Plasmas, Theory of Metals, Quantum Mechanics and Elementary Particles. It was there he met and had regular meetings with Albert Einstein.

In 1949, during the repressive McCarthy era, Bohm was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and he was asked to testify against Robert Oppenheimer who was being accused of Communist sympathies. Bohm refused to testify and was thereafter tried and acquitted. But the damage had been done; he was fired from his position at Princeton University, and he was unable to find work in this country. He then moved to Brazil where he taught briefly at the University of Sao Paolo. He also taught for a brief time in Israel before moving to Bristol, England in 1957. In 1961, he became professor of physics at the Birkbeck College of the University of London, and remained there for the next 30 years, writing and publishing his several books: *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics* (1957), *The Special Theory of Relativity* (1966), *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (1980), and *Science, Order and Creativity* (1987). David Bohm died in 1992.

In the 1950's David Bohm was widely considered one of the most talented and promising physicists of his generation. But his primary work from the 1950's to the 1990's—the ongoing development of his "causal interpretation" (which he later referred to as an "ontological interpretation") of quantum mechanics as an alternative to the standard 'Copenhagen Interpretation'—was met with dismissive hostility by the majority of the world physics community. In his attempt to provide a scientific formulation of quantum physics consistent with the mystic's vision of a Divine source from which our world becomes manifest, Bohm presented his 'ontological theory' in a book entitled, *Wholeness And The Implicate Order*.

The first part of the title of Bohm's book, "Wholeness," reflects a theme that grew out of his long familiarity with Quantum Physics. It is ordinarily true that, when we seek for causes of isolated events or things, we settle arbitrarily on a preceding local event or state which we designate as the *cause* of the present event or state. But as scientific investigations into the Quantum reality tend to show, the internal web of relationships between events and between things is endless. Not only from the point of view of Quantum mechanics, but also from the point of view expressed by the mystics, isolated things and events are not caused by other things and events but are rather linked in a complex web of relationships within a larger common Whole whose nature in turn determines the nature of those constituent things and events. In other words, the material reality is no longer thought to be the independent bits of which the Whole is constituted, but rather the other way around: the overall condition of the universal Whole governs the functions and interrelations of all constituent parts within the Whole.

Here is how Bohm and his co-author, Basil Hiley, explained this understanding in a 1975 article:

"The world which we perceive cannot properly be analyzed into independently existent parts with fixed and determinate dynamical relationships between each of the parts. Rather, the 'parts' are seen to be in immediate connection, in which their dynamical relationships depend, in an irreducible way, on the state of the whole system (and indeed on that of broader systems in which they are contained, extending ultimately and in principle to the entire universe). Thus, one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existent parts. We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent 'elementary parts' of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather, we say that inseparable quantum interconnectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality, and that relatively independently behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within this whole."<sup>7</sup>

The second part of Bohm's book's title, "*The Implicate Order*," refers to his unconventional suggestion, inspired by the mystic's vision, that the phenomenal world is "unfolded from a subtler "enfolded order"—in other words, from an

underlying noumenal Source. He refers to that noumenal Source as “the implicate order” and he refers to the phenomenal world manifested by that noumenal source as “the explicate order”.

According to his theory, *the implicate order* is an invisible substratum containing the archetypal template for the emergence and dynamic unfoldment of both matter and consciousness, much the way an individual’s mind is the archetypal template of conscious thoughts produced from it. And in his wonderfully lucid writings Bohm endeavored to explain in the context of quantum mechanics how the *explicate order* (this perceived phenomenal universe) has its source in and unfolds from an (invisible) implicate, or enfolded order. The implicate order produces from itself the explicate order, and the explicate order manifests as the phenomenal reality.

