

Black holes are irrelevant. What I mean is that black holes do not matter to me and my progression with mindfulness, and spiritual development. I usually never think about black holes. Whether a black hole is a giant mass of chaos or some unifying force of organization for the universe, I do not know. I do not think science knows whether a black hole contains organization or just chaos and randomness. Science does know that everything around a black hole is sucked into it. This action is a very specific type of organization - the sucking or overwhelming gravitational force is highly organized and powerful. What that overwhelming power is, no one really knows. I think the best scientific answer we can give is that we do not know why black holes exist; what kind of force they are; and what happens after something goes into a black hole. Black holes are mostly a mystery.

I don't think the Buddha had any idea that black holes even existed. So, it seems safe to say, that

whether a black hole is organized or chaotic did not matter for the Buddha to obtain enlightenment. In the same regard, the Buddha did not emphasize God in order to obtain Nirvana. The Buddhist tradition teaches that God can be a distraction from one's liberation. In the same regard the idea of the self is also a distraction from one's enlightenment. The Buddha taught that what we perceive as "self" is actually composed of five aggregates: form, feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and consciousness. Buddhism doesn't deny the experience of a self; rather, it teaches that this "self" is a construct. We mistakenly believe in a permanent identity ("I" or "me"), but this belief leads to attachment, craving, and suffering. Recognizing the impermanence of a self is a key step toward liberation. Buddhism encourages us to obtain a nuanced understanding of the nature of self as impermanent – ever transforming. Everything in consciousness constantly changes. In Buddhism, Maya describes how beings are misled by appearances and fail to see the truth of impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and non-self (anattā). The illusion of self is not seeing the interconnectedness of these

attributes of our being. Not that we are literally illusions and do not exist. No more than consciousness is an illusion. Consciousness is real and certain, but is most often subtle and ever moving. The Buddhist perspective on Maya is very refined and nuanced and must be carefully pondered in order for it to make sense. Many people are lured into a misunderstanding of “the self as illusion”. The “self as an illusion”, is a poor descriptive term in this regard. It is not that we don't exist, rather that we don't see ourselves accurately. Consciousness and “the self” exist in the real world, but generally we don't perceive them correctly. There is no permanent self and there is no center to consciousness. Consciousness is subtle, but it is real, not an illusion. There is a big difference between inaccurate perception and a illusion. An illusion is something that does not exist at all in any regard. An analogy would be that the earth is flat, whereas in reality the earth is round. A Flat Earth is a “type” of illusion, that seems real to many. A flat or round earth are both real in an individual perceptive sense, but one is more accurate/complete than the other. Neither is wrong or illusion, one description is

more comprehensive than the other. Where I am standing the earth is flat, however that does not tell the whole story.

The Buddha taught the doctrine of dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*), which explains how all phenomena arise due to specific conditions. The Buddhist perspective is not to ask how the universe got here, rather how it functions.

Dependent Origination refers to the action, process, or conditions of bringing phenomena into manifestation or the arising of experience.

Dependent Origination explains how suffering arises and ceases, moment by moment. It is not called dependent origin because origin refers to the source, starting point, or cause of something, emphasizing the place or time where it began.

The Buddha didn't say, "Don't ask big questions." He said, "Ask the questions that end suffering." The Buddhist task - and therefore my task - is not to

explain how the universe began, but to understand how conditioned phenomena function in relation to my suffering. When the aim is liberation, asking how the universe got here becomes a distraction. Therefore, it does not contribute to understanding my suffering.

Dependent origination says that human thoughts, actions, and decisions are influenced by prior causes and conditions, such as karma, mental habits, and environmental factors. While dependent origination recognizes causality, it does not insist on strict determinism. Conditions can be shaped, modified, or transcended through intentional action (*cetanā*). There is an interdependent agency that exists in the sense that humans have the ability to choose an act, preference, focus in their choices that arise from a web of interconnected causes. Love is the perfect example. A mother or father can give up their life to save a child. In other words, Love has agency. Love can transcend determinism. In modern philosophical terms, this ancient Buddhist philosophy is known as compatibilism. The Buddha

rejected the two extremes of Fatalism/Determinism and Absolute Autonomy for the Noble Eightfold Path as the Middle Way which steers clear of the extremes. This is also the Taoist perspective.

