

## CELTIC METAPHYSICS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

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“In addition to its roman and Christian sources, today’s Europe traces its roots from its Celtic heritage which is there for all to see”

President of Palazzo Grassi (Venice) in exhibition catalogue for “The Celts; the Origins of Europe”, (Cunliffe, 2003, p. 2)

“Is there such a thing as Celtic culture? The answer must be ‘no’”

(*ibid*, p. 65).

**ABSTRACT:** The notorious Stonehenge minilith section of “This is Spinal Tap” begins with the singer intoning about the Druids that “nobody knows who they were or what they were doing, but their legacy lives on”. While the same is not quite true for the Celts in general, in that they left plenty of physical evidence for of their existence beyond Stonehenge, neither a Celtic Plato nor an Aristotle has ever been postulated. This article excavates the subterranean zone of the crisis in today’s Europe and proposes that perhaps something new can be invented that is consistent both with science and our limited knowledge of this fringe civilization. In particular, while constrained by adherence to Christianity like Vygotsky was to Stalinist communism, the mediaeval Irish philosopher Eriugena can – again like Vygotsky – be decoded as harbinger of a revolution in thought even beyond the explicit insights in which he abounds.

**KEYWORDS:** Celtic; Noetic; Metaphysics; Religion

### INTRODUCTION: METAPHYSICS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Since its foundation in 2014, fom has initiated a reparse of nature based on the following principles:

1. It must be consistent with best practice in science and society;
2. It must take account of ontological differences, for example between the physical and biological;
3. Neuroscience, it is self-evident, cannot be simpler than the math reasoning that comprises our physical theories of the world;
4. In like vein, consciousness studies cannot be simpler than our total experience of reality

We were led to certain radical conclusions; for example, causal explanation must vary in nature between the physical and biological. Theories of the brain must become several orders of magnitude more complex in order to work. Our late member WJ Freeman demonstrated that the initial sensory stimulus has been lost by the time the input is processed in the cortex and most experience is what he terms “solipsistic”.

Thus, to create a “science” of consciousness, we need a formalism which distinguishes mere solipsistic “awakeness” from moments in which experience is authentic. It seems to be the case that the game could not be bigger; it is as if we have been compelled to view consciousness as nothing less than the absolute becoming manifest in us.

If that is the case, we can distinguish such moments from our normal alienated, indeed subaltern experience. We can invoke quantum physics to argue that the noetic products of such moments have permanent effects on reality. Indeed, we can claim charter from 20<sup>th</sup> century physics to argue that human beings are indeed part of a thingless, entangled, noetic reality that the best minds of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will spend their careers trying to understand.

Similarly, a new “religious” expression is fundamentally a re-designation of what is to be considered sacred. There are a few constraints:

1. It should be consistent with best practice in science;
2. It should be non-sectarian;
3. It should assert the freedoms of thought, political participation and inquiry perfected in western culture.

Metaphysics is often assumed as referring to the ancient library categorization of Aristotle’s work – the books beyond (meta) those dealing with nature. Modern physics has challenged modern thought to reparse our sense of how we fit in the cosmos. In the first place, massive bodies distort space-time in general relativity. In a sense, special relativity had presaged this by making space and time relative to the observer, the better to maintain the laws of nature as identical to each observer.

With QM, we enter a hall of mirrors. To summarize, it seems to be the case that in addition to normal cognition, there is another act of mind that involves recourse to

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access to a thingless, infinite, noetic realm, without which observation/measurement cannot take place. The hypothesis here is that such measurement arises when an organic entity becomes capable of math reasoning  $\geq$  in formal power to standard arithmetic. The progress to such competence has been brilliantly elucidated by thinkers like Piaget; his contemporary Gödel made explicit the emergent non-computational processes that were necessitated by the undecidability/incompleteness emergent.

In short, consciousness is needed to decide such propositions. Yet such consciousness is not a process; it is the fact that processes have been transcended. Alternatively put, it is Nature in its self-unfolding knowing itself through us. We will find that for writers like Eriugena, as for his disciple Hegel, the cosmos is above all a means for the Absolute to know itself. Moreover, the self that is created in us through this mechanism is capable of citizenship, and indeed of a limited form of retrocausality and backward referral in time.

The perspective so far is necessarily Platonic. Yet, as a cursory look at my writings will suggest, there is also space for Aristotelian causal explanation, and the formal, material and teleological has entered biology along with the efficient in recent years. Moreover, at the social level we add moral reasoning as a necessary Kantian-type category. The fact that societies capable of such science have not made explicit that their societal freedoms are sacred has given rise to the notion that there are no western religions. Our Christless version of Eriugena's thought, one that situates him, like his fellow Celtic Christians as a worshipper of Christ only insofar as He incarnated the infinite will end this paper.

A generation after the "end of history", western civilization faces twin threats. The first, epitomized by the Bataclan attack, is that from radical Islamic terrorism, the latest unpleasantness from the God of Abraham. This is a fundamentalism that wishes to roll back the victory of Charles Martel at Tours and finally conquer Europe. Indeed, for French writers like Eric Zemmour, disapproval of such attacks by mainstream Islam is because they are premature, and risk the longterm project of taking over by stealth and force of numbers. As Zemmour puts it, one refugee is a guest, to be welcomed, but a million is an invasion, to be repelled.

