

Pila -- October 17, 2011

A halo of light surrounds the world of the law.
We forget one another, quiet and pure, altogether powerful and empty.
The emptiness is irradiated by the light of the heart and of heaven.
The water of the sea is smooth and mirrors the moon in its surface.
The clouds disappear in blue space; the mountains shine clear.
Consciousness reverts to contemplation; the moon-disk rests alone.
Empty Infinity from Richard Wilhelm's translation of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*

The material beings that experience our lifetimes have a steady process of change as part of their experience. Those corpuscles that constitute our materiality are continually encountering fellow corpuscles, frequently being drawn to or repelled by them in a cycle that resembles the phases of Hegelian Dialectic: an encounter is presented with contradictions that are resolved by synthesis in a final situation, and from the final situation new encounters arise. Free will may be measured by the ability of an individual to preserve the situations they like or to leave the situations they don't like.

The concept of emptiness in contemplative traditions may assist our freedom to preserve or leave situations we experience, although the density and duration of experience diminishes that notion of free will. Our being is inescapably bound up in our experiences and the residue from all our entanglements limits our freedom. We may strive to obtain ends consistent with our judgments, but our success is at best uncertain since not only our own entangled experiences but also similar entangled experiences of our fellow beings potentially are at play in every lifetime. To the extent we see the manifestations of entanglement we may have some free play for adjustment.

Sentience emerges from nothingness and is attracted toward something -- often toward interests that relate to past experience and perceptions. In their best light, those experiences and perceptions are next to nothing insofar as they are empty of entanglements and residue. If we fill them up with thoughts beyond simple awareness, those thoughts become baggage for our journey. If we allow them to simply be perceived experience, empty of stuff we may add to flavor them, they are closer to their essence and that puts us closer to awareness of how they influence life. Contemplative emptiness is a vehicle for perception without corruption of thought. That is not to say we should ignore ethics or our natural sense of attraction or repulsion as those are part of life, but it is to say that uncorrupted perception best reveals how those senses play a part in the creation of experience.

Returning to the initial imagery, we constantly face potential encounters accompanied by inherent contradictions that by synthesis create new situations. Involvement in the process of interaction and change leaves entanglement and residue. We are obliged to go with the flow of experience and the bit we can do to ease the journey is simplified by being able to see how interactions influencing life play out in their natural course. The best light for perception is empty of corrupting residue. It is free of thoughts that may have consumed past initiatives and responses. It is a simple awareness of experience in that next to nothing condition that accompanies the emergence of sentience.