

050630 blog articles

Thursday, June 30

Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The art of rational thinking: Part V

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 30, 2005 04:48PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

The art of rational thinking: Part V

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[050624 djs continues] Personally, I 'believe' I exist as 'an entity of 'self''. But I recognize that as a personal belief. When I speak to others who 'believe' I do not exist, I fully understand that is a possibility. I may simply be the product of another entity's imagination, I may simply be a figment of your imagination. I personally don't 'believe' that to be the case but it 'is possible'. I do not base my actions on that possibility but it 'is possible'.

As for 'basing my very soul on 'nothingness', hardly. I take responsibility for my soul and as such I follow my personal beliefs as opposed to following my rational thoughts.

But what then of the model symbiotic panentheism? Do I just toss it away?

[050628 cg] **YES! Be free of all beliefs, models and systems!**

[050628 djs] You have said it best, 'be free of all ...' But freedom has its responsibilities. The one cannot exist without the other. To simply 'be free' is to place self above others. I am not here to participate in the purity of that luxury. I am here for a reason. I am here to verbalize an expanded view of reality in order to provide one of many stepping stones which leads to the ability of our species and leads to the ability of ourselves as individuals to construct a more tolerant, less violent, evolving species ... This is not egotism speaking. Everyone has a purpose and everyone is capable of 'knowing' their purpose through the process of 'listening'/meditating if they are willing to take the time to so so.

[050624 djs continues] I would have tossed it away if it had led me to the understanding that relativism was the only rational explanation regarding ethics and morality or if it had led me to the understanding that G-d did not exist. But had it led me there, I would have tossed it away.

But why would I have simply tossed fifty years of thinking away if it had led me to a truth I did not want to find. I would have thrown it away because I have faith, I believe in my heart that 'Nothing is lost including the individual', that G-d does not make junk and thus all forms of existence have purpose, that we have free will and are therefore responsible for our actions, that one person's perception of truth is not as good and everyone else's, that there is such a thing as truth, that we can find a means of remaining unique while enjoying each other's company, that peace is possible if only we look for the means of achieving it - namely advancing our understanding of Reality.

[050628 cg] Please, I agree - G-d does not make junk! How could we be 'junk', we're made of G-d. We are not separated from G-d by a hair, an atom, a quantum moment, and not by a feeling or a thought! We are not 'junk'; that we are fragile and temporary gives us value, makes us precious and worthy of care. And I agree - nothing is lost! How could we be lost to G-d, we're made of G-d. We are not separated from G-d by a hair, an atom, a quantum moment, and not by a feeling or a thought! We may sometimes lose our awareness of G-d, but G-d never loses us.

[050628 djs] I agree with what it is you say, except for two concepts: The first, where you suggest we 'simply cease to be' for such a concept implies 'something is lost' and the second, where you suggest 'nothingness' does not exist.

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 [Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The art of rational thinking: Part III](#)
by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 30, 2005 04:37PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

[Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.](#)

The art of rational thinking: Part IV

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[050624 djs] In terms of your last sentence: "[Nor did I suggest that 'Existence simply is' implies that 'self is not a possibility'](#)". Perhaps I am in error. I had thought you previously stated that 'self ceases to be'. If self 'ceases to be' than self, in essence, 'is not' for in essence there is only 'the now' (see section 'C' diagram 050605) and once 'self ceases to be' there is no self, ever for it has ceased to be.

[050627 cg] I have stated that there is no self ('eternal soul') and that things, including persons, arise and pass away. I have not stated or implied that this follows from 'Existence simply is.' It is the nature of things that

they are composite and dependent on conditions; hence their lack of self and their temporariness.

[050628 djs] But if as you say 'you arise and pass away' both in the physical and the non-physical sense, then you 'cease to be' and is this in essence the same as 'not having been' once you 'pass away'? Is this not a form of 'something is lost' as opposed to 'nothing is lost'?

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 Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The size of G-d: Part III

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 30, 2005 04:34PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

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The size of G-d: Part IV

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[050621 cg] Then it would follow that, according to your presentation: If Total Consciousness is within Omnipresence, then there is a 'not-consciousness' (something other than consciousness) that exists within Omnipresence, so that Omnipresence incorporates both consciousness and not-consciousness. And if Omnipresence is within The Unmanifested, then there is a not-presence (something other than presence) that exists within The Unmanifested, so that The Unmanifested incorporates both presence and not-presence. And if the Whole of Reality contains The Unmanifested, then logically either a not-The Unmanifested (something other than The Unmanifested) exists within the Whole or Reality or The Unmanifested is identical to the Whole of Reality. You have identified the not-The Unmanifested as the 'plus one'; i.e., "'Plus one' deals with the whole as a non-duality." Is this so, according to your understanding?

[050624 djs] Hmmm, well now, let me think. Yes, I think that is so. I hesitate because I am not sure whether or not 'the whole of Reality' and 'the nothingness' would be considered as a 'Ying and Yang' situation to a Buddhist.

Putting that aside, in terms of how I personally perceive the model of symbiotic panentheism (perceived from the point of view of a novice to other religions, perceived strictly from a metaphysical point of view) I would say: Yes, you are correctly stating what the model of symbiotic panentheism demonstrates.

[0506XX cg] To summarize your model:Omnipresence incorporates consciousness and non-consciousness. The Unmanifested incorporates presence and non-presence. The Whole of Reality incorporates The Unmanifested and 'the whole as a non-duality'.I might re-state that as, G-d transcends duality and non-duality.

[050628 djs] ?????

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 **Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The lack of self: Part VI**
by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 30, 2005 04:30PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

The lack of self: Part VI

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[050621 djs] I am not 'claiming truth'. I am simply analyzing the vast libraries of humanity in the attempt to understand the whole of reality and the role we, you and I, have to play within such a reality.

As for your aphorism: 'We all claim Truth and we are all true.' Let us hope this is not the case since the statement implies 'relative moralism' is valid. Is this what you are suggesting?

[050626 cg] No, not at all.

[050628 djs] Are you suggesting there is no such thing as 'universal truths', truth that is not based upon 'perceptions'?

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[050621 djs continues] The questions I have directed towards you are no less unsettling to you than they are to those of my religious leaning.

[050626 cg] No, your questions have not been unsettling, not at all.

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[050619 cg] My analysis is of my beliefs and understanding, not Buddhism and it is not based on faith (a belief without evidence). It is based on personal experience and reflection. It is the very lack of faith! You have faith. You have faith that you have a "soul", but can you experience your soul? Can you demonstrate your

soul? So your comments regarding faith below may take on meanings that you had not intended.

[050617 djs continues] Now there is nothing 'wrong' with basing one's life upon faith as opposed to 'reason'. In fact faith is a wonderful characteristic of humanity. We have faith in our observations and thus we reach to open the door before entering a room as opposed to walking into the door.

We have faith in our fellow man. We have faith in science. We have faith in the teachings of our religions. We have faith in our ability reason.

Without faith we could not survive.

One must not lose sight of the fact, however, that all people are not 'logical' and not all people are 'reasonable', nor will this ever be true of all people.

What then needs to be established is the trunk of the tree from which all religions, sciences, and philosophies can spring. I would suggest such a trunk can be established using human wisdom/knowledge as the roots from which the trunk emerges and rationality as the soil which anchors the roots.

The trunk is a mutual religious, scientific, and philosophical consensus arrived at through the coordinated analysis of the vast accumulation of human wisdom/knowledge developed by our specie. The trunk provides a common ground upon which the diversity of human opinion can commune and embrace diversity.

[050621 djs] You state: 'So your comments regarding faith below may take on meanings that you had not intended.' Excuse my density but are you referring to something in particular?

[050626 cg] No, not at all, but how odd this is. I am attempting to communicate to you that my life is based on my personal experience and reflection, by which I mean my personal experience of perceptions, feelings, and thoughts, and applying logic and reason; that my life is not based on faith. And I am also hoping that you will comprehend that you are basing your life on faith and that you can 'let go'.