The second threat is the decay of values that has turned neoliberalism, best thought of as a fringe economic theory, into a totalizing force. The response by the western academy to both these threats has been at best feeble. At worst, the relativism that has become dogmatic there would insist that the impetus within Islam to turn back the clock on the rights of speech, thought, assembly, property and reproduction that epitomize the greatness of western culture is to be valued as simply another perspective in a multicultural society.

For all its arrogance, modern science is as timid about its ultimate quarry as modern politics is about its purpose. Instead of pursuing the ground of Being, an encompassing realization that will inform each act of consciousness before its birth, science focuses on a reductive third-person instrumental description. This makes it vulnerable on the one hand to the Semitic realization of the Abrahamic god, and on the other to the instrumentalization continued to the point that economics does a claim-jump into politics, to neoliberalism as effectively a religion.

The success of western science in instrumentalizing nature has led to a paradox; the fact that normative disciplines like morality cannot pass muster in a scientific worldview may lead in coldly logical steps to concession to claims on truth arising from irrationality. Instead of an articulate response to these twin threats, attacks on believers from a scientific perspective and refuge in a trivially incorrect version of psychologism have become the norm.

Of course, the Church was assiduous in wiping out all traces of native religions in Europe. Since then, the nearest the West has come to a totalizing worldview attested by a “religious” personal conversion is Marxist utopian socialism. While its roots are in emanationist thought that can be traced from Plato’s *Timaeus* through Eriugena to Hegel, it is ultimately a theory of consciousness. Geist/spirit manifests itself in physical reality and human societies and we are seduced by false consciousness until we realize within ourselves the paramount reality that is class struggle and the unreality of Geist itself in a material cosmos.

Tim Leary, before he became a byword, made what is for us a very essential point; since the contents of our consciousness involve ever more amplified political narratives, the beginning of enlightenment is to find a way to “drop out” from this veil of Maya. His later solution – the wise use of the internet – is also laudable. For the moment, it perhaps suffices to argue that Marxist “false consciousness” is as useful a toll to explore the contents of our psyche than anything from a “spiritual” tradition.

Yet Marxism is of course, in Koestler’s felicitous phrase, “The God that failed”, perhaps due to its roots in the apocalyptic/historicist vision of the book of Daniel. Moreover, in practice it sought to roll back exactly those rights of rights of speech, thought, assembly, property and reproduction that western society clawed away from the Abrahamic god as manifest in the Church. This conference asks whether we can now do better.

It also questions the wisdom of the recent wholesale adoption of Asian religions in the West. The failure of these cultures to produce an epistemology allowing the manipulation of nature is one of the reasons they were colonized; western imperialism as neoliberalism certainly knows how to subdue and enslave addicts of these opiates of

the people. It is trivial to refute Indian non-dualism by asking access to the Advaitin's bank account, since we are all One; in like fashion, the ancient wisdom of the Dalai lama's version of Buddhism is simply an inaccurate account of mind, an unsuccessful rival to cognitive science.

What we can safely reject is the idea that somewhere in Vedanta is an explanation of everything we are, that we can ignore the various realities – social, political as well as scientific – that structure our experience. In fact – to repeat - there are those who find in adoption of these Asian systems a very useful tool for the elites to stop us thinking. Likewise for this nonsense “hard problem” which was mined to exhaustion by Leibniz and Locke and is nothing more than a means for idiots to pretend they're doing science.

Yet the failure of current neuroscience to generate a theory of brain process even remotely near powerful enough to explain how we speak, let alone do physics, surely gives pause? From quantum mechanics (QM) and post QM, we are converging on the idea that, for the conscious observer to function there must be in some ineluctable sense contact with the infinite. That goes even for the most hard-boiled of skeptics like Feynman. Surely there is space here for the cosmic to become manifest in the quotidian, the core of any religious movement?

Perhaps we are close to the endgame in how 21<sup>st</sup> century consciousness studies will evolve. We as humans are intentional symbolic systems; the only ones we know in the cosmos. Thinkers like Pradhan, argue that ultimate reality is Uroboros, beyond subject and object. His use of Hilbert space is perhaps a limit case of the PQM Sarfatti/Bohm/Hiley model.

Indeed, perhaps a conscious moment is when Uroboros knows itself through an obscure primate on a small planet. Thus, the pilot wave does not have qualia; these manifest in the interaction. Both the Pradhan and Sarfatti/Bohm/Hiley models involve connection to a transcendent and ubiquitous Reality; that is essential to QM, and used even by the most hard-nosed in their versions of QM.

As a religion, then, we can perhaps hold as sacred human action that connects us to the infinite and promote praxis that implements this connection. The goal of human life is to act as a vehicle for the Absolute to know itself and be through us in our individual unique existence. Part of the authority of religion springs from its magisterium that delimits a necessary profane/secular part of human existence along with the sacred, which normally requires physical premises.

