The Psychological Construction of Reality:
An Essay in the Buddhist Psychology of Knowledge

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Abstract

This paper explores the theoretical fruits of the marriage between Social Constructionism and Buddhist psychology, particularly vis-à-vis reality, selfhood, and social change. In Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmannn's 1966 classic, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, the authors called for a "sociological psychology," which this paper addresses by building upon some of the insights from Engaged Buddhism, specifically the Order of Interbeing. The paper's chief aim is to understand the psychological construction of reality via a Buddhist psychology of knowledge in order to imagine what the next cultural paradigm shift might look like. The author of this paper imagines a transmodern and ecocentric global culture as informed by the major changes that have been happening since 2007.

Keywords: social constructionism, engaged Buddhism, reality, selfhood, social change

"There is no way to peace, peace is the way" (Muste as cited in Hạnh 1991)

Introduction

Parallels and useful points of intersection between Social Constructionism (SC) and Buddhist psychology will be drawn out by juxtaposing relevant concepts from Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmannn's (1966) groundbreaking book, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, with the teachings of Thích Nhất Hạnh (Thầy), as expressed through the Order of Interbeing (OI), particularly in relation to reality, selfhood, and social change. Such syncretism is not unprecedented to the knowledge of this author (Dhiman, 2009; Kwee, Gergen, & Koshikawa, 2006; Kwee, Naylor, Tilakaratne, & Gergen, 2010), and so this paper adds to that scholarship but also attempts to contribute to the conversation of how the projects of personal transformation and social change are essentially one and the same--see Williams (2010) on "transformative social change." What appears to be a diametric opposition is actually an intricate and nondual relationship between individual liberation and collective wellbeing, wherein the practice of nonviolence is the bottom up method for sustaining peace within a "process-oriented paradigm" (Yeh, 2006, p. 104). The following two quotes from Thầy capture the aforementioned nonduality and echo the second-wave feminist adage of 'the personal is political': "Peace work means, first of all, being peace" (Hạnh, 2000, p. 230) and "Any meaningful work for peace must follow the principle of nonduality, the principle of penetration" (Hạnh, 2009a, p. 10).

In a book titled *Peace Begins Here: Palestinians and Israelis Listening to Each Other*, Hạnh (2004) sheds light on the practice nonviolence: "You cultivate the energy of mindfulness with mindful breathing and mindful walking, then you can recognize and tenderly embrace your worry, fear, and anger" (p. 41). Thầy compares our relationship between our negative emotions and a mother's relationship with a crying baby. This powerful metaphor captures the essence of the practice of nonviolence and is important to

keep in mind, particularly as peaceworkers, because "the self is intimately related to emotions" (Misra, 2016, p. 29). Also, the practice of nonviolence is ontologically founded in "[t]he inter-being of the life-world," which "is *dialogical* from bottom up" (Schrag, 2016, p. 44, emphasis in original). In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "the choice today is not between violence and non-violence, but rather between non-violence and non-existence" (as cited in Webel & Khaydari, 2015, p. 161). In other words, the practice of non-violence is no longer an option but an existential mode of being. According to Webel and Khaydari (2015), who review the history of successful non-violent campaigns, "non-violence can be an effective method of social and political transformation" (p. 161) and it "works in the short and medium term" (p. 163).

Whereas SC deals primarily with epistemology, Buddhism is first and foremost concerned with soteriology, which collapses the main divisions of philosophy: epistemology, ontology, and axiology. Therefore, the insights from SC and Buddhism, when supplemented by one another, can be of great help to those working in the social sciences and whose moral compass points in the direction of justice. By bringing our awareness to how knowledge is not only socially constructed, but also psychologically constructed, it can help us think, feel, and act critically and ethically about our understanding of the self (or lack thereof), which "is not only an object of knowledge, but also the subject of experience embedded in the socio-cultural context" (Misra, 2016, p. 30).

According to Hạnh (2009a), "Understanding is like water flowing in a stream. Wisdom and knowledge are solid and can block our understanding" (p. 5). For Hạnh (2000), "Understanding and love are not two things, but just one" (p. 164). Understanding and (True) Love are realized through practice, which involves looking deeply into the nature of things and watering positive seeds as well as mindfully embracing negative ones. Seeds (*bijas*) are like potentialities--for example, we are wired with many (wholesome, unwholesome, and indeterminate) seeds, however, what makes one seed dormant and another one active has to do with daily practice, which in this particular case has to do with being "aware of the manifestation and the presence of mental formations and to look deeply into them in order to see their true nature [as impermanent and empty]" (Hạnh, 1998, p. 180). Seeds are like probability waves in quantum mechanics, wherein the act of observation, through mindfulness, determines what happens with a seed; that is, whether it will remain dormant in our *ālayavijñāna* (store consciousness) or whether it will manifest in our *manovijñāna* (mind consciousness) as thought, speech, and/or action. According to Buddhist psychology, "fifty-one mental formations are present in the depths of our store consciousness in the form of seeds" (Hạnh, 1998, p. 180). For example, nonviolence (*ahimsā*) is a wholesome seed, while ignorance/confusion is an unwholesome seed.

Ignorance is the first link (*nidana*) in Pratītyasamutpāda (the twelve links of interdependent co-arising), which conditions volitional actions (second link) that in turn condition consciousness (third link) and so on and so forth (for an overview see Hạnh, 1998, pp. 221-249). In this context, ignorance means the inability to see that the self is empty or "made only of non-self elements" (Hạnh, 1998, p. 126), that is, the Five

Skandhas (aggregates) of form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. Ignorance is foundational to the First Noble Truth (*dukkha* or unsatisfactoriness), which we can think of in terms of violence or war (for more on the internal causes of violence and conflict, *see* Yeh, 2006). The remedy for ignorance is Prajñāpāramitā, or the Perfect Understanding that "[e]mptiness is the ground of everything" (Hạnh, 2009a, p. 14). Because everything is empty, "[e]verything contains everything else; that is the principle of interpenetration [or interbeing]" (Hạnh, 2009a, p. 35). Following this logic, any act of killing is ultimately rooted in ignorance, or the belief that: I am an independently existing, separate self.

Since, according to SC, knowledge is socially constructed, is understanding then also socially constructed or does it follow another mechanism? Perhaps it is psychologically constructed, that is, it varies from person to person. Maybe understanding *dukkha* is beyond the realms of cognition and language, rendering it more affective/conative and translinguistic--this could explain why *koans* are confusing to many, and why meditation typically involves long periods of silence. In other words, understanding has more to do with a general quality of heightened awareness and empathic attunement in relation to others and the world. Historically, this form of knowing has been called intuition, and it is achieved through 'the sixth sense' in Buddhist psychology: the (embodied) mind.