[050628 djs] You confuse me.

[050626 cg] No one owns our perceptions; perceptions are experienced, not possessed or controlled. We experience perceptions, but we do not own our perceptions. How can you possess a perception? How can you control your experiences?

You say no one owns 'our' perceptions yet you say perceptions are not possessed. You say you experience perceptions but they are not 'yours'. Everyone's perceptions are unique. They all differ. As such 'your' perceptions are 'your's' and 'your's alone'. In this sense your perceptions are 'owned' by you. If you 'simply cease to be' as you say, then when you 'cease to be' your perceptions cease with your ceasing to be. This fits the concept that 'something is lost' as opposed to the concept that 'nothing is lost'.

As for your comment: 'And I am also hoping that you will comprehend that you are basing your life on faith...' I do base my life on 'faith'. I do not deny that, but having said that I also have enough faith in what it is we observe/science and what it is we are capable of reasoning/philosophy and as such I embrace all three.

I accept the scientific observation that we, individuals, exist and thus I analyze the rationality regarding why it may exist as individuals and having concluded, as you do, that we are of the same substance and essence as G-d, that all individuals should be treated as such.

I accept the scientific observation that the universe may be expanding and thus I analyze the rationality regarding just what it is the universe may be expanding into and having concluded the physical is expanding into the non-physical (or contracting from the non-physical) and as such the concept of eternal existence, existence unaffected by time, which is an aspect of the physical, appears to be rational.

I accept the philosophical reasoning regarding the four forms of being: 'Being' n. as in the whole of existence/singularity; 'being' n. as in the individual existing/multiplicity; being vb. as in 'the passive state of existing/passive; *being* vb. as in 'the active state of existing/action. Having rationalized the four forms of being 'are' I not only have 'faith in' but understand the interrelationship existing between all four states and from this emerges a rational concept of moral and ethics as opposed to an acceptance of morality and ethics based upon faith alone.

This is metaphysics, observation combined with rational analysis and reasoning, combined with faith, the three in one if you will.

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Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The individuated entity of knowing - Part III

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 30, 2005 04:23PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

The individuated entity of knowing - Part III[deleted materials]

[050617 djs] Again I respect your perception but again I ask: If there is no 'self' then do we speak of an individuals 'desire', an individuals selfishness, an individuals incorrect perception, ... ?

[050619 cg] I do not deny that desires arise and pass away, that perceptions arise and pass away, We call them "our" desires, "our" perceptions, ... because we experience them, but there is no owner (one who possesses and has control), there is no owner of the desires, there is no owner of the perceptions, Our desires, our perceptions, ... arise; we do not command that they occur. Our desires, our perceptions, ... pass away; we do not command that they cease. Our experiences occur and cease without our consent; we are not the owners of our experiences.

[050621 djs] Two questions emerge from your statements: If we do not 'own' 'our' perceptions then who does? And if 'we' are unwilling to own our perceptions than who will?

[050626 cg] No one owns our perceptions; perceptions are experienced, not possessed or controlled. We experience perceptions, but we do not own our perceptions. How can you possess a perception? How can you control your experiences?

[050627 djs] (see my own response 050621) Regarding: No one owns our perceptions ... then why are they called 'our' perceptions?

Regarding: [perceptions are experienced, not possessed or controlled ...](#) If we experience perceptions uniquely, if we enjoin new experiencing based upon the personal perceptions we develop than once established who is responsible for the actions we take based upon the perceptions we personally formulate?

Regarding: [We experience perceptions ??????](#) Are you suggesting that perceptions are simply 'out there' just as a physical tree is 'out there' and as such we as individuals do not formulate what it is we 'perceive' but rather we simply experience? Are you suggesting we are not responsible for a perception we embrace or do not embrace?

Regarding: '[... but we do not own our perceptions.](#) Again, I say, since perceptions are unique to the individual, if we do not own 'our' perceptions' than who does?

Regarding: [How can you possess a perception?](#) 'Your perceptions' are just that, yours and yours alone. Others may hold 'similar' perceptions but they are only 'similar'. Are you suggesting two individuals can have the exact same perceptions?

Regarding: [How can you control your experiences?](#) Free will allows one to choose one's path. Now I grant you there are events which occur that one does not control. But I would concurrently suggest there are choices one can make and I would suggest the individual is responsible for the choices they are allowed to make. Are you suggesting that one has no free will?

[deleted materials]

[\[050619 cg\] I do not deny the obvious; i.e., that you and I exist. We are entities. I deny that we have a self \(essence or "eternal soul"\).For example, I do not deny that the chair upon which I sit exists. But if I disassemble the chair into its parts, is there still the chair? Which piece is the chair? Where is the essence of the chair? The chair came into existence and then ceased to exist. We come into existence and then cease to exist. The chair has existence, but no self. We have existence, but no self.If you believe otherwise, then: Examine yourself carefully. Which piece is your "self"? Where is the essence of you; i.e., your soul? Have you experienced your soul?](#)

[\[050621 djs\] Deny what you will, but where does this certainty of absolute denial come from? Is it reason that leads you there? Is it observation that leads you there? Is it believability that leads you there?](#)

[\[050626 cg\] As I have written previously, personal experience and reflection leads me there. By this I mean my personal experience of perceptions, feelings, and thoughts, and my reflection applying logic and reason.](#)

[\[050627 djs\] But what globally accepted observation/measurement/scientific analysis has led you there? What globally accepted philosophical arguments have led you there?](#)

And if there is no list garnered from science and philosophy is it not then a case of, majestic as it may be, faith alone that leads you there?

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You say: **The chair has existence, but no self.** I would tend to agree with this but this point is not yet fully understood by science, philosophy, and/or religion.

You then proceed to say: **We have existence, but no self.** That is your personal 'belief' but it flies in the face of most sciences, most religions, and most philosophies. It is a belief because it is supported by no observations or dialectics.

[050626 cg] As I have written previously, the Truth is approached by personal effort, not by consensus. And it is not a 'belief' because it is supported by observations (my personal experience of perceptions, feelings, and thoughts) and dialectics (my reflection applying logic and reason).

[050627 djs] Regarding your comment: **'Truth is approached by personal effort, not by consensus ...'** I am not suggesting we 'develop' truth by consensus. I am suggesting that we can 'find' truth through a cooperative effort on the part of science, religion, and philosophy. I am suggesting that there are pure 'truths' which we can separate from relative truths.

I am suggesting that we can scatter the hulls of suggested truths into the wind, and leave the kernels of absolute truths in the basket for our observation and examination if we focus the winds produced by religion, science, and philosophy in a common direction passing over the tossed 'truths' as opposed to our present method of allowing the winds of religion, philosophy, and science to all whirl around in a random fashion. The process of doing so is called 'cooperation'. We apply the process to light in science using a tool called a 'laser'.

As for you constant referral to yourself, 'my' personal experiences, 'my' feelings, 'my' thoughts, 'my' reflections, 'my' logic, 'my' reasoning,... I grant you these things are important but you and I actually are not discussing 'you' nor are we discussing 'me' but rather we are discussing issues dealing with 'our', 'humanity's, all individuals in the universe, all existences outside the universe, ... We in essence are tip-toeing around the concept of 'universals', tip-toeing around concepts of absolute truths versus individual truths.

This is, in essence, a colossal concept reduced to its most elemental aspects.

As for your suggestion: **If you believe otherwise, then: Examine yourself carefully. Which piece is your 'self'? Where is the essence of you; i.e., your soul? Have you experienced your soul?** I would suggest to you that 'I am my soul/spirit' and 'My soul/spirit is who I am.' I would suggest to you that I am consciousness, consciousness of my experiencing. Symbiotic panentheism supports this perception. I have, therefore, experienced my soul for my soul is who I am.