We can add to this core the ideas of code, community, and – above all – the sense that religion is above all Immanuel, assertion of the sacred in our experience. This holds whether the religion is secular, like Marxism; atheistic, like some schools of

Buddhism, or the religio of the west that is only in the face of twin threats daring to speak its name, the assertion of our freedoms as sacred. Therefore, this paper proposes to debate what we should hold sacred, and how the infinite becomes immanent in us.

## DESIDERATA FOR A NEW RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

In the early 21st century we in the free world live in a space of unparalleled opportunity. Almost all of humanity's accumulated knowledge is available to us within seconds from devices small enough to carry around with us. The devotional exercises exemplified in physical disciplines are available to anyone living in a medium sized western town. Our science gets more and more precise in its established forms.

There is a growing consensus among cosmopolitan elites about what constitutes high culture and indeed decent behavior. Yet most of popular culture is trash; established and Islam religions like Christianity and Islam are in a crisis of perverts and zealots; science itself oscillates between attempting answers in areas outside its proper domain, often committing category errors in the process, and over-restraining itself with Gradgrindian facts.

One result has been a proliferation of cults. Many of them, like Scientology, are as harsh as the ascetic core of the world religions, and just as epistemologically ill-founded. Moreover, they seek to guide the initiate from childhood on, applying an ill-conceived developmental psychology as the basis for a lunatic metaphysics.

We can propose two tenets for a new religion:

1. Nothing in it should contradict best practice in science
2. Science deals with mental processes that are relative to consciousness, that is can become automatic, a category that includes all skill. Religion deals with processes that are transcendent to consciousness; the sense of being in an encompassing social situation, with exigent rules; the emotional and biosocial states arising from our embodiment, and so on.

Bionoetics as science points to the different levels of Being in the natural world and the fact that there are different types of causal explanation applicable to each one. When it comes to the mind, the models must be as complex as physics.

Bionoetics as religion points to the fact that it is a universal consciousness that "sees" the truth of the Gödel sentence. In fact we can continue thus; since the self has been transcended, to the point that one can identify with a source of awareness which sees one's quotidian self as object, we can argue that an immanent reality has been incarnated through this "noetic" process. In short in science reality knows itself through us; in the arts, dance, and sport, Reality IS through us.

The task of a new religion is to imbue such moments of incarnation with a numinous, a sacred tinge and to create institutions that preserve these processes. Much of western art is under pressure as the aesthetic dimension is reduced to a subjectivist trivialization eg “feeling good”. The importance of the normative in society is being elided by the creation of new “rights” never seen before in family, community and civil society. Conversely, inalienable rights to privacy, property and the expression of beliefs are being swept away in the name of new “rights”.

For the moment, these inalienable rights should be part of religion, as should the honouring of ontological distinctions. What should remain at its core, however, is the sacralization of everyday life.

By the time we reach adulthood, most of us in the free world have a deep sense of what is healthy. What can be added is a sense available ironically in theocracies that certain disciplines can inculcate a higher level of being, not just knowledge or other “knowing how” skills. As one’s musical being develops, the nursery rhymes of rap are supplanted by music that is provably computationally more complex, with a wider emotional vocabulary

## THE STASIS IN NEUROSCIENCE

First of all, a few empirical observations. We have no account whatsoever of symbols, why spiking does not seem central to neural function, the mass action of neurons in fields, and much else. We are thrown shibboleths like the Libet work to explain free will, or why it does not exist. I will take a short time to look at these points.

Libet’s work used EEG. The skull is a very effective low-pass filter. It would seem much better to use ECOG, with the electrodes directly attached to cortex. The fact that Libet’s work is imprecise is featured here, inter alia

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3746176/>

Now we come to the ECOG work recently done at UCSF and UCB. . Fully 264 epilepsy patients have signed consent forms at UCSF and allowed researchers fiddle around under the hood. Freeman regarded this as similar to attempting to read with one’s eyes imm away from a full-stop. Ironically, while Bob Knight claimed to find some clean sequences of action from his patients, his student Maya Cano went back to using EEG as - yes, it was hard to do tasks with your skull off! FOM made its ethical misgivings clear at a meeting in cal in Dec 2016 – the reaction was vociferous and the fact that the 264 had signed “consent” forms emphasised.

Secondly, to repeat, the Libet (1983) work on "free will" was EEG. Libet's surgeon Feinstein died of colon cancer in 1978. The 1979 paper is consistent with subsequent

work like Chang's using similarly invasive methods in that it accords with Kant in suggesting that time (and space) are categories. Feinstein (Diane's husband) would almost certainly have used ECOG in the 1983 paper.

The 1983 work is of very limited validity as EEG is a very imperfect instrument. It is not even reliable for seizures;

[http://jnnpbeta.bmj.com/content/76/suppl\\_2/ii2.full](http://jnnpbeta.bmj.com/content/76/suppl_2/ii2.full)

To my knowledge, nobody has replicated the 1983 results with ECOG; researchers like Moaz have come up with a much more complex story. The ethics are in any case questionable, but the Knight/Chang initiative was after (as they saw it) bigger game.