Buddhas (awakened ones) do exist, and they have historically existed in societies around the world for millennia, and so they are not outside the social order with its socially constructed notions of time and space, but Buddhas directly experience Ultimate Reality through *nirvāṇa*--"the extinction of all concepts and notions" (Hạnh, 1998, p. 129)--, which falls outside the social order or at least challenges it. Once *nirvāṇa* is expressed linguistically, verbally or in written format, it becomes a concept. Perhaps we can call such direct experiences that are common in meditation "anomalies," to use Kuhn's (1970) term, that challenge the existing dominant paradigm. When enough of such anomalies come to the fore and accumulate, as realized by a critical mass, a paradigm shift in the collective consciousness can then materialize--perhaps in the form of a revolution.

A paradigm shift can happen on a personal level--for example, changing through therapy-- or on a transpersonal level--for example, individuation or 'inner revolution.' Transpersonal is another way of saying "transformative social change" (Williams, 2010), but that is an idiosyncratic interpretation of the term 'transpersonal' that is in line with Ferrer's (2002) theory of "participatory spirituality," Thompson's (2016) understanding of the intricate relationship between spirituality and social justice, and Lomas's (2015) perspective on the transpersonal/transformative potential of compassion as a process of self-transcendence, which enables people to enter into "an intersubjective state of selfhood" (p. 178). One eminent archetype of the shift in both individual and collective consciousness is the counterculture of the 1960s, of which we have seen a recent resurgence on a much larger scale-- at least in terms of spirit--- as will be illustrated later.

Engaged Buddhist Psychology via The Order of Interbeing (*Tiếp Hiện*)

Buddhism offers us both a theoretical framework and a practice towards enlightenment, but Buddhists are not immune from fundamentalism or controversy. Some Buddhists in countries such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Burma (Jerryson, 2015) have been, and are still, terroristically targeting Muslims, while other Buddhists have historically used self-immolation ironically as a form of nonviolent resistance (Makley, 2015; Whalen-Bridge, 2015). Aside from these confused or confusing aspects about some Buddhists or Buddhism in general, the aim of the Buddhist project is for us, as individuals, to understand our minds, so we can then reduce and transform our *dukkha* and ideally the collective *dukkha* of all sentient beings, which is the Bodhisattva ideal of Mahāyāna Buddhism (*see* Lama, 2002; Yeh, 2006). However, to refer to 'Buddhism' is generic, and so to be more concrete, the Buddhist perspective will be represented through the lens of OI, which was founded by Thầy in Ho Chi Minh City in 1966.

OI has its roots in a Vietnamese Zen tradition with a lineage that can be traced back to the Linji School-- a Chinese Chán school of Mahāyāna Buddhism--one of the three main branches of Buddhism. OI, however, has grown over the years to become an international community of monastics and lay people, Buddhist and otherwise.

Aside from the fact that the author of this paper has received the Five Mindfulness Trainings, OI is historically relevant in relation to the United States, and its teachings are practical as well as empowering, not only for the individual but also for society as a whole.

To highlight the historically relevant piece, we must go back in time to a war that lasted more than eighteen years, wherein more than one million human lives were lost on all sides. That war is known as the 'Vietnam War' in America, yet it is called the 'American War' in Vietnam. On the surface, it was a battle between 'the good' anti-communist forces and 'the evil' communist forces; in actuality however, it was a proxy or 'cold' war between the United States and the Soviet Union over who gets to claim the title of 'superpower.' This is where Thầy enters the picture ("Ven. Thích Nhất Hạnh", n.d.):

> During the war in Vietnam, he [Thầy] worked tirelessly for reconciliation between North and South Vietnam. His lifelong efforts to generate peace moved Martin Luther King, Jr. to nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. He lives in exile in a small community in France where he teaches, writes, gardens, and works to help refugees worldwide. He has conducted many mindfulness retreats in Europe and North America helping veterans, children, environmentalists, psychotherapists, artists and many thousands of individuals seeking peace in their hearts, and in their world

Thầy was kicked out from his native country and separated from the *sangha* (community) that he had founded, by both the Vietnamese communist and non-communist governments. Because of his work toward establishing peace between the

United States and Vietnam, he was not allowed to re-enter to his country of birth for thirty-nine years. All of the suffering that he had gone through in pursuit of his ideals, briefly outlined here, serendipitously served to solidify and ground his teachings and practice further and deeper. The purpose of this biographical sketch is to point to the important connection between OI and the United States as well as to establish that the teachings of Thầy are not abstract concepts from the mind of a Buddhist monk who has been meditating for years in seclusion; rather, his teachings are based on real life experiences and a profound understanding of *dukkha*.

The key word in Thầy's peacework, if there is one, is reconciliation. Thầy believes that when it comes to any conflict (for example, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict), "[p]eople completely identify with one side, one ideology" (Hạnh, 2000, p. 220). Peaceworkers ought to instead focus on reconciliation, that is, understanding "both sides, to go to one side and describe the suffering being endured by the other side, and then to go to the other side and describe the suffering being endured by the first side" (Hạnh, 2000, p. 220). Applying this philosophy to counterterrorism, our energies would have to shift from hating or fearing terrorists to rejecting and combating terrorism through law enforcement and politicization, while attempting to understand the suffering of both terrorists and non-terrorists. This line of thinking is supported by the commednable thesis of "security *as* ethics" (Fierke, 2016, emphasis in original). Fierke (2016) points out that dualistic distinctions (human/non-human or self/other):

> have been central to the reproduction of war ... insofar as they define who is a legitimate subject of killing and who is not. Distinctions between who and what have life, and thus who or what it is ethical to destroy, reside first and foremost in our consciousness and language. (p. 219).

Instead of engaging in dehumanizing figures of speech that justify violence and war, it is crucial that we recognize that "consciousness goes 'all the way down' to the sub-atomic level" (Fierke, 2016, p. 218), and hence, honor all forms of life in the biosphere.

When most people think about Buddhism, they probably imagine a secluded 'Asian' monk meditating somewhere in the Himalayas. While there may be some truth to this stereotype, one of the Three Jewels in Buddhism is the *sangha*. Though a number of *sanghas* in the past have been exclusive-- for example, to no more than monks and nuns or even to monks only-- the ideal behind that specific Jewel is inclusiveness, not only of Buddhist monastics and lay practitioners but, more importantly, of all sentient beings. The application of the Bodhisattva ideal then, within a social justice framework, is precisely how practicing Engaged Buddhism has been not only healing for individuals but also empowering for the community at large.