[050626 cg] You write, "I have, therefore, experienced my soul for my soul is who I am." **Since you and your soul are one, this sentence means that your soul has experienced your soul. Yes? What else has your soul experienced that you can share with me? Is it your soul that has been writing to me?**

Regarding: **'Since you and your soul are one, this sentence means that your soul has experienced your soul. Yes?'** I am the composite of my physical essence and my conscious self. I would suggest to you that it is my physical essence that as you say: 'simply arises and passes away, ceases to be'. I would go on to suggest it is my conscious knowing/my soul if you prefer which does not 'cease to exist'.

Regarding: **'What else has your soul experienced that you can share with me??'** My soul has experienced the physical through the tool we call the 'body'.

Regarding: 'Is it your soul that has been writing to me?' Yes, using the physical body as its means of transferring my thoughts to you via the manipulation of the internet, this computer, my brain, and my hands.

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Monday, June 27

Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: Regarding Nothingness: Validity of: Part II
by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 27, 2005 12:20AM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

Regarding Nothingness: Validity of: Part II

[050621 djs] When you state: **I believe that G-d is One and omnipresent and that all things (and entities) are of the same substance.** That is a religious statement indicated by the words 'I believe ...'. I am not talking religion here. I also have my 'beliefs' but I have cast them aside for the purpose of this discussion. Having cast them aside I am now examining them from afar in order to determine what is most probable from an unbiased point of view.

[050624 cg] **I have concluded, based on personal experience and reflection, that G-d is One and omnipresent and that all things (and entities) are of the same substance. (All is in G-d and G-d is in All.)**

[050625 djs] All is in G-d is panentheism. G-d is in All is pantheism. The two are opposites and as such contradictions, conflicts, moral dilemmas, ethical dilemmas, social dilemmas, irresolvable paradoxes, ... arise and such emergences would tend to indicate there is a flaw in such thinking.

[050621 djs] In terms of my question: "And if 'nothingness' exists?" You appear confused about the question when you state: **If 'nothingness' exists (Whatever that may mean!),** For an understanding of the existence of 'nothingness' go to www.panentheism.com and appropriately Google the site.

I understand your confusion regarding nothingness and how it would lead you to make the statement: **G-d is One (the Singularity), the Whole of Reality, and therefore G-d is the substance of both.** Although I respect your personal belief, I would respectfully disagree with your statement G-d is the substance of both ['somethingness' and 'nothingness']. If nothingness exists as pure nothingness it would, by definition, be the absence of all including the absence of G-d. To suggest otherwise is to transform nothingness into 'somethingness'.

[050624 cg] If, as you argue, nothingness exists and G-d exists then it follows that there is an existence that incorporates both. In which case, I would suggest that you have mislabeled somethingness as G-d and that G-d is that Existence in which both nothingness and somethingness exist.

[050625 djs] So it would seem, unless ... Unless one truly embraces all the nuances which follow the understanding that 'nothingness exists and has functionality/meaning'purpose'.

For instance, your perception, 'All is in G-d and G-d is in All.', leads to the immediate understanding that G-d is in 'nothingness' but such an understanding establishes the seemingly irresolvable philosophical paradox that if G-d is in nothingness is it really 'nothingness'?

Proceeding then to address your statement: 'I would suggest that you have mislabeled somethingness as G-d and that G-d is that Existence in which both nothingness and somethingness exist.' I must admit my understanding of G-d is very limited since G-d is the 'unmanifested' but I would like to suggest that should nothingness exist then the void of G-d within nothingness would not diminish G-d since nothingness is the void of all including the void of presence and thus G-d absence in the void is no absence at all.

[050614 cg continues] ... This means that we are all fundamentally equal and not separate, and is the source of respectfulness and kindness.

[050617 djs] I agree but just because you and I agree upon this statement does not make it a rational statement. The statement is simply a statement based upon the lack of an in-depth discussion of reality.

[050619 cg] I disagree. From my perspective it is quite logical. It is logical that I act respectfully and kindly to me. If you and I are truly the same substance and not separate, then it is logical that I act respectfully and kindly to you for it is an act to me. To do otherwise would be illogical.

[050621 djs] I agree with your position regarding fundamental moral and ethical behavior, however, your perspective is based upon the basic premise you have established 'I believe that G-d is One and omnipresent and that all things (and entities) are of the same substance. Your position is based upon what it is 'you believe and I respect that, I respect your 'belief'. The question, however, is: What arguments other than religious beliefs support such moral and ethical standards? I would suggest the metaphysical model of reality demonstrated by symbiotic panentheism brings together the scientific observations, religious dialogue, and philosophical dialectics to support your and my perceptions of moral and ethical behavior. This is why sp can be labeled 'a 'universal philosophy'.

[050624 cg] Now that I have asserted that 'I have concluded, based on personal experience and reflection, that G-d is One and omnipresent and that all things (and entities) are of the same substance' my ethical position is not based on belief or faith.

[050625 djs] Very good, uhhh except you have forgotten a couple things, correct me if I am wrong, but don't you still 'believe' nothingness does not exist and don't you still believe 'the individual ceases to be'. In addition aren't both such positions beliefs upon which your perception of reality is based.

In essence, aren't you simply looking away from issues which might cause you to understand reality.

As for your ethical positions, I still don't understand why your ethical position is any more valid than that of Stalin, Hitler, Manson, ... They also were individuals that lived as they felt 'they should' live and they also simply cease to be and thus feel no consequences for their actions.

Symbiotic panentheism addresses this social issue, as well as a myriad other religious, philosophical, and scientific issues head on. Forgetting all the other issues, how do you address the social issue outlined directly above?

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 [Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: Regarding Nothingness: Validity of: Part I](#)
by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 27, 2005 12:16AM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

[Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.](#)

[Regarding Nothingness: Validity of: Part I](#)

[deleted materials ...]

[\[050619 cg\] You believe in the Nothingness of non-existence. According to you, this Nothingness of non-existence forms a boundary creating you from the substance of G-d as an "entity of consciousness" and separating you from G-d. And you believe you exist in this condition, like a bubble of consciousness, for eternity, forever separated by the Nothingness of non-existence from G-d. So, according to you, your existence is dependent on the Nothingness of non-existence. I believe that G-d is One and omnipresent and that all things \(and entities\) are of the same substance. You asked, "And if 'nothingness' exists?" If 'nothingness' exists \(Whatever that may mean!\), then there is also a 'somethingness' \(a not nothingness\) that exists. G-d is One \(the Singularity\), the Whole of Reality, and therefore G-d is the substance of both.](#)

[\[050621 djs\] Regarding your observation: 'You believe in the Nothingness of non-existence.' It is not that I 'believe' in nothingness, I simply state that 'nothingness' 'may' exist and proceed to analyze the concept on the basis of what religion, science, and philosophy have all given us. My conclusion: Nothingness/non-existence most probably exists.](#)

[As for your statement: According to you, this Nothingness of non-existence forms a boundary creating you from the substance of G-d as an "entity of consciousness" and separating you from G-d. This is what I have concluded from analyzing the information with which science, philosophy, and religious all appear to concur.](#)

[In terms of: And you believe you exist in this condition, like a bubble of consciousness, for eternity, forever separated by the Nothingness of non-existence from G-d. You speak of 'my belief' and again I will state that it is not a 'belief' but rather it is a possible conclusion drawn from analysis. I would also add that it appears to provide answers to haunting questions our specie has never been able to answer and as such the ability to](#)

answer previously unanswered question simply reinforces the legitimacy of the concepts.

You conclude erroneously: **So, according to you, your existence is dependent on the Nothingness of non-existence.** I am not saying that my existence is dependent upon the Nothingness of non-existence. Rather I am saying this understanding answers a lot of philosophical paradoxes, religious contradictions, and scientific puzzles which have previously gone unanswered. I am not saying it is an absolute I am simply saying it is not impossible. I am suggesting, based upon scientific observations, religious texts, and philosophical dialectics, it is more probable than improbable that non-existence not only exists but has functionality.