Moreover; the surgeon himself – David Chang – found a Kantian imposition of space and time that his linear model of speech production could not handle. In short, it was not at all clear how the articulatory components “chimed in” over time. What I think is clear is that the Libet work is passé and the more complex scenario of the article above holds true.

## QUANTUM MECHANICS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

The strength of the Penrose arguments is their allusion to issues in computational complexity (especially P and NP problems), partially recursive function theory and so on in a context informed to some extent by phenomenology and neuroscience. Unfortunately, that has been ignored in the rush to impose Orch OR as the main theory of consciousness has led to the kind of tension I we saw at the CIIS with Hameroff and Hagelin fruitlessly butting heads.

In certain quarters, this argument occurs with disturbing frequency;

1. consciousness is the all in all
2. That is attested by Advaita Vedanta
3. Details? – come, come, that's the Hard Problem

## ON NON-VERBAL PREDICATION; HINTS OF A CELTIC PARMENIDES

“For the. verb.” to be" contains a double meaning.-. sometimes it means the subsistence. without temporal. movement of. whatever is predicated ..... for only where eternity is known may immutable truth be understood” (Eriugena quoted in Bamford 2001, p.29).

To be precise, Irish is a verb-subject-object order language like 19% of the world's languages. Let us take, for example, the dialect of Mixtec spoken in Ixpantapac in the Oaxaca Valley in Mexico. It is worthwhile unpacking this, as many things about Ireland and the Irish are complicated, and riding roughshod over them with a West

British accent and attitude does violence to them. The account here does not apply to Scots Gaelic.

The standard Irish boast is that they learned their Gaelic at the rate of a beating per line. Many beatings were administered for the misuse of the verb “Bí” where the copula “Is” was appropriate. Or, in the famous excoriation of the anti-Catholic provost of Trinity:

Mahaffy of TCD  
Does not know the verb “to be”

Of course, if the copula in Irish is not in fact a verb, which is the current received wisdom, Mahaffy may remain famous only for his comment that James Joyce showed the danger in educating the wrong sort of people. Standard Irish grammars make the distinction just alluded to of the verb “Bí” and copula “Is”. Ixpantec Mixtec (IM), by contrast, seems at first blush to have two copulas; roughly, *kuu* and *ka*. *Kuu* behaves like the Irish “Is” in many contexts:

*Kuu* Juan tata  
Is athar é Seán  
John is a father

*Ka*, on the other hand, initially seems to map onto “Bí”

Tá Seán árd  
Jiko ka Juan  
John is tall

Yet this is an over-simplification.

\*ka jiko Juan

is ungrammatical in IM, which like Irish is a VSO language. In fact,

jiko Juan

is grammatical, which leads one to suspect that perhaps something is awry. Can it be the case that *ka* is not an independent verb, and that the predication structure of the two languages is actually a little more similar than we might have thought? “ (From my 2012 book).

More to the point, is there is this predication an echo of an ancient spirituality as speculated by Keepin (2016):

“Although ‘isness’ is a more awkward word than oneness, it is more accurate, because rather than a static noun it contains the eternal dynamic verb is....the eternal silent now” (30)

So also for “Tawhid – making One” in Islam,<sup>(41)</sup> and alert readers will note a resonance with Parmenides. Others will note that Celtic Christianity in its apotheosis in Eriugena, was Neoplatonic. See my 2012 book for much of this account.

## TOWARD A GAELIC SPIRITUAL PATH

“The metaphysics, mythology and language of the Irish, from their first recorded writings, together with cutting-edge contemporary neuroscience, affords us an opportunity to revolutionize our conceptual systems, and indeed way of life. In particular, it gives us cues to root our identities at the most fundamental level in a more veridical experience of selfhood as pure subjectivity, and so feel less inclined to seek environmentally toxic and socially pathological ways of proving our existence to ourselves when societal pressures impinge on us.

The creative power present in the cosmos, currently explained (away) by the anthropic principle (see my 2012 paper), was called “nyart” by the Gaels. They conceived god as immanent in nature, including themselves; Brahman is the same as Atman; the observer just before wave-function breakdown is identical with the wave-function itself, nowhere and everywhere. We have seen this theme being echoed in Joyce. This is exemplified in the song of Amergin, the first human arrival on the island of Ireland from whom the Gaels claimed ancestry. His song is epiphany, and also Bhagavad-gita style theophany:

“I am wind on sea, I am an ocean wave ... I am an ox of seven fights ... I am a tear of the sun”

As in classical Indian thought, the “I am” is identified with the nyart of nature. Even later Hiberno-Christian thought, including present-day Hiberno-Catholic writings, stressed that one central goal of the spiritual path was to amplify the experience of God in nature in oneself.

There is much political sociology in Irish mythology, even if it is adulterated by later Christian interpolation. The nadir of the latter can be read in the “Exodus to Connacht”, comparing the transplanted Cromwellian Irish to displaced Israelites, and Sean O Conaill’s “Tuireamh na hEireann”, a psalm-like complaint against a Semitic transcendent God from the same period.