Following the footsteps of peaceful revolutionaries (such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Thây) who have promoted nonviolent resistance in the face of oppression, we have recently witnessed the fruits of their emancipatory seeds manifest in the Arab Spring and the Occupy movement. We can contextualize these social

movements as "anomalies" (Kuhn, 1970) in a paradigm shift towards a global culture. Only a global culture would be equipped to contain all the energy, financial, and ecological crises, among other global issues, facing us at present.

Psychological (de)Constructionism

In *The Social Construction of Reality* (SCR), Berger and Luckmann mainly looked at two things: society as both an objective reality and a subjective reality. In the book's conclusion, the authors made a call for a "sociological psychology," or "a psychology that derives its fundamental perspectives from a sociological understanding of the human condition" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 186). The work of psychologist Kenneth J. Gergen seems to fit that description. As a matter of fact, he co-edited two anthology books titled *Horizons* (Kwee et al., 2006) and *New Horizons in Buddhist Psychology* (Kwee et al., 2010) that look, among other things, at SC in relation to Buddhist psychology. Also relevant is Friedman's (2016) rereading of SCR and her grounding of social constructionism in the body through an emphasis on "processes of perceptual construction" (p. 80). Her theoretical effort to transcend "dualist ontologies that separate mind from body" (Friedman, 2016, p. 89) through a focus on embodiment is in no doubt indebted to Merleau-Ponty's (2012) foundational work on the topic and is something that I have also addressed in my research on mindfulness (Beshara, 2015).

Even though psychology has many sub-fields, one can by and large conclude that the individual (or the *Subject*) is the key focal point bringing certain coherence to the discipline's diversity. Following this logic, the deconstruction of the individual would be like pulling the rug from under psychology's feet.

The deconstruction of the self may be a painful process, but it can also be a therapeutic one, which is not an end in itself but a means to another process: reconstruction (Gergen, 1999). Perhaps psychology's incoherence is a reflection of our inconsistency as individuals. In other words, human beings are not only governed by logic; we are also 'irrational' animals or, as psychoanalysts like to claim: unconscious forces, in our mind and body, largely drive how we think, feel, and act (Freud, 2010). What about freedom of choice? Is that largely an illusion? The Buddhist answer is pragmatic, and not very dissimilar from the ethos of the "critical social sciences" (Flores, 2015) or critical psychology for that matter: we work with the givens, and so beyond free will and determinism, we try to liberate ourselves from *dukkha*, and dualistic concepts in general, to achieve greater freedom.

Inspired by SCR, we will look at the psychological construction of reality by examining the individual as both an objective reality and a subjective reality, and we will try to move beyond this binary as well. The main lens through which the individual will be examined is that of Buddhist psychology, specifically OI, wherein the individual does not possess a separate self. An alternative to this illusion of self, or *anattā* (nonself), is a social or relational self.

In analytical psychology, Carl G. Jung visualized the relationship between the self and the ego, since they are usually conflated, as the relationship between a circle and a

dot at its center. In *The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious*, Jacques Lacan (2004) argued for a different metaphor in conceptualizing the (divided) Subject. Borrowing from the history of astronomy, especially from Johannes Kepler, Lacan saw the ego being like the sun and the self like an ellipse, as opposed to a perfect circle. This analogy challenges our comfortable notion of a stable center or personality core, which is at the foundation of humanistic psychology.

Despite their drastic differences as torchbearers of psychoanalysis, both Jung and Lacan used a heliocentric model of the self; possibly, they championed the spirit of the modernity, which can be traced back to the Copernican revolution. This paradigm shift from the geocentric model to the heliocentric one marked the birth of modern science, but on a subtler level it marked the beginning of the de-centering of the self. One would think that, as a result of modernity, we would be moving away from anthropocentrism, but ironically the opposite manifested, especially after the industrial revolution. We went from having a premodern "worldcentric" (Wilber, 2006) outlook, such as pantheism, to having a modern ethnocentric view--as epitomized by the grand narrative or discourse of a 'clash of civilizations' between 'Judeo-Christian' Occidentals and Muslim Orientals. Now we are at a postmodern egocentric crossroads where 'anything goes' is the relativistic ethos *du jour*. Here is a quote from Bridge (2013) that crystallizes this last point:

> 'Selfie' has been named 'Word of the Year' by the Oxford Dictionary, an award that underscores the notion that we're fast becoming a wired-up, dumbed-down society of egomaniacs. […] Paradoxically, the more technologically-equipped our society becomes the closer to the animal world the human species seems to aspire. We're evolving backwards to the Freudian id […], the source of our animalistic needs and wants, particularly our sexual and aggressive drives. The id works according to the pleasure principle, the psychological force that motivates an increasing number of people, from Miley Cyrus to the kids at the local shopping mall, to engage in behavior not worthy of the local zoo [such as 'twerking'].

In *The Century of the Self* (Curtis, 2002), we see how Western colonial powers in the 20th century, namely the United States and the United Kingdom, made use of the different notions of the self, as understood in psychoanalysis and humanistic psychology, to manipulate the masses economically and politically. This collusion between the power elite and social scientists, of course, highlights the usefulness of socially constructing a 'self' in order for societies to have consumers who will buy products and voters who will maintain the status quo. In other words, one can argue that individualism is a myth whose sole purpose is crowd manipulation.

Instead of romanticizing the premodern world however, we can start visualizing a transmodern revolution, wherein egocentrism would be replaced by ecocentrism or geophilosophy (Schrag, 2016), putting the individual back to its humble place within the larger picture of the cosmos. Put differently, interbeing "can separate one's mind from

[ignorant] anthropocentric thinking to [compassionate] holistic understanding" (Sieber, 2015). A significant aspect of transmodernity is decoloniality, the antidote for Eurocentrism, and so the present application of Buddhism (as an alternative to Western philosophy) is a working example of decoloniality-in-action. For Dussel (2012):

> '*Trans*-modernity' points toward all of those aspects that are situated 'beyond' (and also 'prior to') the structures valorized by modern European/North American culture, and which are present in the great non-European cultures and have begun to move toward a *pluriversal* utopia. (p. 43, emphasis in original)

On the 15th of November 2013, Richard Tarnas gave a lecture organized by the Jung Society of Atlanta, titled *Understanding Our Moment in History: An Archetypal Perspective*. The most powerful theme during that evening was concerning how we have lost our connection with the cosmos. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are always constructing mythologies--the difference being that some mythologies are more meaningful and purposeful than others. For example, the Gaia hypothesis is unarguably much more valuable and ethical than Nazism. In the lecture, Tarnas (2013) illustrated a sad aspect of our postmodern mythos of cynicism and disconnection by showing us the trailer for a film called *The City Dark* (Cheney, 2011). The feature documentary takes place in New York City, where residents no longer see the stars because of the over-abundance of electric lights.

