Monotheism and the Concept of Unity

by John Paulin, Ph.D.

Dedicated to Dr. Charles H. Townes

For his support of the Ram Mohan Roy Monotheistic Temple, for his kind service as an advisor to the IIBB, for his contribution to the peoples of India, Bangladesh, and beyond and for his inspiration to the IIBB and its volunteers.

"Do you know *That,* by knowing which, everything is known?
Do you know *That,* by which the unheard becomes heard,
the unthought becomes thought?"

Chandogya Upanishad, Swami Krishnananda, trans.

Those who see all creatures in themselves
And themselves in all creatures know no fear.
Those who see all creatures in themselves
And themselves in all creatures know no grief.
How can the multiplicity of life
Delude the one who sees its unity?

Isha Upanishad. Easwaran, trans.

There is a traditional metaphor about blind men and an elephant employed to explain partial understandings of realities too large for any single individual's comprehension or even too great for human understanding itself. This story has been used by a number religious figures including Gautama Siddhartha, Rumi, and Ramakrishna, it has been employed as a parable in Jainism, and it is the subject of a painting by the 17th Century Japanese painter, Hanabusa Itchō**.**

A group of blind men from some part of the planet without any surviving genus of order proboscidea encounters a very large but friendly elephant. Because this creature is too large to be grasped in its entirety, in the tactile sense, if not otherwise, the blind men surrounding the beast come to no consensus on what they have encountered. The trunk is a very strong appendage that extends for a considerable distance and is characterized by its extreme sensitivity and its great degree of motor control. The ears are very large folds of tissue, the hide is wrinkled, the tail is hairy, and, paradoxically, despite its immense size, the beast appears to subsist entirely on peanuts. So what is it? There is no agreement, only different but valid observations of a larger totality whose unity and existence are vigorously affirmed by all. Yet lack of sufficient experience, imagination, or even cognitive capacity prevents the production of a concept sufficient to explain the organism as a unity capable of resolving the apparent contradictions among the different observers' viewpoints.

Participants in large-scale ecumenical enterprises able to set aside doctrinal claims to an exclusive possession of truth might regard the blind men as the great monotheistic traditions and the elephant as a shared mission too large to be contained in any one doctrine. But what if monotheism is only one of the blind men? Would we then be able to accord the dignity of this shared aspiration to the ancient but surviving beliefs of the world's animists, pantheists, and polytheists, as well as the followers of non-theistic paths such as Jainism, Buddhism and Taoism?

What if the combination of all such beliefs amounted to no more than one finger on the hand of an individual blind man? Would this individual finger accommodate different approaches of other fingers including, perhaps, those of arts and sciences pursued for the common good without reference to religion? What about purely secular beliefs, including modern humanism and that peculiar species of secular Anglican communitarianism all too obvious in the practices of what Richard Dawkins professes to be atheism? Professor Dawkins is a secularist, a humanist, an atheist, an evangelist, and, most importantly, an admirable person who has as much empathy, good will, and good faith as any other person passionate about truth.

"What is truth?" These are the words of a bureaucrat who could have cared more for another person had he pursued his own humanity beyond the expedience of his office. But the question is valid, especially in an age where to understand our universe even physicists have become nomads wandering among irreconcilable models of reality. Likewise, as people of faith or good will, our ecumenical endeavors must reach beyond the limits of any given doctrines and scriptures to the followers of other doctrines and scriptures, and, indeed, to the followers of no less sacred but unwritten teachings and traditions. We must attempt to arrive at a more sufficiently broad understanding of the term, "truth." But to do so, we must put aside our need to create doctrines and rationally defined group identities and appeal to faith, hope, and love stripped of all possible conditions. We must also be ready to forgo Western rationalism's logical insistence upon non-contradiction, coherent explanation, rigorous definitions so that our humanity may remain uncorrupted by our own dogmatism. But can we be certain that faith and hope will survive the divestment of systemic and doctrinal thinking for which we have just called? What are faith and hope? These two very human attributes have until now ensured the survival of our civilization and our species, but they have little place on the stage of tragic drama upon which the Western tradition discovered one of its profoundest and most valid formulations of human value and integrity. What can we hope for Oedipus or Antigone? What can we hope for the desperate who have no chance of recovery, and what can we hope for suicide victims, the victims of