Some centuries later, some Irish like the fiercely anti-clerical Fenians calmly looked at the facts of their colonisation, revolted against it, and became an example of freedom and courage to the colonised world. Among the pieces that have come down to us relatively intact is the “Battle of Allen”, which describes the inevitably disastrous effects of a war conducted contrary to the rule of law. This urgent and contemporary theme is given geophysical and cosmic significance in the “Tain bo Cuailgne” (Tawn

bo coolnya). The Tain also features the “reestra”, rage, of the Ulster hero Setanta as he combats perceived injustice with great skill and courage. The reestra of the decolonialising Irish resonated throughout the world. In particular, the hunger strike to death of Terence MacSwiney, a potential pillar of the Irish bourgeoisie who had everything to live for, done explicitly in the name of self-authentication, revealed the colonial order for the murderous and parasitic entity we all currently know it to be.

We can ourselves interpolate a post-christian spirituality using Gaelic words. We can use the two forms of “to be” in the Irish to contrast *Taw*, the activity of the inauthentic self, to “Is”, true authentic presence. This realisation, “*layergas*”, which can be achieved through any authentically engaged human activity, including and perhaps especially political struggle, invites the person to “*Moknov*”, contemplation. In this, she can see the deceptive workings of *Intinn*, mind, while remaining rooted in “Is”. She achieves “*Seersha*”, freedom, which stays with her through all her daily activities, as she continues to identify *Bealtaine*, *Samhain*, the hunting of the wren/humanity giving back to nature, and the engagement with artistic culture and literacy that the current neoliberal world order is trying to destroy in Ireland (with the help of the corporatist state) as elsewhere.

Of course, Joyce shows us the path here with a truly incarnated, non-dualistic, way of living on our island, the antidote to colonialism, as he himself predicted. Likewise, the emanationist perspective of *Erigena* – according to Schopenhauer the inspiration for Hegel – shows the Irish leading European thought. Indeed, Rudolph Otto claims that the Rhenish mystics, exemplified by Eckhart, took their cue from this great Irish forebear. The resources of the land itself show that it was regarded by our forebears as itself a sacred space, and we need to refocus on their precise geological and cartographic intuitions.

Let us be clear about a few issues; please see my 2012 paper on this subject as what follows is rather laconic. The first is that we are making a distinction between the search for truth as pursued in the academy, which is rigorous and free inquiry into objective reality, with only a tiny aspect of subjective experience being catered to in analysis of sensorimotor consciousness and that in the “real world”. The latter perspective accepts the achievements of the academy but paradoxically has both a humbler starting-point and a higher aim. Its starting-point is the Lifeworld we all – academics and laypeople alike – share in modern society. The bigger game it pursues is neither more or less than a compelling experience of Being itself, infusing every aspect of daily life, and urging us as human beings to ever greater heights of self-integration, refinement of emotion, reclusive ability and that selflessness from which comes not just mere “charity” but contact with the Real.

At times there will be conflict with the academy, particularly as the latter enters one of its all-too-frequent manias. In the past century, ontological behaviorism rejected the existence of mind, and of course consciousness; in response, and quickening in the 1990's, neuroscientists provided fanciful mapping of subjective dispositions to cerebral locations, the majority of which were simply fraudulent. An ontology is necessary, as indeed is a set of irrevocable moral imperatives to maintain distinctions and societal achievements, and preserve nature.

We use a Gaelic term and call this “On Shlee”, the path. In the first instance, there are clear desiderata for people living a normal daily existence. As it incarnates itself in this quotidian existence, it involves that type of presence in our dealings with others that classically has been called humility; Where one is pursuing an ethical end like the presentation to the public of music that is finer than the average, it is acceptable to use environmental resources at the same rate as one's competitors. In general, however, one should strive to minimize one's footprint, recycle everything possible, all the while asserting our rights as human beings for full self-expression through the arts and sciences. Indeed, political issues like universal electoral suffrage, ecological maintenance, representation by the individual on an equal basis to the state in disputes, an appropriate currency, equality of opportunity for all, and private property are political issues of such urgency that their assertion is itself a spiritual path as one reclaims the correct relationship of part to whole in society.

The cosmology includes the following: It is dangerous to map perennial life-affirming intuitions of the absolute onto one's contemporary science. Science is by its nature subject to refutation. Yet the primordial REALITY, Brahman, godhead, inspires stillness and reverence in much the same way as physicists currently revere their ultimate reality – this time approached by mathematics.

Brahman/Godhead unmanifest can be thought of as the equally fugitive quantum vacuum Nous, the ordering force in reality, can indeed be conceived of as scientific law. The “unseen energies of god” may be the dark energy...or not. The meditative state may be able to sustain quantum coherence, with its postulated supercomputational powers. The refined types of energy in the body may be conceived of as Nadh-stored; versus those dormant in fact cells (see our 2011 paper).