Whether we are interested in cosmology or not, it would be unwise to overlook the fact that we are specs of dust in a vast and expanding universe, which is accelerating toward greater and greater entropy via a mysterious force called dark energy that constitutes, along with dark matter, about 96% of the known universe--meaning that all of what we know about the universe amounts to less than 4% (Moskowitz, 2011). Our sheer size and the limitation of our knowledge are humbling, to say the least; nevertheless, we have accomplished many great things--from building the Great Pyramids at Giza to coming up with the Internet-- and hopefully more to come.

In the premodern world, the Ancients observed, learned from, and revered the stars in the heavens whose light represented gateways to the universe's past, wherefrom understanding can be accrued. Today, in this postmodern epoch, instead of looking at the heavens to construct our mythos, we have become--particularly through social media--worshippers at the virtual altars of the cult of celebrity, whom we revere as demigods and ironically call 'stars.' Interestingly, in the psychological realm, we are quite behind and somewhat primitive in our commonsensical understanding of psychological reality, particularly in comparison to a field such as physics. This comparison is made not in the spirit of 'physics envy,' but to point to the fact that even the solidity of matter was severely challenged in quantum mechanics around a century ago. Yet, in the field of psychology, we still did not catch up on that verity, which is why the publication of Alexander Wendt's (2015) *Quantum Mind and Social Science: Unifying Physical and Social Ontology* is so timely.

In a transmodern world, there would be no need to argue for a return to the golden past, instead we would create a new mythos: technology would be greatly embraced with a strong emphasis on renewable energy, in attempt to heal our severed connection with the biosphere. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966, pp. 122-134), mythology is the most archaic form of "universe-maintenance" and "legitimation," which historically has been replaced by theology first, and then science. Conceivably, we went from superstition and dogma to uncertainty--an eminent fruit of modern science, according to physicist Richard Feynman (1998).

Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 106) write of the reified world as a dehumanized world and, of course, that is one of the traps of language, since through language we tend to transcend the here and the now by abstracting, objectifying, and categorizing our experiences in the process. This "objectivation" of human subjectivity through "signification" is what Berger and Luckmann (1966) call "detachability" (pp. 50-51). The irony is that "man is capable paradoxically of producing a reality that denies him" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 107), and for this reason, one can find SC to be existentially freeing, since if we see ourselves performing roles or wearing hats then we can perceive ourselves to have more freedom of choice within the boundaries of what is possible. This principle of playfulness or performativity (Butler, 1990) is at the core of SC.

Freedom, however, comes with responsibility and it is always contingent upon our history and the specific context in which we exist. Again, the Buddhist perspective on freedom is pragmatic as captured in the Four Noble Truths: we accept "the 'givens' of existence" (Yalom, 2008, p. 201), or our human condition, and we work our way from there. Put differently, we realize that suffering is a fact of life and we try to understand it by tracing it back to its roots in order to transform it.

Buddhism gives us a realistic picture of life and a practical approach, or the (Noble Eightfold) path we can take to transform our suffering; SC gives us a playful outlook on life that can be intellectually liberating from different types of determinisms, be they theological, biological, or cultural. It is easy to imagine then why the marriage between Buddhism and SC would be a productive one, especially as we psychologically (de)construct our self in favor of a social or relational self.

The Psychological Construction of Reality

As has been already established, psychological reality is psychologically constructed, and the role of a psychology of knowledge would be to analyze the process by which that knowledge becomes psychologically established as reality. This brings psychiatric discourse to mind, especially psychiatry's 'bible,' or The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). Of course, when we think of critiques of the dominant discourse of psychiatry, the anti-psychiatry movement comes to mind, particularly the following heroes: Michel Foucault and RD Laing.

In some cases psychiatry is efficient, particularly when the psychological condition has a deeply rooted physiological cause. For example, Temple Grandin spoke

of how she favored Prozac over psychoanalysis in terms of treating her anxiety because after she had her brain scanned she realized that, because of her autistic condition, her amygdala was larger than average ("Paul Bloom Talks Mind vs. Brain, Temple Grandin Talks Prozac", n.d.).

In the current socioeconomic system within which we all operate in most parts of the world--otherwise known as global capitalism-- profit is prioritized over ethics. It comes as no surprise then that vast income inequality and poverty--among other aspects of "structural violence" (Galtung, 1969)--are natural byproducts of said system. This connection, first exposed by the anti-psychiatry movement in the 1970s, between the socioeconomic system and the resultant psychological constructions of mental illness (as pathological knowledge) speaks to the collusion between Big Pharma and psychiatry (Breggin, 2013).

Levine (2013) shows how psychiatry has been used as a political tool of coercion, which is an important dimension that is inseparable from the social construction of the political economy:

> One reason that there is so little political activism in the United States is that a potentially huge army of anti-authoritarians are being depoliticized by mental illness diagnoses and by attributions that their inattention, anger, anxiety, and despair are caused by defective biochemistry, not by their alienation from a dehumanizing society. These diagnoses and attributions make them less likely to organize democratic movements to transform society.

Does a diagnostic label such as Oppositional Defiant Disorder allude to a real disorder, or does it basically imply a challenge to the status quo: the social 'order'?

Speaking of (dis)order, the whole purpose of the social order, according to Berger and Luckmann's (1966, p. 70) "theory of institutionalizations," is "stability" (p. 140); something we all desire, since it shelters us from chaos, and hence, reduces our anxieties. This sought-after stability can be framed as a defense mechanism, a form of collective denial; homeostasis can be realized, according to Berger and Luckmann (1966), through the following triad: "externalization," "objectivation," and "internalization" (p. 78) between "the human organism," "the environment", and "the social order" (p. 66)--which we produced, yet which produces us too.

On the topic of *stability as a form of collective denial*, if we are to "maintain" reality (p. 14), we must factor in order as well as disorder, both wellbeing and illbeing. Conceivably, a cyclical perspective could help us see wellbeing and illbeing as states that we fluctuate between in a natural way, instead of committing the error of instant pathologization. This was historically and unfortunately a common feature of many psychiatric diagnoses, such as how homosexuality was considered a mental disorder in the first edition of the DSM because of the cultural conservatism prominent in the 1950s.

Before going any further, we must attempt to define 'reality,' which is an onerous task given that it has befuddled philosophers for millennia. Also, how can we address reality without addressing 'truth'? Berger and Luckmann (1966) define reality as "a

quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition" (p. 1). Maybe we can interpret that definition using a neo-Kantian lens, that is, our knowledge of reality is our phenomenal experience of the thing-in-itself, while the *noumenon* could be the truth, which is inaccessible empirically due to the limitation of our five senses, but which may be more accessible using our sixth sense: the (embodied) mind.