Bohm theorized that, in the implicate order, all things—matter as well as consciousness, body as well as mind—are integrally interconnected in a way that transcends space and time. This is because the implicate order is a noumenal substratum resembling a transcendent Thought-matrix which generates, forms, and organizes the constituents of the explicate order. These constituent elements, or quanta, appear wavelike until they are observed; that is, witnessed by a conscious observer. Then they appear to those observers as particulate, i.e., as individualized ‘entities.’ Bohm suggests that this wave/particle complementarity can be explained by the implicate-explicate order duality: The *implicate order* is one indivisible continuum, a noumenon consisting of waves; but the *explicate order* is perceived by the human consciousness as congregates of particulate, individualized elements, such as electrons, protons, etc. This, he suggests, is the basis for the well-known wave-particle duality.

Together, the implicate order and the explicate order comprise what Bohm regards as *the holomovement*, which he describes as “the unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence as an undivided flowing movement without borders”.<sup>8</sup> From the point of view of the mystic, the One, the transcendent Absolute, is the supreme Source (the ultimate Cause), and it is the divine Mind (the implicate order), which is the active causal principle of the Absolute One. But in David Bohm’s ontological theory, nowhere is there any indication of a primary origin for this “undivided flowing movement”. He does suggest, however, that the ultimate source of the *holomovement* might include a “superimplicate order”, which in turn may result from a “super-superimplicate order”, and so on indefinitely. In his theory, Bohm does not explicitly define these possible primary causal orders, but he suggests that, ultimately, underlying all noumenal implicate orders, there must presumably be an Origin, an eternal Intelligence, or Divine Ground, something

along the lines of an Absolute, the “Brahman” of Vedanta, or “the One”, of Neoplatonism. But Bohm, as a scientist dedicated to the empirical method, seems to prefer to remain wholly noncommittal regarding the distinct nature of any primary supernatural cause.

For the mystic, informed by direct visionary experience, the perceivable phenomenal world is the manifestation of the Creative Energy of God. That Creative Energy (which Plotinus called *Nous*, “the Divine Mind) is the Source of all phenomenal manifestation. The One, the all-pervading Consciousness, is inherently implicit in Its Creative Energy. It fills all animate and inanimate beings, to varying degrees according to their evolution, with Its own Consciousness and Joy. Thus, the manifested beings, who are the evolutes of Its Creative Energy, are able to know within themselves Its being, Its freedom, Its Consciousness, Its Joy. They are able, by the power of God’s Grace, to transcend the limitations of the egocentricity imposed on them in the process of manifestation and are able to ascend to the very Consciousness of God, knowing Him as their own original and authentic Self.

In that mystical ascension to the Divine Mind (*the implicate order*), the manifest souls are able to perceive the perfection of the universal manifestation in which all created things are linked in a wonderful unity of being and becoming.<sup>9</sup> Like the atoms in a cresting wave, or in the flowering of a rose, they are participants in a synchronous dance of movement toward their intended evolutionary culmination. How vast and perfect in every way is their dance! It is indescribably wonderful! In the mystic’s vision, the unfolding of the universe and all that unfoldment entails is seen to be a coordinated and integrated presentation wherein “all things move together of one accord;” and wherein “assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.”

If David Bohm experienced at some time in his career such a mystical revelation, I have not been able to find any mention of it in his writings. Nonetheless, his exposition of “The Implicate Order” offers many similarities to the direct perceptions frequently reported by many well-known mystics. In David Bohm’s broad suppositional theory, causality is seen to reside in the ideational substratum (the implicate order), and then becomes manifest in all its effusive multiplicity as a universe of time and space (the explicate order). Events in the explicate order are merely manifest expressions of an implicit noumenal order. And, while this ‘ontological interpretation’ of David Bohm’s is a marvelous restatement of the expressed vision of the mystic, it remains, from the standpoint of conventional science, merely another speculative philosophy, unprovable (unfalsifiable) by science’s criterion of proof. Bohm’s work, however, is ground-breaking proof that

gnosis is indeed a fruitful source for scientific investigation and understanding. Perhaps other scientists will follow the path he has shown, expanding on his vision, and bringing us closer to a science that corresponds with the declarations of the gnostics of every generation.<sup>10</sup>

## NOTES:

1. To many, the notion of a distinction between the Absolute Ground (the One, Pure Consciousness) and the Creative Power (the Creator, the Divine Mind) seems to be a false distinction, establishing a Duality between The Godhead and God, which is nonexistent. But it is, in fact, a necessary distinction, not only from a logical theological standpoint, but from an experiential standpoint as well. Given that we are made in His image, I think we can get a sense of this distinction by examining our own conscious makeup, wherein our ever-present substratum of conscious awareness and our creative faculty of thought-production, though interrelated, are nevertheless distinguishably separable from one another.