The final issue is how life consonant with the principles would be led. In society, the moral imperatives to rationality, compassion, creativity and environmental conservation should be clear from the above. However, there is surely space for a place in which the life is led as a vocation, with three prayer meetings a day for a group, celibate or not, who maintain themselves with ethical work. In classical fashion, they can offer a satsang – or whatever service is appropriate - to those in the “real world”

who are interested.

To be specific, this involves a community of respect; it is unlikely that aggressive music like rap or heavy metal has a place, however valuable the catharsis they produce in fragmented societies; there must be work for everybody, even if that begins living off the scraps industrial society has left behind by using freeware products; total commitment to open-ended scientific and artistic creation is encouraged.

I leave it up to professionals to work out how to implement this vision in terms of the conventional accoutrements of religion – cult, cosmos, ceremony, community, and cross-currents. Suffice to say that present-day science, for all its shortcomings, does give us an active proof of the mystery of our existence in a cosmos that inexplicably begets order.” (again, from my 2012 book)

#### WHAT IS CONSCIOUSNESS?

-Various fronts have been opened up on this topic, and the following is a synoptic perspective. The most plausible neural story is that consciousness reflects phase synchrony of neural oscillations at gamma frequency (40-80 Hz). The content of consciousness is formed by modulations of this carrier wave. This synchronous state does not last for more than a few seconds, but decreases metabolic demand by the brain on the organism when it does. The best way to prolong it is to restrict content; we call this restriction a meditative context and the resultant prolongation meditation.

In psychological terms, consciousness seems to provide a universal language in which normally separate modules can communicate. It is reminiscent of an actor in the theatre’s spotlight, and allowed to broadcast for the short period the spotlight is on him, It is useful to speculate that two such modules may feed from thought and language, separate in human evolution before we humans came along. Likewise, it may be a mode of access to short-term memory.

Critically, what we experience is a relatively slowly sampled tiny subset of the myriad processes occurring in the brain. We compress several billion bits into a few hundred each second. As humans, we also narrate to ourselves continually, a process called the “interpreter in neuroscience and the “imposter” in spiritual disciplines.

In physics terms, the emphasis on the observer since 1905 has given pause. First of all, the maintain the notion that the laws of physics are universal, special relativity makes time and space relative to the observer. Secondly, and even more consequentially, in QM the particle “knows” whether it is being observed. This gives rise to speculation about a Noosphere, a direct connection from our minds to an encompassing reality.

Post QM argues that there is no need for probabilistic reasoning. Consciousness

reflects a deterministic physical process rooted in a homuncular pilot wave. The question of whether this description, with its invocation of “fiber bundles” or the Hilbert space probabilistic description is correct is still open.

When the first quantum mind ideas emerged, researchers like Tegmark argued for their impossibility based on decoherence. Responses have varied from the accepted fact of physiological temperature coherence in photosynthesis to Frohlich and Bose-einstein condensates in microtubules.. in either case, the quantum Zeno effect as wielded by Stapp expands the time in processing from picoseconds to milliseconds.

My own work has produced a theory of holographic representation with each memory involving storage at different degrees of granularity. These can then be evoked in a Hopfield-net type content address system. This type of thinking is buttressed by the fact that neither “mentalese” nor formal models of semantics have worked well.

On a computational level, the links with noncomputability, retrocausality and cryptography have drawn intelligence services to the area. Here again the jury is out, but there is increasing evidence it is plausible. More important, perhaps, is that all observer models contain infinite quantities. This gives rise to the speculation that consciousness involves relation to the infinite. It is perhaps the infinite knowing itself through the holographic representations imposed on our brains through conscious experience. Here is a corer idea for a new spirituality.

#### CONCLUSION: CELTIC METAPHYSICS OR IRISH PORRIDGE?

“Thousands of years have passed since any Western philosopher imagined that a person should be made happy peaceful or even wise .... in the Search for Truth ...if there is an equally arresting image that accounts for why nondualistic empirical mysticism Seems to have arisen only in Asia I have yet to find it”  
(Harris 2004/5, P. 215)

It is not post-truth to say that western culture is in crisis. Arguably, the mediaeval synthesis of Roman law and Hebraic experience of the sacred that birthed Europe in the face of Islam is in rapid terminal decline. The language of the social sciences has become sufficiently debauched that normative statements, first ruled out by political correctness, are now viewed as epistemologically suspect.

We could argue that East Asian systems fail to make metaphysical subject-object distinctions of sufficient granularity to support dualistic Western science. Conversely, for all its bravado, western science has never engaged with the Ground of Being. The results include relativism in morality and aesthetics which culminate in “Crime and Punishment” means vs end paradoxes in arguments about stopping terrorism. They involve also a debauching of art that culminates in drunken party goers staring at a DJ

as the apotheosis of their very expensive aesthetic experience.

Johannes Scotus Eriugena (John the Irishman/Scot born in Ireland) lived from 810 to 877 or so. There are indications (see my 2012 book) that Irish culture was the cutting-edge of Europe at the time, and that it featured themes from Indus Valley culture as well as a recapitulation of the Greek/Roman intellectual inheritance. He came from “the Monastery Schools of the Celtic Church - thought by many to be the highest level of spiritual culture ever attained by Christianity” (Bamford, 2001 p.7 – quotes are from a previous edition from 1980).