This is the historical difference between empiricism and rationalism to situate this argument in the context of Western philosophy. To categorize 'Buddhist psychology,' in this instance, under rationalism is a mistake because the mind and its processes are conceived of in a completely different way in Buddhism.

According to the Two Truths doctrine in Buddhism, for instance, there are a relative truth or historical reality and an Absolute Truth or Ultimate Reality. We can see the relative truth being almost equivalent to inter-subjective reality or Kant's *phenomenon*, while Absolute Truth could correspond to inter-objective reality or Kant's *noumenon*. The purpose of the prefix inter- is to emphasize that we live in a relational world, and so we cannot understand psychological (or any other kind of) reality in a vacuum.

Thầy equates interbeing with the first element of the Noble Eightfold Path: Right View. Absolute Truth might sound like a turn off to secular humanists, who shy away from any form of dogma, but to oversimplify the Two Truths doctrine, Absolute Truth alludes to the fact that all phenomena are empty of a separate existence. Western scholars have wrongly interpreted this emptiness over the years to mean nihilism or nothingness, but emptiness really alludes to the interconnectedness of all things, or Pratītyasamutpāda (interdependent co-arising).

Similar to probability waves in quantum mechanics, humans have wholesome and unwholesome seeds in their store consciousness or Unconscious. *Bajas* are like dormant potentialities, which can manifest as thought, action, and/or speech, depending on the variables of each moment, but most crucially, the manifestation of any seed is dependent on the intention we bring to it in the here and the now. The point of mindfulness is to make ourselves aware of this process so that we can make responsible decisions on our path to greater freedom, principally from delusion and ignorance.

To sum up this section, two types of realities/truths have been addressed here, at least as far as psychology is concerned: inter-subjective/historical reality (*phenomena*) or relative truth, and inter-objective/Ultimate Reality or Absolute Truth (the *noumenon*).

In Western philosophy, these two types of realities/truths-- the immanent and the transcendent-- have been posited as inherently dichotomous, but in the Buddhist tradition they have been regarded as two aspects of one Ultimate Reality that are overlapping, just like how dimensions fold into one another. Therefore, any perceived dualism of internal (psychical) and external (physical) realities, or of mind-body/subject-object, is then seen as a function of the limitation of our senses, which can only perceive a three-dimensional reality. The Buddhist understanding of a multi-dimensional reality is supported by M-theory, according to which there may be eleven dimensions--ten of space and one of time (Rosenthal & Zaidan, 2013).

Challenging mainstream knowledge on sensation and perception, Terrence McKenna argued for the expansion of consciousness through the use of psychedelics. According to him, some of these exceptional experiences give us access to "nonordinary states of consciousness" (Grof, 2000, p. 1); therefore, said experiences are not mere hallucinations but may be direct experiences of the fourth dimension via the mystical concept of the Third Eye, or the eye of the mind.

A more interesting way of conceptualizing the relationship between the body and the mind is by using electromagnetism as a metaphor. While that is clearly not an explanation, it gives us a new lens through which to look at the age old paradox because, similarly to how electricity and magnetism were seen as two unrelated phenomena, the dualism between the body and the mind may very well be resolved in a similar fashion in the near future (Chalmers, 1999). Only then would we use a term like 'bodymind,' which should be in more common usage and not only limited to the New Age subculture.

The Self is Made Only of Non-Self Elements

Can consciousness exist without an observer? Probably, but that is something that is hard to write about, which shines a light on the dualistic nature of grammar. More than a century ago, Nietzsche (1998) addressed this problem in *On The Genealogy of Morals*, when he wrote, "common people separate the lightning from its flash and take the latter as a *doing*, as an effect of a subject called lightning" (p. 25, emphasis in original). In the example, there is a subject (lightning) and a predicate (flash) even though, in actuality, there is no separation between the lightning and the flash, but when describing the phenomenon, a dualism ensues. A similar principle is at work when it comes to selfhood, or psychological reality in general. When we say 'I,' we reify and separate ourselves from the Other, which is known as the subject-object problem in Western philosophy. This could be seen as an extension of the body-mind problem.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) define knowledge as "the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics" (p. 13). The psychology of knowledge, as a constructed soteriological endeavor, follows the middle way of "pragmatic pluralism" (Ludwig, 2011) between the extremes of realism/nominalism, physicalism/dualism, and modernity/postmodernity. *Pragmatic pluralism* occupies the crossroads of pragmatism, pluralism, and transmodernity, wherein the emptiness of the Subject is not a nihilistic nothingness but a field of infinite possibilities or unrealized potentialities. The Subject inter-is with all that is because:

> For Buddhism, knowledge of reality is associated with self-transformation and the liberation of practitioners, and an underlying assumption that all life within the universe is connected. It assumes that the transformation of human suffering is not only possible but an ethical imperative. (Fierke, 2016, p. 221).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) addressed multiple socially constructed realities in their book--eleven, to be exact-- which, coincidentally, is the number of dimensions

identified by string theorists, as previously stated. And so in the psychology of knowledge, we must acknowledge how psychological reality is multilayered, and perhaps one of our tasks is to attempt to identify the different levels of consciousness--for instance, seven according to the chakra system (Beshara, 2013a) or eight according to Buddhist psychology-- without being trapped into a discriminatory and hierarchical way of thinking, such as the caste system in India.

The question of self-knowledge, as captured in the famous maxim 'Know Thyself,' can be traced back to Ancient Greece, according to most scholars. The credit usually goes to Socrates or to the Oracle at the temple of Apollo at Delphi, but James (1989) believes the aphorism dates back to Ancient Egypt.

'Who am I?' was probably one of the first questions to baffle philosophers, but a better question is: how are we working together as world citizens in caring for the Earth? Moving away from "nation-state ideology" and its "ontology of otherness," we can then begin to recognize that "[t]he geophilosophical self is a multiplicity," wherein difference is "a positive feature of the process self and social constitution" (Schrag, 2016, pp. 45-46). Schrag's (2016) proposal for a "postnational politics of cosmopolitan world democracy" (p. 43), a politico-phenomenological vision based upon Hwa Yol Jung's Great Chain of Ecological Interbeing, is an ambitious alternative to 'international politics,' which emphasizes "solidarity of transversal human rights, shared values, and agreed-upon principles of justice" all the while placing "a premium on cosmopolitan life-world nongovernmental organizations that operate on a grassroots level" (p. 47) as opposed to top-down organizations like the United Nations or the European Union. Schrag's (2016) vision is holistic and the approach which he promotes is bottom up, but he focuses solely on self-identity and politics while failing to mention economics, culture, language, religion, and ethnicity--important categories when it comes to the analysis of identity and/or ideology. Yeh (2006), on the other hand, is aware of the importance of these issues when it comes to a field like peace studies, as is clear from the following quote: "specific areas of problem, such as class/race oppression and environmental degradation need to be adequately addressed and fully explored" (p. 108).