[050624 cg] In the above paragraphs you seem uncertain, writing that this or that is "a possible conclusion", is "not impossible" or is "more probable than improbable".If, as you stated above, you conclude that, "Nothingness/non-existence most probably exists," then you admit the possibility that nothingness does not exist. If the existence of nothingness is uncertain, what is certain?

[050625 djs] Regarding your statement: ‘then you admit the possibility that nothingness does not exist.’ You are correct, I do admit the possibility that nothingness does not exist. I am only postulating that nothingness exists based upon what sciences, religions, and philosophies have provided us over the last four thousand years. I am stating that to suggest nothingness does not exist is to misinterpret the fundamental wisdom established by the three over four millennia.

Regarding your statement: ‘...If the existence of nothingness is uncertain, what is certain?’ That is a terrific question! If one is to be completely honest, one has no choice but to admit that nothing is certain and if one is to be completely honest one has no choice but to admit one cannot name truth as an absolute, but one can define truth, define perceptions of reality as best one can and then one moves on from there.

This is the very foundation of science. Science does not claim they know anything as an absolute but rather they make statements based upon degrees of probability. In science there is, basically speaking, the first step – observation, the second step – hypothesis, the third step – Theory, the fourth step – Law of ...

But even science will concede that the ‘Laws of science’ are not absolutes. For instance all the Laws of Physics have either been discarded, merged, modified, or allowed to stand as they are for the time being.

So it should be with any model of reality we establish which emerges from the examination of all three perceptual tools we use, namely science, religion, and philosophy.

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 **Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: On logic**

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 27, 2005 12:08AM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

On logic:

[deleted materials] [050614 cg] **If, as you wrote above, "it is possible that 'Existence simply is'", then it must be rational to hold the position that 'Existence simply is'.**

[050617 djs] **Just because something is 'possible' does not make it rational. It is possible the universe could collapse into nothingness tomorrow but is it rational to stand, day after day after day, on the corner carrying a sign stating 'The world is coming to an end'?**

I would suggest not. I am not suggesting there is anything wrong with the act, I am simply suggesting that it is not supported by any rational dialectics, direct observations, and/or universal beliefs.

[050619 cg] **The question was "Is such a position rational ... ?"; i.e., the question was regarding one's belief or understanding and whether the belief or understanding was rational, not whether any act was rational; so your argument misses the point. And my answer to the question was "If it is possible that 'Existence simply is', then it is rational." If it is possible that Existence simply is, then it follows that the proposition 'Existence simply is' may be true. In a logical Existence not all logical propositions are true, but all illogical propositions are untrue. And if the proposition may be true, then the proposition must be in the logical category, because if it was in the illogical category it would not be possible for the proposition to be true.**

[050621 djs] **Ah, I think I am beginning to understand what separates us. I begin with the perception that nothing, literally nothing, is impossible. I reject nothing. I embrace all. I then proceed to analyze what is more probable. The more probable, the more rational.**

[050623 cg] **And I now understand that you are using the term 'rational' to be a measure of probability, where I am using the term 'rational' as a synonym for 'logical'. Then again you stated that being probable does not make something rational.**

[050626 djs] **See response: Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The art of rational thinking: Part I, posted June 25, 2005.**

[deleted materials]

[050621 djs] **As for your statement: "If it is possible that 'Existence simply is', then it is rational." For you, yes. For me, yes, but for me the position is very improbable since it is supported by nothing we observe as a specie and simultaneously it is supported by nothing we reason as a specie. In addition the statement, 'Existence simply is', is supported by little we believe universally as a specie.**

Having said that I will admit that the position is not irrational, nor is it unbelievable, nor is it incapable of supporting moral and/or ethical foundations, nor is it 'wrong', nor is it illogical, nor is it harmful in nature, nor is it a stressful position, nor is it ...

The concept, 'Existence simply is', however does not suggest any of the negative (negative as in it does not..., not negative as in detrimental) absolutes you suggest. As an example, the statement does not imply nor directly state: 'Existence simply is and therefore self is not a possibility.' Etc.

[050623 cg] **HUH? I stated: Existence simply is and therefore it follows that Existence has no meaning or**

purpose. I did not suggest that the proposition suggested any other "negative absolutes". Nor did I suggest that 'Existence simply is' implies that "self is not a possibility".

[050626 djs] See response: Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The art of rational thinking: Part I, posted June 25, 2005.

[050621 djs] When you state: If it is possible that Existence simply is, then it follows that the proposition 'Existence simply is' may be true. In a logical Existence not all logical propositions are true, but all illogical propositions are untrue. At one point in our history it was considered illogical to think we would ever go to the moon. As history has demonstrated, man has stepped upon the surface of the moon. Thus what was once an illogical proposition, 'Eventually man will go to the moon' has been moved from the 'untrue' to the 'true' column. The result: 'all illogical propositions are untrue' may be true in the short run but has been shown to be in error in the long term.

[050623 cg] HUH? There is a difference between what is logical and what is probable. Certainly you, as a mathematician, can identify illogical propositions that cannot be true (real).

[050626 djs] See response: Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The art of rational thinking: Part II, posted June 25, 2005.

[050621 djs] I do not agree with your statement: And if the proposition may be true, then the proposition must be in the logical category, because if it was in the illogical category it would not be possible for the proposition to be true. Symbiotic panentheism would suggest the Buddhistic percepton 'Nothing is lost' is correct. Sp would also suggest that nothing is impossible. It is only our ego which suggests that we, limited beings, are capable of stating 'absolute impossibilities.

[050623 cg] If my statement above is not true, then are you positing that a proposition may be illogical and true? And if that is the case, then what is the value of logic?

[050626 djs] The value of logic lies in its ability to 'help us' as individuals and a specie understand physical reality within which we exist as conscious beings/spiritual beings within physical garbs.

But the question becomes: Is it possible for something to be simultaneously illogical and true. I would suggest that it is possible for something to be simultaneously illogical and true.

illogical: adj. 1. not observing the principles of logic 2: devoid of logic : senseless

logic: n 1: a science that deals with the principles and criteria of validity of inference and demonstration: the science of forma principles of reasoning 2: a branch of variety of logic 3: a branch of semiotic: exp : syntactic 4: the formal principles of a branch of knowledge b (1) : a particular mode of reasoning viewed as valid or faulty 2:

So you see logic deals with what makes 'sense', deals with knowledge, deals with a particular mode of reasoning, deals ...

In short, logic depends upon what it is we understand. There is much we do not understand and often we categorize such events or statements as 'illogical'.

Understand this allows us to use 'logic' while not allowing 'logic' to 'box us in', to 'limit us', to succumb the phrases such as: 'we cannot...', 'it is impossible for ...', '... will never happen', ...

As such many statements of possibilities become illogical statements and likewise many negative absolutes become 'apparently illogical' when we perceive logic to be an absolute as opposed to perceiving logic to simply be a tool subject to its own limits, namely the limits of the very beings who implement it.

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Saturday, June 25

 **Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The art of rational thinking: Part II**

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 25, 2005 03:29PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

The art of rational thinking: Part II

Excuse the verbiage of the below, it deals not only with a dialogue between cg and myself but with reflective thinking.

[050619 cg continues] ... If it is possible that Existence simply is, then it follows that the proposition 'Existence simply is' may be true. In a logical Existence not all logical propositions are true, but all illogical propositions are untrue.

[050621 djs] At one point in our history it was considered illogical to think we would ever go to the moon. As history has demonstrated, man has stepped upon the surface of the moon. Thus what was once an illogical proposition, 'Eventually man will go to the moon' has been moved from the 'untrue' to the 'true' column. The result: 'all illogical propositions are untrue' may be true in the short run but has been shown to be in error in the long term.