There are neurological studies being able to predict one's choices before they are made in the lab.

These studies are true; however, they do not prove "free will" is an illusion. There is a important distinction between time and determinism.

Determinism does not properly consider the concept of time in relation to consciousness. In a non-dualistic state of consciousness, time is not very apparent or necessary. In non-dual states (pure consciousness), causality might seem irrelevant because the focus shifts from "events happening in sequence" to a holistic, indivisible experience of reality. This suggests that the subjective experience of time is not fundamental but rather constructed by the mind. Basically, pure consciousness is outside of the realm of time. It is not that time is an illusion, but that it is not necessarily a focus in pure consciousness. Time is just another event in

consciousness. Again, love is the best example, I do not need a time frame to experience love. Love goes beyond time. And love is its own reward for all time.

Another tricky subject in both ancient and modern thinking is that of theism. Does God exist?

Buddhism, mostly, does not specifically affirm or deny a supreme being. The historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, remained silent on the matter of a creator God. Buddhism teaches that God can be a distraction for one's own liberation or enlightenment. In the same regard, whether or not a black hole is organized or chaotic is not necessarily relevant to one's liberation from suffering. However, organization and chaos are key concepts in modern science that bias our reasoning. One must ask the question, what is not organized in our universe? One answer may be, again, a black hole. However, we have no confirmation of what happens inside a black hole. Therefore, we do not know if it is organized or chaotic. It is unknown. Correlating chaos with the unknown is not scientific. Organization is everywhere in the entire universe that we observe,

from galaxies to quantum mechanics. However, there is a very small percentage ( $\ll 1\%$ ) of phenomenon that we perceive in the universe that science labels chaotic. On closer examination, the so-called chaos is really just unexplained phenomena. Chaos is a label that we place upon something in order not to feel ignorant. Chaos, in this regard, is associated with the unknown. Saying the unknown is chaos is unscientific – not logical or truthful. What happens inside a black hole may be chaotic, or maybe something else that we do not fully understand. There is no evidence to suggest one thing or another. We do not know if a black hole is chaotic or organized.

Ultimately, it's difficult to find any physical phenomenon or system entirely devoid of organization. Even the most random-seeming systems are often governed by underlying laws or statistical principles. The closest we come to true randomness might be at the quantum level, where certain events seem to appear random without a hidden "cause," though they still adhere to

probabilistic rules like the wave function. Other events in current science are touted as chaotic or random: Turbulence in fluids, Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB), radioactive decay, Quantum Foam, Random Number Generation. However, all of these phenomenon have some organizational properties and/or statistical dimensions. In the final analysis we confuse the unknown with chaos and randomness. As our knowledge progresses, we reveal new connections – organization. The earth is no longer flat, but round. And the Earth is no longer the center of the universe. As our knowledge progresses, so does our understanding of what we do not know. Everything seems organized in some way and interconnected, or, at the very least unknown. The unknown is not chaos; chaos is not proven anywhere, yet. As observed and stated - everything in the universe is interconnected - that denotes organization. Everything in the universe is related to something else in the universe, which is a tautology, just like the dictionary. Chaos and randomness may in fact be the “true illusion”. Chaos and randomness may not even exist. What we attribute to chaos and randomness may just be

unknown or undiscovered organization. As a species we are growing and making new connections as we go. Therefore, at this point in time, whether or not chaos truly exists is unknown.

So, in relation to theology, we must continually ask ourselves the question; why does everything seem organized and interconnected? How did this organization and interconnectedness pervade everything in time, space and consciousness? Organization implies design. Design implies a designer. We cannot prove a designer; however, a designer seems plausible thesis. Isn't the basis of all science to establish a plausible hypothesis or theory? What does your scientific mind say to you on this principle of ubiquitous organization? Random chance is an intellectually defensible theory; however, it is a very weak thesis, it does not seem plausible. Random chance is defensible; however, it is very anemic. Determinism posits that there was a first cause for all subsequent events in the entire universe; the first cause was uncaused or undetermined. Was the big bang random chance?