Schrag's (2016) shortcoming renders the applicability of his vision questionable among the many citizens of the world who are not interested in, or familiar with, either Western democracy or phenomenology. This critique is applicable to this paper as well as to any peace proposal for that matter. Having said that, Yeh's (2006, p. 98) "integrated peace" model may serve as a corrective because it is holistic and covers four dimensions relevant to any work in peace studies: intra-personal, interpersonal, in-group, and inter-group.

Given that the focus of this paper is psychological, emphasis is put on the intra-personal dimension with the following in mind: "As a member of the human race, we all contribute directly or indirectly, with action or inaction, to violence, be it war, conflict, or exploitation" (Yeh, 2006, p. 106). Peace is a process and we are all part of that process whether we are aware of that role or not, particularly if we want to realize positive (as opposed to negative) peace because the "absence of war" (or negative peace) is not "real peace, but a peace founded on fear" (Lama, 2002). Without understanding and True

Love, we will never be able have a sense of what the Dalia Lama calls "universal responsibility;" ironically insects like bees, which are arguably less intelligent than humans, "possess an instinctive sense of social responsibility" (Lama, 2002). "The real test of compassion," according to the Dalai Lama (2002), and by extension *the real test* of any peace proposal, "is not what we say in abstract discussions but how we conduct ourselves in daily life." The practice of nonviolence is "the medicine of altruism" (Lama, 2002) and it is based on the Third Mindfulness Training, or the four elements of True Love: loving kindness, joy, compassion, and equanimity.

Earlier, we addressed the difference between the self and the ego using Jung's and Lacan's heliocentric model(s). This distinction is colloquially the distinction between 'who we are'--consciously and unconsciously--and 'who we think we are'--which is the ego, a fraction of our consciousness. Psychological deconstructionism, which can be seen as a form of 'ego death,' is about putting the ego back in its place, especially when it is inflated to the degree that it becomes conflated with the self. Such an inflation/conflation can result in a narcissistic personality (see the "Dark Triad" in Goleman, 2006, p. 118)--a common condition in the postmodern world, particularly on social media, with its neoliberal ethos of absolute relativism.

Another way of addressing 'ego death' with a positive slant is in terms of 'ego rebirth,' if we are to view the deconstruction process as a cycle à la *saṃsāra* or the mythological symbol of the *ouroboros*. The argument is not whether there is or is not an individual, for it is commonsensical to assume the existence of a human organism. The problem is that once we construct the individual and turn her into an –ism, usually in speech or writing, we reify and abstract her. In other words, the paradox of individualism is that we--as a society in the 'developed' world--are positioned as being made up of disconnected individuals who seemingly live in a vacuum, yet whom simultaneously are expected to compete with one another, according to the social contract or the unwritten rules of the 'free' market. Nevertheless, it is useful to talk about the individual categorically with the awareness that she lives in a complex web of relationships with other individuals as meditated through the social order and the environment.

Since we are addressing a psychology of knowledge, which begins with self-knowledge, we are referring to intrapersonal relationships, that is, the relationship of the individual with her self.

In Buddhist psychology, though, the self is nothing more than a concept because the self is seen as made only of non-self elements--the Five *Skandhas*. This is similar to the conceptualization by different psychologists of the various elements that make up a person: Jung called them *complexes*, Assagioli--the founder of Psychosynthesis--called them *subpersonalities*, and Schwartz--the founder of the Internal Family Systems Model (IFS)--calls them *parts*. The Five *Skandhas* are form, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Form is the body, so do we have a body or are we the body? If we say we are the body, we are equating the part with the whole, but if we say we have a body then who is this 'I' that has a body?

According to Buddhist psychology, referring to 'I' is a function of language--which we tend to reify when communicating with one another. Ultimately, there is a body

and there is a consciousness of that body (in other words, 'the body within the body') among other non-self elements without the need to explain away our subjectivity, or the 'hard problem of consciousness,' using a homunculus. At the level of historical reality, there is a social or relational self, but in terms of Ultimate Reality there is no self. However, Buddhism's overemphasis on the mind, as both a tool and an object, can mislead one to think that Buddhism is idealistic, or even solipsistic. To avoid this problem of infinite regress, it is vital to remember that "[t]he topology of inter-being is at once inter-corporeal" (Schrag, 2016, p. 44), meaning that the various categories used when referring to the self (such as the Five *Skandhas*) are pragmatic tools employed chiefly for analytical purposes.

In IFS, the metaphor used is that of the self as a conductor of the different parts, which are like musicians in an orchestra: an integrated (or individuated) self produces a beautiful symphony, while a disintegrated (or divided) self produces a psychological cacophony of mental disorders. This is where SC is precisely helpful when it comes to selfhood because deconstructing the ego is half of the process of self-knowledge, with the other half being the psychological reconstruction of the self, which is a difficult process that involves a balancing act between freedom of choice as well as responsibility, and often can take a lifetime to complete if one is successful because it is the equivalent of enlightenment.

Consequently, authenticity, according to the present framework, is not about some intrinsic essence, but rather about understanding ourselves, that is, understanding our *dukkha* and the root(s) of our *dukkha*, so that we can transform this *dukkha*, be free from it, and become whoever we wish to be. In this context, selfhood is in a constant state of flux towards greater wellbeing, provided we are diligent enough about our mindfulness practice. Selfhood, in other words, has more to do with understanding how we relate to others, the world, and ourselves, since we do not operate within a vacuum of self-interest. It is worth reminding ourselves of our evolution: that the survival of our species has depended and will always depend on both competition and collaboration.

René Descartes is often quoted for writing *cogito ergo sum*. Thầy challenges Descartes's maxim with his own version: "I think therefore I am…*not* here" (Hạnh, 2009b, p. 33, emphasis added), which means that there is thinking without a thinker, a process without a processor, a brain without a homunculus, and a mind without an 'I.' Recognizing these puzzling facts can help us become more aware of some of the trappings of language, such as reification and objectification. Interestingly, in *Lacan: A Beginner's Guide*, Bailly (2009) quotes Lacan having used the same exact reformulation of the Cartesian quote as the one provided by Thầy, though undoubtedly through his structuralist/psychoanalytic lens.

William Shakespeare (1599) had some wise words to say, as expressed by Jacques in *As You Like It*, on the social construction of selfhood: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages" (Act II, Scene 7). To stay with Shakespeare (1600), but moving on to another play, Hamlet is known for this ontological statement: "To be, or not to be- that is the question" (Act III, Scene 1).