[050622 cg] HUH? There is a difference between what is logical and what is probable. Certainly you, as a mathematician, can identify illogical propositions that cannot be true (real).

[050624 djs] No, I cannot. In terms of section 'A' in diagram 050605, you are correct. In terms of the remainder of the diagram, the answer is: No, I cannot. Since 'A' is only temporary in the physical sense, the

answer is not both but rather simply: No, I cannot.

[050619 cg continues] ... And if the proposition may be true, then the proposition must be in the logical category, because if it was in the illogical category it would not be possible for the proposition to be true.

[050621 djs] Nothing is lost and nothing is impossible. It is only our ego which suggests that we, limited beings, are capable of stating 'absolutes'.

[050622 cg] "Nothing is lost". Is that an absolute? "[N]othing is impossible." Is that an absolute? "It is only our ego which suggests that we, limited beings, are capable of stating 'absolutes'." Is that an absolute?

[050624 djs] Ahhh, you got me. They are stated as absolutes and as such are 'beliefs', religious in nature. When dealing with metaphysics such statements become a portion of the material from which one proceeds to rationalize which in turn leads to the development of rational concepts such as the development of a rational model of Reality. If one rationalizes using only 'beliefs' one obtains religious statements, religious models. Therefore there are other sources of materials one uses in the process of developing universal rational concepts. The other sources of materials are 'the materials' developed through observation and measurement, science, and materials developed through reason and dialectics, philosophy.

When one incorporates all three tools, science, religion, and philosophy, one develops concepts which are 'intra' as well as 'inter' universal in nature.

[deleted materials ...]

[050614 cg continues] ... In any case, here is how I understand the ethical situation: All that is, whether you consider it physical, mental, consciousness, illusion, G-d, whatever Reality is, we are of the same substance.

[050617 djs] And if 'nothingness' exists? Are you suggesting that we are also of the same substance as 'nothingness'?

[050619 cg] You believe in the Nothingness of non-existence.

[050621 djs] No, I simply state that 'nothingness' 'may' exist and proceed to analyze the concept on the basis of what religion, science, and philosophy have all given us. My conclusion: Nothingness/non-existence most probably exists.

[050622 cg] WHAT? You base your very soul on the 'nothingness' you simply state 'may' exist (whatever that means) and you can't imagine it otherwise.

[050624 djs] Oh, I can 'imagine' it otherwise, I can 'imagine' anything. I have a vivid imagination. That is why I can 'imagine' two plus two equals five.

Personally, I 'believe' I exist as 'an entity of 'self''. But I recognize that as a personal belief. When I speak to

others who 'believe' I do not exist, I fully understand that is a possibility. I may simply be the product of another entity's imagination, I may simply be a figment of your imagination. I personally don't 'believe' that to be the case but it 'is possible'. I do not base my actions on that possibility but it 'is possible'.

As for 'basing my very soul on 'nothingness', hardly. I take responsibility for my soul and as such I follow my personal beliefs as opposed to following my rational thoughts.

But what then of the model symbiotic panentheism? Do I just toss it away? I would have tossed it away if it had led me to the understanding that relativism was the only rational explanation regarding ethics and morality or if it had led me to the understanding that G-d did not exist. But had it led me there, I would have tossed it away.

But why would I have simply tossed fifty years of thinking away if it had led me to a truth I did not want to find. I would have thrown it away because I have faith, I believe in my heart that 'Nothing is lost including the individual', that G-d does not make junk and thus all forms of existence have purpose, that we have free will and are therefore responsible for our actions, that one person's perception of truth is not as good and everyone else's, that there is such a thing as truth, that we can find a means of remaining unique while enjoying each other's company, that peace is possible if only we look for the means of achieving it – namely advancing our understanding of Reality.

As such, I set aside all my personal beliefs in search of truth. I did not reject my personal beliefs, I simply set them aside while I searched for truth and surprisingly the metaphysical development of a rational model of Reality which I simply call symbiotic panentheism, led me straight back to religion, all religions, led me to understanding how it is that all the above can be understood through a more comprehensive understanding of Reality. The model of symbiotic panentheism clearly demonstrates the rationality of faith and the significant role faith/religion has to play in the individual's attempt to accomplish the purpose of their very existence within the physical.

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 [Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The art of rational thinking: Part I](#)
by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 25, 2005 03:23PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

[Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.](#)

The art of rational thinking: Part I

Excuse the verbiage of the below, it deals not only with a dialogue between cg and myself but with reflective thinking.

[deleted materials]

[050614 cg] If, as you wrote above, "it is possible that 'Existence simply is'", then it must be rational to hold the position that 'Existence simply is'.

[050617 djs] Just because something is 'possible' does not make it rational. It is possible the universe could collapse into nothingness tomorrow but is it rational to stand, day after day after day, on the corner carrying a sign stating 'The world is coming to an end'?

I would suggest not. I am not suggesting there is anything wrong with the act, I am simply suggesting that it is not supported by any rational argument.

[050619 cg] The question was "Is such a position rational ... ?"; i.e., the question was regarding one's belief or understanding and whether the belief or understanding was rational, not whether any act was rational; so your argument misses the point.

[050621 djs] Ah, I think I am beginning to understand what separates us. I begin with the perception that nothing, literally nothing, is impossible. I reject nothing. I embrace all. I then proceed to analyze what is more probable. The more probable the more rational.

[050622 cg] No, I think you have avoided the point I was making about your argument. And I now understand that you are using the term 'rational' to be a measure of probability, where I am using the term 'rational' as a synonym for 'logical'. Then again you stated that being probable does not make something rational.

[050624 djs] You are correct. I perceive logic and rational thinking to be specific specialty fields within the arena of thinking. (see previous discussion)

As for the degree of probability associated with any particular rational concept/statement, probability runs from 0% to 100%. I hesitate to suggest we, as human and thus by definition limited, have the ability to make a statement which falls specifically into either the 0% or 100% category. A

In addition: I perceive a 'rational statement' much as I perceive a piece of art.

In arena of art, one does not begin with a piece of art and then proceed to paint it. One begins with the materials and proceeds to do the painting and the end product is the piece of art itself. Some art is poor. Some are is good. Some art is excellent. Occasionally one has the opportunity to encounter an extraordinary piece of art.

Having said that one is also able to understand that the arena of art is occupied by varies fields of art: paintings, sculptures, ...

In the arena of thinking, one likewise does not begin with a rational concept and then proceed to rationalize the concept. One begins with the materials and proceeds to do the rationalizing and the end product is the rational concept itself. Some rational concepts are poor. Some rational concepts are good. Some rational concepts are excellent. Occasionally one has the opportunity to encounter an extraordinary rational concept.

Thus the measure of probability emerges. The more extraordinary the rational concept the more probable the

concept.

As art is divided into the sub-arenas of paintings, sculptures, ... so to thinking is divided into its sub-arenas of rational concepts, logic, ...

[deleted materials]

[050619 cg continues] ... And my answer to the question was "If it is possible that 'Existence simply is', then it is rational."

[050621 djs] For you, yes. For me, yes, but for me the position is very improbable since it is supported by nothing we observe as a specie and simultaneously it is supported by nothing we reason as a specie. In addition the statement, 'Existence simply is', is supported by little we believe universally as a specie.

Having said that I will admit that the position is not irrational, nor is it unbelievable, nor is it incapable of supporting moral and/or ethical foundations, nor is it 'wrong', nor is it illogical, nor is it harmful in nature, nor is it a stressful position, nor is it ...

The concept, 'Existence simply is', however does not suggest any of the negatives absolutes you suggest. The statement does not imply nor directly state: 'Existence simply is and therefore self is not a possibility.' Etc.

[050622 cg] HUH? I stated: Existence simply is and therefore Existence has no meaning or purpose. I did not suggest that the proposition suggested any other "negative absolutes". Nor did I suggest that 'Existence simply is' implies that "self is not a possibility".