The Big Bang comes across as an enormous leap of faith. Everything from nothing in a singularity is feeble science – wishful & weak thinking – grasping at straws. The Big Bang and singularity thesis also comes across as a type of scientific religion - requiring more faith than reason. I do not think there is any theory that explains the existence of the universe well. This lack of coherent origination theory is very unpopular! Science does not like unexplained reality. We are still experiencing the trial and tragedy of Galileo even today, before the Church of physics – in relation to the Big Bang, which is based upon the singularity theory. It is a very weak theory that is almost universally accepted. Another trial and tragedy in modern science today is unrequited consciousness. Science, and physics in particular, does not really want to study consciousness very much. Consciousness transcends the physical world, and this makes science people (materialists) uncomfortable. The most prominent thing of all human existence is consciousness. The fact that we see a rock, tells us that consciousness is more fundamental than the

rock itself. Even touching the rock is only experienced in consciousness.

Consciousness is the ultimate reality of human existence. The various events in consciousness may or may not be real. However, the experience of consciousness is always with us in one form or another. Consciousness is not an illusion; it is all we have to experience the universe. Certain events in consciousness may turn out to be illusions, distortions, or untrue. However, many events in consciousness seem quite persistent and real. For example, a rock is always the same and has a sense of falsifiability. Therefore, we say the rock is real. In the same regard another tenacious event in consciousness is breathing. Breathing is always with us and appears falsifiable - it is persistent and real. Does breathing require a breather? What is the breather? Is the breather a part of the greater conglomerate of what we call "the self" in a certain format? At the very least the breather seems to have a body that we sometimes perceive in consciousness. Breathing is real and not an illusion.

Many parts of what we call the self are an illusion, but breathing is fundamental in consciousness and part of the self. There's a big difference between belief and experience. A belief is an intellectual construct, justification or description of an experience or event. A direct event, like breathing, has no reasoning, it is just a phenomenon of experience in consciousness. Any of my beliefs about breathing are an afterthought to the fact that I breathe. All beliefs, about anything, are afterthoughts. There is a tendency to confuse beliefs with actual experience. Beliefs are not primary in consciousness; they are a commentary on experience we have in awareness. The belief that "the self is an illusion" is just a commentary on the nature of existence. All beliefs are just commentaries on experience. Breathing does not require a commentary, simply observation. Commentaries are the very definition of Maya. Meditation does not require a belief or commentary, simply the observation of whatever happens fundamentally in consciousness. Distractions (vikṣepa) are all those things that take us away from the fundamental awareness. Distractions are hindrances to

enlightenment. It is important to make a distinction between fundamental experience and intellectual constructions which are beliefs. Beliefs are not fundamental; they are afterthoughts on experiences we have had previously. Perhaps afterthoughts is not the right word, a better phrase would be after experience.

I have a belief, afterthought, about philosophy. I believe that philosophy has an intention of helpfulness towards me. Philosophy does not know me, but I use philosophy every day and I know it is helpful, most of the time. Philosophy expertly guides me to understand and appreciate my awareness. I don't agree with all political, philosophical, or spiritual thoughts coming from Philosophy. What I do agree with and hear is careful nurturing to grasp what consciousness is. What I feel is that philosophy wants to discover what is the truth about consciousness and awareness for itself and the entire world. This is really, not complicated, however, it is a very subtle and mysterious (read delicate) understanding. I find philosophy to be honest and

have integrity. I don't agree with all philosophical and intellectual ideas, I don't think anyone agrees with them all either. philosophy is after the truth, as best as it is able to grasp it. We are all struggling to perceive this moment. A task which is not as simple as it may appear. A silent moment does not require/need philosophy, in the same regard that black holes are irrelevant to a pure aware experience. A good metaphor in this regard is the saying "no mud no Lotus". The philosophy surrounding mindfulness and meditation effort is equivalent to parts of the mud, pure awareness is just the Lotus. In the Lotus experience, the mud is irrelevant. Yes, they are related, but the experience of the Lotus stands alone. The same is true in relation to the self, a pure awareness experience does not require a self, or free will, or God, just the experience. All labels and concepts are irrelevant to the pure awareness experience. philosophy struggles with us to make sense of this world/universe. I'm grateful for its guidance. However, as we approach stillness, there is no guidance or direction.

Philosophy is irrelevant to stillness. Stillness does not have or require a philosophy. Stillness does not require volition or motivation, and it has no goals. Stillness does not have an intention or identity of self. Stillness is just an experience of being without any association with anything, anywhere. Stillness contains nothing and everything. In the final analysis I wish nothing and everything for you and myself.