According to Thầy, however, "To be or not to be is *not* the question' (Hạnh, 2002, p. 19, emphasis added), because he views the notions of being and nonbeing as obstacles or concepts that we have to transcend in order for Ultimate Reality--the reality of interbeing--to manifest. Interbeing is the Right View that can lead us to wellbeing (Hạnh, 2007), which "promotes a better society" (Misra, 2016, p. 38). Wellbeing, the outcome of the Noble Eightgfold Path, is equivalent to 'eudaimonic happiness,' as opposed to 'hedonic happiness' (illbeing)--a product of consumerism and materialism. Said differently, " Inter-being is not being and it is not non-being. Inter-being means at the same time being empty of a separate identity; empty of a separate self" (Hạnh, 2002, p. 48). Are we afraid that our body will die, or are we afraid that our idea about our self will no longer exist?

Transformative Social Change

Building upon Jung's work, cultural historian, Richard Tarnas, sees 'archetypal astrology' as synchronicity on a grand scale. Based on his knowledge of what he called "The Saturn-Uranus-Pluto T-Square of 2007-2012: The Convergence of Three Planetary Cycles," Tarnas (2010) made a prediction for the time period between 2007 and 2020, which he described as, "a more rare three-planet configuration whose historical correlations consistently involves events of markedly *greater transformative, destabilizing, and often destructive power*" (p. 161, emphasis added). Whether we take astrology seriously or not, at one point in history, it was considered to be a science, and even though most scientists today think of it as a pseudoscience, there is a resurgence of astrology--at least of 'astrological medicine' as a historical research area--that is being studied by professor Lauren Kassell at the University of Cambridge. Wolfson (2013) highlights the strengths of astrology to the dismay of its skeptics:

> The season of your birth, it turns out, appears to have a strong influence on your future. Depending on whether you were born in the spring, summer, fall, or winter, you could have a higher or lower risk for: schizophrenia, multiple sclerosis, sleep disorders, Type 1 diabetes, bipolar disorder, and allergies, among others. The season of your birth also seems to affect how long you live.

To conclude in favor of 'archetypal astrology,' especially as it relates to psychology, here are the judicious words of Stanislav Grof (2012), based on his fifty years of research into the mysterious terrain known as 'consciousness studies':

> [I]t is important to emphasize that the astrological predictions, while extraordinarily accurate, are archetypically predictive and not concretely predictive. […] Each archetype and archetypal combination has a rich spectrum of meanings, while at the same time remaining true to its own specific nature. […] In my present understanding, archetypal astrology is the long-sought Rosetta stone of consciousness research. It provides a key for understanding the nature and content

of present, past, and future holotropic states, both spontaneous and induced. I now strongly believe that responsible work with holotropic

states combined with archetypal astrology as a guide represents probably one of the most promising trends in psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy. (p. 161)

The shifts in our collective consciousness that Tarnas (2010) alluded to earlier, and which echo the ethos of the counterculture of the 1960s, can be confirmed when we recall to mind certain individuals, groups, events, or ideas from around the world since 2007, such as Anonymous, WikiLeaks, the financial crisis of 2007-2008, Barack Hussein Obama II as the first African American president of the United States, the Zeitgeist Film Series and the Zeitgeist Movement, the Arab Spring, the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, the Occupy movement, and whistle blowing (such as Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden). What do all of these things have in common? They are anomalies in the current paradigm of global capitalism, which points to the fact that we are in desperate need of a paradigm shift, but toward what exactly?

First of all, we need to set our priorities straight; we cannot put profit before ethics if we plan to survive as a species. Fierke (2016) reminds us that "[e]thics is about [legitimate] action" (p. 216). By ethics we mean 'ecocentric ethics'--see Schrag's (2016, p. 44) "ethic of ecocentric responsibility," which is fundamentally "an ethics of compassion" (Fierke, 2016, p. 217). The Venus Project (VP) is Jacque Fresco's vision for a better future without what he calls "the old-age inadequacies of war, poverty, hunger, debt, environmental degradation and unnecessary human suffering" ("The Venus Project", n.d.). Fresco's project could be misinterpreted as some kind of socialist utopia, however, VP is not driven by any political ideology. Rather, VP's emphasis is on technology (particularly renewable energy,) social engineering as informed by behaviorism, and what Fresco calls a "Resource-Based Economy" (RBE), which is his alternative to the current monetary system. VP is not flawless though, for it needs to address psychological reality beyond an instrumental/behaviorist understanding, particularly when it comes to accounting for why people commit crimes and how to address that psychosocial problem.

In the political sphere, we can learn about the application of direct democracy from the experience of the Icelandic people who, after the collapse of Iceland's banks and government in 2008/2009, crowdsourced their country's constitution using social media (Siddique, 2011). However, it is vital to also not idealize democracy as a panacea, for it founded upon the violence of slavery, misogyny, and Western imperialism.

On the topic of social media, there is clearly a connection between global consciousness and the role of the Internet, particularly as facilitated through Web 2.0 technologies that allow for greater virtual interactivity between people and machines (see Beshara, 2013b). Some would even argue that the Internet could become conscious one day, which pulls us into the strange world of transhumanism. According to one such theorist, "by the mid-2030s, when artificial intelligence is expected to surpass human intelligence levels, and quantum computing systems become reality, positive futurists

believe that our global brain will become fully conscious and self-aware as it guides humanity into what promises to become a most 'magical future'" (Pelletier, 2008). This panpsychic view is shared by brain scientist and serial entrepreneur, Jeff Stibel, as well as neuroscientist, Christof Koch ("Will the internet become conscious?", 2012), and is reminiscent of the concept of the *noosphere* or the sphere of human thought. Koch asks, "is the internet more complex than the human brain?" (as cited in Keim, 2013), and provides the following answer:

> It depends on the degree of integration of the internet. For instance, our brains are connected all the time. On the internet, computers are packet-switching. They're not connected permanently, but rapidly switch from one to another. But according to my version of panpsychism, it feels like something to be the internet -- and if the internet were down, it wouldn't feel like anything anymore. And that is, in principle, not different from the way I feel when I'm in a deep, dreamless sleep.

The ancient philosophical question of selfhood, though important, becomes trivial in the context of world poverty when almost half of the world--over three billion people--live on less than $2.50 a day (Shah, 2013). Gandhi called poverty the worst form of violence, and it is this form of inequality--a product of "structural violence" (Galtung, 1969) that will always exist as long as profit precedes ethics-- is the root cause of most *dukkha* in the world today, which is why we desperately need to shift our politico-economic practices from egoism to compassion (Fierke, 2016).