[050624 djs] In terms of your last sentence: "Nor did I suggest that 'Existence simply is' implies that "self is not a possibility". Perhaps I am in error. I had thought you previously stated that 'self ceases to be'. If self 'ceases to be' than self, in essence, 'is not' for in essence there is only 'the now' (see section 'C' diagram 050605) and once 'self ceases to be' there is no self, ever for it has ceased to be.

In terms of your statement: "I stated: Existence simply is and therefore Existence has no meaning or purpose. I did not suggest that the proposition suggested any other "negative absolutes". I am using the concept of 'negative' in the pure sense not the judgmental sense. Thus 'it is not possible' becomes the opposite, the negative, of it is possible.

Thus 'Existence has 'no' meaning' is the opposite or negative of 'Existence has meaning'.

The statement, 'Existence simple is', is an 'absolute as compared to 'Existence might simply be' which is a statement of possibility as opposed to an absolute statement. 'Existence has 'no' meaning' is both an absolute statement and a 'negative' which gives us a 'negative absolute'. The same applies to 'self is not a possibility', which is both a negativism and an absolutism thus a 'negative absolute'.

A 'negative absolute' in this discussion is not intended to be a criticism nor is it intended to reach into the realm of emotion or personal attack.

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 Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The size of G-d: Part II

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 25, 2005 03:13PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

The size of G-d: Part II

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[050616 cg] How do you distinguish or what is the difference(s) between Total Consciousness (C) and Omnipresence (D)?

[050617 djs] We are limited beings and to suggest that 'consciousness' is the ultimate of existence is anthropomorphic and considering the 'size' of the universe and the 'size' of total consciousness this perception is most probably erroneous.

[050621 cg] Are you implying that I suggested that "'consciousness' is the ultimate of existence"? My question was not intended to suggest any such concept, but to understand your position as presented in your diagram.

[050624 djs] No, you have been quite clear that is not what you think. When I stated '...to suggest ...', I was not referring to you but rather I was stating '... to suggest ...' I will try to be more explicit in the future.

[050617 djs continues] It would be more honest, therefore to suggest: There may be more to 'presence' than consciousness. This 'presence' may be beyond our comprehension as 'conscious' beings. Therefore Omnipresence is depicted as being neither less nor equal to consciousness but rather potentially more inclusive than simple consciousness. Thus section 'D' takes on the appearance of being 'larger' than section 'C' but smaller than 'E'.

[050621 cg] It is my understanding that in such diagrams when a smaller figure is placed within a larger figure it implies that there is another smaller figure that also exists within the larger figure; i.e., if A is placed within Z, then there is a not-A that also exists within Z; otherwise A would be identical to Z. Then it would follow that, according to your presentation: If Total Consciousness is within Omnipresence, then there is a 'not-consciousness' (something other than consciousness) that exists within Omnipresence, so that Omnipresence incorporates both consciousness and not-consciousness. And if Omnipresence is within The Unmanifested, then there is a not-presence (something other than presence) that exists within The Unmanifested, so that The Unmanifested incorporates both presence and not-presence. And if the Whole of Reality contains The Unmanifested, then logically either a not-The Unmanifested (something other than The Unmanifested) exists

within the Whole or Reality or The Unmanifested is identical to the Whole of Reality. You have identified the not-The Unmanifested as the 'plus one'; i.e., "'Plus one' deals with the whole as a non-duality." Is this so, according to your understanding?

[050624 djs] Hmm, well now, let me think. Yes, I think that is so. I hesitate because I am not sure whether or not 'the whole of Reality' and 'the nothingness' would be considered as a 'Ying and Yang' situation to a Buddhist.

Putting that aside, in terms of how I personally perceive the model of symbiotic panentheism (perceived from the point of view of a novice to other religions, perceived strictly from a metaphysical point of view) I would say: Yes, you are correctly stating what the model of symbiotic panentheism demonstrates.

Note: The interesting thing about symbiotic panentheism is that it is somewhat fluid and can be interpreted somewhat differently by different religious groups. For example, terminology may vary just as the word for God varies from religion to religion.

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Friday, June 24

 [Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The lack of self: Part IV](#)
by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 24, 2005 12:41PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

The lack of self: Part III

[050617 djs continues] Although I'm not sure what to do with the last three statements let me state the following:

[050619 cg] And I'm not sure what to do with your comments below. We all claim Truth and we are all true.

[050617 djs continues] *The metaphysical understanding put forward by symbiotic panentheism fully embraces your positions.*

The purpose of symbiotic panentheism is not to establish a religion but rather to place into society a model of reality based upon scientific, religious, and philosophical wisdoms which together establish the underlying rationality needed to validate the model itself.

The model, interestingly enough, does nothing to reduce the significance or the legitimacy of Buddhism, Islam,

Atheism, Judaism, Tao, Hinduism, Rosicrucians, Theosophers, Catholics, Protestants, Cosmologists, Existentialists, Phenomenologists, ...

Symbiotic panentheism is a universal philosophy capable of acting as the trunk from which all of the above can branch uniquely. The roots of sp are composed of the human wisdom generated by the above and the roots of sp find themselves anchored in the soil of rational discourse.

As such to argue the points you present is in essence to suggest Buddhism is 'wrong' when in fact it is no more wrong than is Christianity, Hinduism, ...

[050621 djs] I am not 'claiming truth'. I am simply analyzing the vast libraries of humanity in the attempt to understand the whole of reality and the role we, you and I, have to play within such a reality.

As for your aphorism: **'We all claim Truth and we are all true.'** Let us hope this is not the case since the statement implies 'relative moralism' is valid. Is this what you are suggesting?

[050614 cg continues] ... Such a person

[050619 cg] And to your statements below, you may purport whatever pleases you. As I have stated previously, I do not represent Buddhism. I am not a philosopher, scientist, or theologian. I only express my own beliefs and understanding. Your comments are about symbiotic panentheism and Buddhism. I am not Buddhism. I am a person.

[050617 djs] But there can be no 'person' if there is 'no self'. Symbiotic panentheism would purport that Buddhism is correct when it address positive issues, address issues of what is as opposed to issues of 'what is not'. Symbiotic panentheism holds this view of all religions, sciences, and philosophies. Symbiotic panentheism also suggest that the negative absolutism embraced by religions, sciences, and philosophies is where the three must tread lightly and where the three are most likely to be in error.

For instance Buddhism address the issue of The Whole in a positive sense, but appears to state the 'self' does not exist. The absolutism of the negative, "self 'does not' exist", is what is Buddhism leaves as it emerges from the trunk of the tree represented by sp. The religion of Buddhism then becomes a branch which distinguishes itself from the trunk through the process of removing 'self'. The branch therefore is symbolically 'smaller' than the trunk.

This does not cause the branch to be insignificant nor does it cause the branch to be invalid but rather the branch simply represents a unique perception of reality which fits the needs of specific organizations (branches of branches, stems of branches, ...) and of individuals (the leaves) and the thinkers, developers of new ideas, artists, creative individuals ... (flowers found on the branches).

[050621 djs] I also am not a philosopher, scientist, or theologian. I, like you, am simply a person. If you sensed I was suggesting otherwise, I did not intend to mislead you. If you sense I have been suggesting you are an expert in Buddhism, I have not intended to put you in that position.

All the dialogues have listed you as a 'Neo-Buddhist'. This terminology was extracted from you at my

encouragement. You never were enthusiastically professing yourself to be any form of Buddhist nor have you ever indicated you were an expert in Buddhistic dogmas, traditions, or fundamentals. You have always been very forthright, honest, and well intentioned.

I sincerely hope I have not shaken your faith for that was not my intent. My questions were statements intended to open the mind to the concept of pluralism.