Eriugena’s work – spinal tap notwithstanding – indicates to writers like Bamford (10) that there is a uniquely Celtic form of Christianity, one based like the Orthodox church on Plato rather than the Aristotle of the Roman Catholic church, and –pace Harris– nondualistic:

“Periphyseon. --. represents a perfect, nondualistic fusion of Christianity and Platonism and constitutes the only philosophical alternative in the West to the Aristotelian scholarship of St Thomas Aquinas”

To reiterate (ibid) “the entire wisdom of the Platonic world is made secure in Christ -- and yet we also find in Eriugena’s distinctive flavors a unique framework at once cosmic and ecological ..... this we can only assume was part of his Celtic background”.

In fact (12) “Eriugena manages to unite and transform the classical heritage of Pythagoras and Plato and merge these with the Hebraic”

Again, it is worth pointing out, contra Harris, that Spinoza’s goal was to make men live more happily. What is remarkable about Eriugena is first of all his rationality:

“Eriugena began by claiming that true religion and true philosophy were one and the same. Hence a religious problem was a philosophical problem” (ibid, 7-8).

Moreover, as he argued against his Saxon opponent Gottschalk’s double predestination, God created a good world, and evil is *privatio*, not *esse*:

“All things proceed from the good and to the good they must return the only held is ignorance” (ibid, 9)

This led to the condemnation of his work by the synod of Valence as “pultes scotorum” Irish/Scottish porridge (ibid.). It also seems to have led to his being given access to the work of St Denis the Areopagite and other classical authors:

"Greek Christian Platonism.... the agent through whom the western world came into this valuable inheritance" (ibid, 10)

For Bamford (ibid.) “he makes no opposition between being and consciousness or consciousness and nature.... poles of a unique process whose ground is divine.” We are

left to witness a process of emanation from the absolute:

“a unique process whose ground is divine Consciousness as knowledge and whose existence is divine. Procession” (ibid.)

The culmination of this procession is “the human being is the place where the means or organ by which- the entire universe may be united and transfigured and God known in his own self knowing” (ibid, 11) Moreover, the thrust is “ecological that does not exist in quite the same powerfully embodied form elsewhere” (ibid. 10). There is a salutary emphasis in this context that “the threefold human being of body, souls and spirit is primary” (10).

Alternatively put (79) “the Universe is the revelation of God through human nature.”

That is why according to Eriugena the reality of God and the world is one ... if only we are open” It is as a result of ideas like this that he is seen as a forerunner of Hegel.

As Bamford later puts it (69) “Human Nature... as a whole it is Life intellect reason sense and memory.... it revolves about its Creator in an intelligible and eternal motion”. He is concerned also that we should understand that “There is a power in the mind which touches neither time nor flesh ... in this power god is fully verdant...Such is the Eagle” (ibid.). We shall have reason to query his identification of this higher aspect of mind (70) with “intelligence, conscience, identity.... the eagle is all of these.”

Some of the language is strikingly modern, with a concept like the quantum vacuum being presaged (84) “Arche is the principle Cause, Source and origin of all. Nothing comes before it ... it is ALL ... it is absolute unity ... the nothingness. ... from which all things will be made. As such it is the ground of. all being ... in the. nothing lies the power of something”.

Even that does not come as a surprise after hearing Eriugena himself say (35-36) ““Contemplate how an infinite number of lines may subsist in a Single Point". All observer-dependent measurement in Quantum Mechanics involves the infinite, a point we will presently exploit. At this we may make reference to Keepin (2016, 161) "mathematically this means that the entire universe can be collapsed to fit neatly inside the little dash above". In fact, so possessed is Keepin by fractals, holograms and self-similarity that his spiritual apotheosis is identity with the “fractal seed formula” (ibid.)

How does Keepin come to this conclusion? He starts (xxi) with the results of the snowmass process:

“xxi all the world religions bear witness to the experience of Ultimate Reality. ... the ground of infinite potentiality and actualization”

Moreover (xxii) “Ultimate Reality may be approached,... Also through nature, art, human relationships.”

Please note that there is no concept of the Sacred as exclusive to religion here; arguably, Ultimate Reality is to be found in this scenario through science, aesthetics, and friendship. This is not the Ground of Being, and it is where Eriugena's metaphysics starts to prevail.

My 2012 book references the Vedic influences in the Ireland in which Eriugena was educated. O Duinn (1990, 171) (translation by current author) comments on the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad that "The text continues and references the elements... water fire ... air, wind, sky, sun, the four points of the Compass, moon and stars, darkness, light" and as such echoes the "Lorica" (breastplate) of St Patrick, which also invokes he who "is the self within you the inner Controller the immortal".

Likewise the Atharva Veda X 7: 35 namechecks like "Patrick" (the text was written about when Eriugena was born) "the four points of the compass, up and down" In 1225 Eriugena's work was condemned by a Papal bull and the rest, as we say is history.