Likewise, the Godhead, which is the Ground and Source of all activity, is Itself inactive, and is sometimes referred to as “pure Consciousness.” Its active, Creative Power, is The Divine Mind, or God, and is sometimes referred to as “the Creator.” They are two, but they are one. They are one, but they are two. This is why, in every metaphysical description from every religious tradition, these two are distinguished by separate names: Purusha-Prakriti, Brahman-Maya, Shiva-Shakti, Tao-Teh, Jahveh-Chokmah, Theos-Logos, and on and on. The distinctive nature of these dual aspects of Divinity requires recognition of the unique and separate nature of each.

2. For Plato and Plotinus, the three levels of reality were *the One, the Divine Mind (Nous)*, and *Soul*. *The physical cosmos* was produced by *the Divine Mind*. For the authors of the Upanishads, the three levels of reality were *Brahman/Atman*, *Ishvara/Maya*, and *jiva*. For the Buddhists, it was *Tatatha/Dharmakaya*, *ekachittakshan*, and *samsara*.

3. I use the term, ‘ideational’ to describe the secondary subtle level of reality that Bohm calls “the implicate order” only because I don’t have a better or more fitting term... It is ‘ideational’ in the sense that it is non-physical, and non-individualized; the separate forms of this ideational reality may be perceived (by the divine eye), but they are constituents of a single continuum. That continuum is subtler than physical reality, but we have no acceptable term to describe it, except for ‘spirit,’ ‘soul,’ or ‘idea’. It is not a humanly produced ‘idea’, but a divinely produced ‘idea’. It might be construed as equivalent to Plato’s ‘Forms’ or David

Bohm's 'implicate order' of reality, containing no individuation or material substance.

4. 'The transcendent Absolute,' 'Supreme Cause,' or 'universal Consciousness,' is the uncreated Source, beyond time and space, the Godhead, the imperceptible and inconceivable Self of all.
5. For references to 'the Great Radiance', please see my article, "How God Made The World (6-07-2013)", or "The Phenomenon of Light (10-15-2014), or "First Light (4-12-2013)" all available at my website: [www.themysticsvision.com](http://www.themysticsvision.com).
6. Bohm, David; quoted in Friedman, Norman, *Bridging Science And Spirit*, St. Louis, Missouri, Living Lake Books, 1994; p. 95.
7. Bohm, David and Hiley, Basil, "On The Intuitive Understanding of Non-Locality as Implied By Quantum Theory", London, Foundations of Physics journal, Vol. V, 1975; pp. 96, 102.
8. David Bohm, *Wholeness And The Implicate Order*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 172.
9. The mystical experience is frequently referred to as "the unitive experience" because it reveals the identity of the experiencer to be identical with the one all-pervasive Reality, i.e., it reveals that 'I and the Father are one.' This nondual 'mystical' experience occurs because it is, in fact, a revelation of the subtle level of reality, what Plotinus called *Nous* (the Divine Mind), or what David Bohm calls 'the implicate order.' Previous to the "unitive experience", the 'explicate order', which had been the experiencer's former "reality", appeared to consist of separate individual things and beings in a world of incredible diversity and multiplicity of identities. But now, suddenly awakened to this subtle level of reality (the implicate order), there is but one identity spreading everywhere; 'I' am in the clouds and in the gritty soil; 'I' am the pulse of the turtle; 'I' am the clanging bells of joy. In that implicate order, one 'I' is all-pervasive, constituting the one and only identity of everything everywhere.
10. For a first-person account of 'the mystical' or 'unitive' experience, see my book, *The Supreme Self*, Atma Books, 1984, available as a free PDF document downloadable from: [www.themysticsvision.com](http://www.themysticsvision.com).