I have a brother and a sister who are very religious. They never question their beliefs. They simply state the obvious: They are religious and believe through faith alone. There is nothing wrong with such a position. In fact it is very refreshing and honest.

I too am religious. Symbiotic panentheism is not my religion. If symbiotic panentheism ever becomes a religion it will have failed miserably in terms of what it was intended to do. Sp is intended to be the foundation from which all religions, sciences, and philosophies can spring. Sp is intended to provide a model of reality which provides the means by which pluralism, tolerance, respect, and brotherhood can flourish.

The questions I have directed towards you are no less unsettling to you than they are to those of my religious leaning.

[050614 cg continues] ... (Such a person) would understand the illusion of separateness, of self, of gain and loss and would be free to act compassionately; i.e., respectfully, kindly, and selflessly.

[050617 djs] I agree completely with your analysis as to the affect Buddhism would have upon civilization should everyone become a Buddhist. But the fact of the matter is that not everyone will become a Buddhist because not everyone agrees with the Buddhistic premise that 'self' does not exist, since the premise is based upon 'faith' as opposed to 'reason'.

[050619 cg] My analysis is of my beliefs and understanding, not Buddhism and it is not based on faith (a belief without evidence). It is based on personal experience and reflection. It is the very lack of faith! You have faith. You have faith that you have a "soul", but can you experience your soul? Can you demonstrate your soul? So your comments regarding faith below may take on meanings that you had not intended.

[050617 djs continues] Now there is nothing 'wrong' with basing one's life upon faith as opposed to 'reason'. In fact faith is a wonderful characteristic of humanity. We have faith in our observations and thus we reach to open the door before entering a room as opposed to walking into the door.

We have faith in our fellow man. We have faith in science. We have faith in the teachings of our religions. We have faith in our ability reason.

Without faith we could not survive.

One must not lose sight of the fact, however, that all people are not 'logical' and not all people are 'reasonable', nor will this ever be true of all people.

What then needs to be established is the trunk of the tree from which all religions, sciences, and philosophies can

spring. I would suggest such a trunk can be established using human wisdom/knowledge as the roots from which the trunk emerges and rationality as the soil which anchors the roots.

The trunk is a mutual religious, scientific, and philosophical consensus arrived at through the coordinated analysis of the vast accumulation of human wisdom/knowledge developed by our specie. The trunk provides a common ground upon which the diversity of human opinion can commune and embrace diversity.

[050621 djs] You state: 'So your comments regarding faith below may take on meanings that you had not intended.' Excuse my density but are you referring to something in particular?

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 Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The lack of self: Part III

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 24, 2005 12:35PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

The lack of self: Part III

[050614 cg continues] ... All things, including us, are not self-existent; i.e., things lack a "self" (or an "eternal soul") and will pass away. This means that there is no self to be selfish.

[050617 djs] I respect your perception, but the question becomes: If there is no self to be selfish then why do we speak of the individual being 'self'ish, since there is no self?

[050619 cg] We are sometimes confused and speak of delusions. That is also our nature.[050621 djs] Delusions are simply perceptions lacking supporting verification. Just because we classify certain perceptions as 'delusions' does not mean they are not 'real'.

[050614 cg continues] ... and that we, our desire, and the things we desire are temporary, and this is the source of selflessness.

[050617 djs] Again I respect your perception but again I ask: If there is no 'self' then do we speak of an individuals 'desire', an individuals selfishness, an individuals incorrect perception, ... ?

[050619 cg] I do not deny that desires arise and pass away, that perceptions arise and pass away, We call them "our" desires, "our" perceptions, ... because we experience them, but there is no owner (one who possesses and has control), there is no owner of the desires, there is no owner of the perceptions, Our desires, our perceptions, ... arise; we do not command that they occur. Our desires, our perceptions, ... pass

away; we do not command that they cease. Our experiences occur and cease without our consent; we are not the owners of our experiences.

[050621 djs] Two questions emerge from your statements: If we do not 'own' 'our' perceptions then who does? And if 'we' are unwilling to own our perceptions than who will?

[050614 cg continues] ... A truly logical and reasonable entity, knowing (or believing) the above to be true, would act accordingly.

[050617 djs] And again I respect your position. Here again you speak of 'the' 'entity' as if it exists as 'a' 'self' and as if it has free will to choose yet you speak of there being no 'self'. Where is the rationale which explains the apparent discrepancy of the lack of self and the constant reference to self?

[050619 cg] I do not deny the obvious; i.e., that you and I exist. We are entities. I deny that we have a self (essence or "eternal soul"). For example, I do not deny that the chair upon which I sit exists. But if I disassemble the chair into its parts, is there still the chair? Which piece is the chair? Where is the essence of the chair? The chair came into existence and then ceased to exist. We come into existence and then cease to exist. The chair has existence, but no self. We have existence, but no self. If you believe otherwise, then: Examine yourself carefully. Which piece is your "self"? Where is the essence of you; i.e., your soul? Have you experienced your soul?

[050621 djs] Deny what you will, but where does this certainty of absolute denial come from? Is it reason that leads you there? Is it observation that leads you there? Is it believability that leads you there?

Regarding your position and question: **For example, I do not deny that the chair upon which I sit exists. But if I disassemble the chair into its parts, is there still the chair?** In the tangible/physical, the chair is gone. In the intangible/abstract, the chair remains. In the intangible/knowing, once the chair has been assembled it is never erased. Nothing is lost.

As for the question: **Which piece is the chair? Where is the essence of the chair? The chair came into existence and then ceased to exist.** In the physical sense you are correct, the chair ceases to exist. In the intangible sense, the chair, once created, never ceases to be.

In terms of your statement: **We come into existence and then cease to exist.** In the physical sense this would appear to be true. In regards to the intangible I would disagree. I would suggest, nothing is lost. But how can it be that we are lost in the physical sense and yet the statement remains true that 'Nothing is lost'? If the physical emerges from nothingness, then the physical is nothingness in a different form, thus anything physical which is lost is simply a from of nothingness returning to nothingness and thus 'nothing is lost'. On the other hand, in terms of the intangible/knowing/consciousness, the chair remains as an entity experienced and thus once again, 'nothing is lost'.

You say: **The chair has existence, but no self.** I would tend to agree with this but this point is not yet fully understood by science, philosophy, and/or religion.

You then proceed to say: **We have existence, but no self.** That is your personal 'belief' but it flies in the face of

most sciences, most religions, and most philosophies. It is a belief because it is supported by no observations or dialectics.

As for your suggestion: **If you believe otherwise, then: Examine yourself carefully. Which piece is your "self"? Where is the essence of you; i.e., your soul? Have you experienced your soul?** I would suggest to you that 'I am my soul/spirit' and 'My soul/spirit is who I am.' I would suggest to you that I am consciousness, consciousness of my experiencing. Symbiotic panentheism supports this perception. I have, therefore, experienced my soul for my soul is who I am.

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Thursday, June 23

 **Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The lack of self: Part II**

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 23, 2005 12:08PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

The lack of self: Part II

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[050614 cg continues] ... In any case, here is how I understand the ethical situation: All that is, whether you consider it physical, mental, consciousness, illusion, G-d, whatever Reality is, we are of the same substance.

[050617 djs] And if 'nothingness' exists? Are you suggesting that we are also of the same substance as 'nothingness'?

[050619 cg] You believe in the Nothingness of non-existence. According to you, this Nothingness of non-existence forms a boundary creating you from the substance of G-d as an "entity of consciousness" and separating you from G-d. And you believe you exist in this condition, like a bubble of consciousness, for eternity, forever separated by the Nothingness of non-existence from G-d. So, according to you, your existence is dependent on the Nothingness of non-existence. I believe that G-d is One and omnipresent and that all things (and entities) are of the same substance. You asked, "And if 'nothingness' exists?" If 'nothingness' exists (Whatever that may mean!), then there is also a 'somethingness' (a not nothingness) that exists. G-d is One (the Singularity), the Whole of Reality, and therefore G-d is the substance of both.