Clinical psychology, although historically a Western social construct, can be useful to poor populations in developing countries when it comes to the treatment of mental disorders, but cross-cultural sensitivity is key; hence, liberation psychology (Martín-Baró, 1994) is the way to go in order to avoid cultural imperialism in the Global South. While these low-income populations are rightly concerned with physical survival, psychology can help them with symbolic survival too, such as surviving the postmodern world through (digital) literacy. The ideal situation in a transmodern world would be to eradicate inequality, and subsequently poverty, using a post-scarcity economic model, such as RBE.

Again, how are all of these things interconnected? Fundamentally, there is a larger system at work, let us say at the cosmic level, which we have been mythologically disconnected from since modernity. The insights from Buddhist psychology on the Three Marks of Existence--impermanence, suffering, and nonself-- soteriologically point in the direction of ecocentrism, and that is precisely the paradigm shift that is taking place on a global level, as far as our collective consciousness is concerned. Put simply, the universe is much older and wiser than we are and it will surely outlive us, so we can either align ourselves to it and adapt or suffer the consequences of our resistance to the laws of nature, whether because of our ignorance, confusion, or stupidity.

Beginning

As members of the social order, we (according to Berger & Luckmann, 1966) have roles to perform in terms of the "legitimation" (p. 110) of the "uninstitutionalized" (p. 97) parts of reality, like "socially segregated sub-universes of meaning" (p. 102), via "habitualization" (p. 70) and "typification" (p. 72), and the "de-institutionlization" (p. 99) of irrelevant sub-/super-structures (p. 18), in our attempt to transcend 'false consciousness' in favor of a more inclusive ideology.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), institutions need "conceptual machineries" (p. 122), such as mythology, theology, or science, for "universe maintenance" (p. 122) and legitimation. Conceivably, if we have conceptual machineries that are informed by transdisciplinary theorizing and praxis, we would be producing critically conscious institutions that can take care of the planet as well as its inhabitants (namely animals, minerals and plants) on a global scale. Most of the time, we settle for co-existence, but this passive multiculturalism leaves us with the problem of relativism, which can be solved if the social order's ethos is in an alignment with the workings of the natural order.

In other words, opinions on what will happen if we jump off of a building are irrelevant when we know that gravity, as a constant, is a natural law that most likely will be in effect regardless of the variables involved in the situation. This position is not reflective of some type of scientific dogmatism. Rather, it is informed by the fact that knowledge is a realization in two ways: apprehending the objectivated reality and producing this reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 78). Deviance, which is akin to thinking outside the box, is important too, when it comes to the production of social or psychological reality, especially if what we aspire to is a paradigm shift toward a greater alignment with Ultimate Reality.

The psychology of knowledge, or self-knowledge, when it comes to the psychological construction of reality, as informed by Engaged Buddhism, goes something like this (Hạnh, 2009a, 19):

> As I look more deeply, I can see that in a former life I was a cloud. This is not poetry; it is science … Without the cloud, I cannot be here. I am the cloud , the river, the air at this very moment, so I know that in the past I have been a cloud, a river, and the air. And I was a rock. I was the minerals in the water. This is not a question of belief in reincarnation. This is the history of life on Earth. We have been gas, sunshine, water, fungi, and plants. We have been single-celled beings … These are not superstitious things. Every one of us has been a cloud, a deer, a bird, a fish, and we continue to be these things, not just in former lives.

Since we established that there is no self, then the psychology of knowledge becomes a metapsychology of emptiness, the interconnectedness of all things, or interbeing. A Big Bang had to take place 13.7 billion years ago for us to exist today; we are made of 'star stuff' after all, as the late Carl Sagan famously put it in his wonderful TV series *Cosmos*. Can we exist without air? Obviously not, yet we take breathing for granted, even though it is the basis of our survival. A complete psychology ought to be

concerned not just with the mind or the brain, but also with the relationship between the mind, the body, and the world. Buddhist psychology is a psychology of emptiness, that is, a psychology of relations, but since its emphasis is on the (embodied) mind, we need to do more transdisciplinary theorizing and praxis in order to meet the needs of an ecocentric and transmodern global culture, especially if all of us are to survive. To echo Webel and Khadari's (2015) words, "To survive, humanity must learn both to see clearly and to act forcefully but non-violently" (p. 167).

Notes

1. It is appropriate to not translate some of these original concepts from Pali or Sanskrit because they are unique to their tradition. A translation, as opposed to an adoption, would not do justice to these unique concepts because it can be a form of linguistic imperialism or even intellectual property theft.
2. The use of 'the sixth sense' in Buddhist psychology is unrelated to the paranormal association with that term.
3. This symbol ⊙, which was used by Carl G. Jung to describe the relationship between the ego and the self, happens to be the astronomical and astrological symbol for the sun, and the ancient Egyptian sign for 'sun' or 'Ra' in the hieroglyphic writing system ("Solar symbol", n.d.).
4. Carl Sagan's (1994) reflections on the cosmos are prescient:
    > Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light [the Earth, which he called 'the pale blue dot']. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.
5. The Ancient Egyptians, according to Gadalla (2002), were so advanced in terms of their consciousness that they were able to hear the frequencies produced by the movement of planets in the heavens, a phenomenon known as 'the music of the spheres,' which interested Pythagoras greatly. One can argue that the way the Ancient Egyptians used the heavens in the premodern world is similar to how we use the Internet today in the postmodern world, that is, seeking knowledge from something that is greater than ourselves: to them, it was the cosmos, and to us today, it is the Internet.
6. To be fair, Stuart Hameroff and Roger Penrose are working on some cutting edge research regarding 'quantum consciousness': http://www.quantumconsciousness.org/
7. As established earlier, 'normal' is used in line with Kuhn's (1970) usage of the term. Curiously, psychology has been historically more obsessed with the abnormal.
8. The mystical concept of the 'Third Eye' is now being connected to the chemical compound, dimethyltryptamine (DMT), which the pineal gland produces. In this sense Descartes is not completely wrong in emphasizing the important role that the pineal gland plays in facilitating our consciousness, as research shows (Barker,

Borjigin, Lomnicka, & Strassman, 2013). Descartes is wrong, however, in establishing a false dichotomy (the mind-body problem) as the basis of modern science.

9. According to James (1989):

Every school boy believes that when he hears or reads the command 'know thyself', he is hearing or reading words which were uttered by Socrates. But the truth is that the Egyptian temples carried inscriptions on the outside addressed to Neophytes and among them was the injunction 'know thyself'. Socrates copied these words from the Egyptian Temples, and was not the author. All mystery temples, inside and outside of Egypt carried such inscriptions, just like the weekly bulletins of our modern Churches.

10. "The term holotropic [literally, 'oriented toward wholeness' or 'moving toward wholeness'] refers to a large subgroup of non-ordinary states of consciousness that are of great theoretical and practical importance" (Grof, 2012).

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