It is worth pointing out that Irish Catholicism is reverting to a quietist emphasis. One can quickly find terrifying fire and brimstone speeches by the Redemptorist order in Joyce's "Portrait". Their advice now (Tobin, 2016);

"What are they all getting at... especially God... things that only unfold as we practise the discipline of stillness". In fact, far from indulging in guilt "Since were not used to relinquishing control you may become restless... Smile yourself through"

Quantum Mechanics and neuroscience have both struggles mightily with the question of what it is to observe something in the world. It is fair to say that the former has fared rather better than the latter. Indeed, it has explicated how the act of observation can change something in the world, while also effectively reprogramming the brain by adding the observed datum. The fact that these remarks derive from the most accurate science ever devised/discovered and the relative failure of neuroscience surely gives pause?

Here is an even more radical idea; what happens is that as soon as an obscure primate became capable of generating formal systems with undecidable propositions - which can be explained with Piagetian reasoning - consciousness became causal in symbolic operation. The brain got totally reprogrammed, with epigenetic changes. *Mirabile dictu*, "our" consciousness in such moments of observation is merely a sketchy sample of the universe coming to know itself through us, in the emanationist process proposed by Eriugena and recapitulated as "anerkennen" (recognition) by Hegel. To assert the "truth" of an undecidable proposition, we need recourse to contact with an encompassing, noetic, ground of Being.

There is, as of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, much debate about the correct

interpretation of Quantum Mechanics. Indeed, researchers like Zurek have argued that the observer may not be necessary; however, his concept of “decoherence” was anticipated by the decidedly observer-friendly von Neumann in 1932. What all of them share in common – and this goes also for “post” Quantum Mechanics (PQM) ideas from Bohm and his followers – is a substrate that reaches to the far ends of the universe at every act of observation.

It is worth making a few general points. Along with the frameworks that famously give a role to consciousness, others like decoherence, spontaneous localization and the transactional interpretation (TI) try to diminish or altogether get rid of the observer. Indeed, the Bohm-Hiley model arguably returns us to the classical world, with every particle having fixed quantities.

All these viewpoints agree that the Hilbert space formalism, with its operations on the complex conjugates bra and ket, as well as the equivalent Schroedinger formalism, to be accurate. TI considers bra and ket to be forward and back in time. No observer needed. By contrast, for Pradhan bra and ket are subject and object. Yes to the observer.

The Bohmian pilot wave is a Cartesian homunculus which knows all things, leading to the need for another homunculus in recursive fashion in the classical critique. TI is like Freudianism; just as Freudianism could not explain a dream with sexual manifest content, so TI cannot explain someone deciding to observe and doing so.

In short, things are in a mess. What can we rescue? For a start, it is still valid to assert a causal role for consciousness, if one that operates in conjunction with non-observer type methods. Moreover, there seems to be an argument for Bohm-Aharonov destiny waves; for a form of precognition. Finally, the existence of noetic acts on mind encompassing the infinite as well as quotidian cognition is solid.

It is arguable that mediaeval Europe recreated the only force it knew could stand up to Islam and its rampant Abrahamic God – the Roman Empire – and recreated that Empire as the Catholic Church with Christ becoming, like Mohammed, a warlord. In this scenario, the Celtic church went another, Platonic route. Christ was to become a replacement for the “infinite” in the Upanishad-influenced religion they exported to Europe.

We are often told about the “defeat” of the Celtic church at the synod of Whitby in 664 A.D. This does not explain how its apogee was actually much later. In fact, the critical event leading to its demise may have been the Norman conquest of the Iona archipelago, and the eviction of Irish monks from Cistercian monasteries. This was

done in the power vacuum opened up by the confrontation between Henry IV of Germany and Pope clement VII, one that started a new schism between church and state.

Let us now reparse Eriugena There is not attempt to reinstate Christianity, let alone Christendom, about to be made. His (lack of) theodicy is that the cosmos is good. We can reparse that as the statement that unlikely coincidences have allowed us to be and think; the anthropic principle. Thesisists can opt for a once-off creation; the rest of us can exult in the sheer unlikeliness that we are.

We can assent to his rationality, to embodiment, to his (quantum vacuum, to his erudition. For the “Eagle” we can substitute “nous”, that in us which apprehends in a way that transcends cognition. The rational soul is cognition. Perceptions are acts that try and transcend out environment; inner and outer; by contrast, sensation is relatively passive apprehension of data.

We all the new perspective “Celtic” not just because of its founder; Europe is in crisis at a time when Brexit is leading to a renewed sense of identity among those countries that, with heroic persistence. Kept up Celtic language and art. Famously, Bobby Sands died on hunger strike as an assertion that his was a military action that merited the dignity of prisoner of war status; less famously, hunger strikes were successful in lobbying for a Welsh language TV station. Vistors are often thrilled by the fact of ubiquitous celtic live music in our countries; neither that not the bilingual road signs happened by accident.

FOM/UIOI

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