[050621 djs] Regarding your observation: 'You believe in the Nothingness of non-existence.' It is not that I 'believe' in nothingness, I simply state that 'nothingness' 'may' exist and proceed to analyze the concept on the basis of what religion, science, and philosophy have all given us. My conclusion: Nothingness/non-existence most probably exists.

As for your statement: According to you, this Nothingness of non-existence forms a boundary creating you from the substance of G-d as an "entity of consciousness" and separating you from G-d. This is what I have concluded from analyzing the information with which science, philosophy, and religious all appear to concur.

In terms of: And you believe you exist in this condition, like a bubble of consciousness, for eternity, forever separated by the Nothingness of non-existence from G-d. You speak of ‘my belief’ and again I will state that it is not a ‘belief’ but rather it is a possible conclusion drawn from analysis. I would also add that it appears to provide answers to haunting questions our specie has never been able to answer and as such the ability to answer previously unanswered question simply reinforces the legitimacy of the concepts.

You conclude erroneously: So, according to you, your existence is dependent on the Nothingness of non-existence. I am not saying that my existence is dependent upon the Nothingness of non-existence. Rather I am saying this understanding answers a lot of philosophical paradoxes, religious contradictions, and scientific puzzles which have previously gone unanswered. I am not saying it is an absolute I am simply saying it is not impossible. I am suggesting, based upon scientific observations, religious texts, and philosophical dialectics, it is more probable than improbable that non-existence not only exists but has functionality.

When you state: I believe that G-d is One and omnipresent and that all things (and entities) are of the same substance. That is a religious statement indicated by the words ‘I believe ...’. I am not talking religion here. I also have my ‘beliefs’ but I have cast them aside for the purpose of this discussion. Having cast them aside I am now examining them from afar in order to determine what is most probable from an unbiased point of view.

In terms of my question: "And if 'nothingness' exists?" You appear confused about the question when you state: If 'nothingness' exists (Whatever that may mean!), For an understanding of the existence of ‘nothingness’ go to www.panentheism.com and appropriately Google the site.

I understand your confusion regarding nothingness and how it would lead you to make the statement: G-d is One (the Singularity), the Whole of Reality, and therefore G-d is the substance of both. Although I respect your personal belief, I would respectfully disagree with your statement G-d is the substance of both [‘somethingness’ and ‘nothingness’]. If nothingness exists as pure nothingness it would, by definition, be the absence of all including the absence of G-d. To suggest otherwise is to transform nothingness into ‘somethingness’.

[050614 cg continues] ... This means that we are all fundamentally equal and not separate, and is the source of respectfulness and kindness.

[050617 djs] I agree but just because you and I agree upon this statement does not make it a rational statement. The statement is simply a statement based upon the lack of an in-depth discussion of reality.

[050619 cg] I disagree. From my perspective it is quite logical. It is logical that I act respectfully and kindly to me. If you and I are truly the same substance and not separate, then it is logical that I act respectfully and kindly to you for it is an act to me. To do otherwise would be illogical.

[050621 djs] I agree with your position regarding fundamental moral and ethical behavior, however, your perspective is based upon the basic premise you have established ‘I believe that G-d is One and omnipresent and that all things (and entities) are of the same substance. Your position is based upon what it is ‘you believe and I respect that, I respect your ‘belief’. The question, however, is: What arguments other than religious

beliefs support such moral and ethical standards? I would suggest the metaphysical model of reality demonstrated by symbiotic panentheism brings together the scientific observations, religious dialogue, and philosophical dialectics to support your and my perceptions of moral and ethical behavior. This is why sp can be labeled 'a 'universal philosophy'".

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 **Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: The lack of self: Part I**
by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on June 23, 2005 01:26AM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

The lack of self: Part I

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[050611 cg continues] ... In that case, one may abandon one's search for meaning and be natural in the present.

[050613 djs] Perhaps, I will readily admit such a position is the least stressful of all positions, but the question becomes: Is such a position rational as opposed to being simply a mechanism by which one can find inner peace?

[050614 cg] If, as you wrote above, "it is possible that 'Existence simply is'", then it must be rational to hold the position that 'Existence simply is'.

[050617 djs] Just because something is 'possible' does not make it rational. It is possible the universe could collapse into nothingness tomorrow but is it rational to stand, day after day after day, on the corner carrying a sign stating 'The world is coming to an end'?

I would suggest not. I am not suggesting there is anything wrong with the act, I am simply suggesting that it is not supported by any rational dialectics, direct observations, and/or universal beliefs.

[050619 cg] The question was "Is such a position rational ... ?"; i.e., the question was regarding one's belief or understanding and whether the belief or understanding was rational, not whether any act was rational; so your argument misses the point. And my answer to the question was "If it is possible that 'Existence simply is', then it is rational." If it is possible that Existence simply is, then it follows that the proposition 'Existence simply is' may be true. In a logical Existence not all logical propositions are true, but all illogical propositions are untrue. And if the proposition may be true, then the proposition must be in the logical category, because if it was in the illogical category it would not be possible for the proposition to be true.

[050621 djs] Ah, I think I am beginning to understand what separates us. I begin with the perception that

nothing, literally nothing, is impossible. I reject nothing. I embrace all. I then proceed to analyze what is more probable. The more probable, the more rational.

The question then becomes: What determines the degree of probability? We, as individual humans and as a specie, have three tools we use to validate. We as individuals and as a specie use the tool of observability, epitomized by science. We as individuals and as a specie use the tool of reason, epitomized by philosophy. We as individuals and as a specie use the tool of believability, epitomized by religion.

From where I begin – nothing is impossible - the more all three human tools concur with a statement the more probable the statement. Now this does not mean the positions or ‘facts’ to which the three concur are in fact absolute truths, but rather it means that the positions to which the three simultaneously adhere are more probably correct than are the positions supported by none of the three, etc.

If one takes the statement: The sun exploded six minutes ago. This is not observable, it is not reasonable, and although it is almost unbelievable it is possible. The statement therefore is not very probable and thus not very rational, although one cannot say it is absolutely irrational.

As for your statement: "If it is possible that 'Existence simply is', then it is rational." For you, yes. For me, yes, but for me the position is very improbable since it is supported by nothing we observe as a specie and simultaneously it is supported by nothing we reason as a specie. In addition the statement, ‘Existence simply is’, is supported by little we believe universally as a specie.

Having said that I will admit that the position is not irrational, nor is it unbelievable, nor is it incapable of supporting moral and/or ethical foundations, nor is it ‘wrong’, nor is it illogical, nor is it harmful in nature, nor is it a stressful position, nor is it ...

The concept, ‘Existence simply is’, however does not suggest any of the negative (negative as in it does not..., not negative as in detrimental) absolutes you suggest. As an example, the statement does not imply nor directly state: ‘Existence simply is and therefore self is not a possibility.’ Etc.

When you state: If it is possible that Existence simply is, then it follows that the proposition 'Existence simply is' may be true. In a logical Existence not all logical propositions are true, but all illogical propositions are untrue. At one point in our history it was considered illogical to think we would ever go to the moon. As history has demonstrated, man has stepped upon the surface of the moon. Thus what was once an illogical proposition, ‘Eventually man will go to the moon’ has been moved from the ‘untrue’ to the ‘true’ column. The result: ‘all illogical propositions are untrue’ may be true in the short run but has been shown to be in error in the long term.

I do not agree with your statement: And if the proposition may be true, then the proposition must be in the logical category, because if it was in the illogical category it would not be possible for the proposition to be true. Symbiotic panentheism would suggest the Buddhistic percepton ‘Nothing is lost’ is correct. Sp would also suggest that nothing is impossible. It is only our ego which suggests that we, limited beings, are capable of stating ‘absolute impossibilities.

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