others, the victims of governments, and the victims of religious persecution, and the victims of genocide? What are we entitled to hope? Can we avoid using our hope for these people as consolation for ourselves, and if this is part of the nature of hope, is hope some fundamentally human, but inescapable and all too human evasion of responsibility? Can we hope without self-interest? Can we hope to be totally unselfish? Can our self-interest expand to include an unconditional *philia* or solidarity with all members of our own species? Are there times when we can only care?

The Past

These were valid questions 2500 years ago. Yet what is the spiritual validity today of an art form, at once a civic and religious discourse, that can in the words of the Sophoclean chorus, call no one blessed (*ouden makarizo)*? What should its observations be worth to us now? Can we so easily ignore the value of our tragic tradition as our politicians pursue religious wars and we push our planet to ecological collapse? Would an examination of the growing perils to our civic life and even our species in light of the tragic vision allow for a clearer assessment of our current situation? Can we dismiss its insights merely because they are old or because we have chosen to forget them? The insights of Greek civilization's philosophical and scientific giants are today held in great honor. Should we ignore the religious and ethical visions of ancient Mediterranean civilizations because the funding for the propagation of their values remains at the discretion of those who refuse to consider the relevance and validity of their implications? Are the humanity and moral depth of our civilization's origins the exclusive property or commodity of Western European fundamentalists who do not, cannot, and will not understand them, yet claim them as monuments to the superiority of their modern European civilization—which they also do not understand? We are certainly not the new Athenians, but we will be the poor children of their legacy if we will not take them more seriously and accord them their proper respect.

Then again, what if the gods don't care or perhaps, even, do not exist, as is suggested in Euripidean dramas including the *Andromache*? In *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche claims that Euripides destroyed tragedy, mythology, and all credible foundations upon which we might sustain faith as the possibility of religious belief. Moreover, he claims that Euripidean drama taught Socrates his dialectic or cross examination, and after that the power of any remaining gods was lost to the omnipotence of reason. Modernity was born in Athens when Western metaphysics sprouted from the corpses of the gods. Yet I do not think Nietzsche's contribution to metaphysics does complete justice to Euripides, because even in Euripidean drama two things persist, *ethos* and *sorge,* character and love. These two properties cannot exist without each other, and their unity remains the ethical possibility of our species' continuation and, currently, its survival.

The answer to Pilate is, "why not *love*?" All things that humans profess to be truths may ultimately be value judgments, but all values depend upon the *ethos* behind their articulation. Truths formulate matters of interest to us. Timeless or metaphysical status aside, they are judgments that have been structured according to the requirements of abstract or epistemic reasoning and, ultimately, to those of the *ethos* and the desiderative as well as moral reasoning that defined their relevance in the first place. And our ability to define truth as such is responsible for our development as rational and ethical beings. By themselves abstract reasoning and its "truths" establish nothing, affirm nothing, and decide nothing. Thus the power of affirmation is not disinterested, but belongs to the *ethos*, and *ethos* is what remains in Sophoclean as well as Euripidean drama. The great metaphysician of the European Enlightenment, Kant, has defined this *ethos* for our age as “a good will,” and it is here that love survives. The lesson of tragedy is that the value of human existence is defined, given, and expressed through the *ethos.* Even if the gods have abandoned us, even if they do not exist, even if faith in moral

and religious codes is corrupted by superstition, or fanaticism, and even when faith has been corroded by our own skepticism and our suspicion that in our age such codes have become absurd, we will still love. Even after all such teachings pass away, and we are left without religion, laws, or moral definition of our obligations, there will still be love. Even in the collapse of the intellect, the personality, and all but the most rudimentary structures of the human person, there is still love. St. Paul says, faith itself is nothing without love, and nothing is anything without it.

Even when faith is gone there will still be love, and love will once again reconstitute faith, if not in the generation that lost it, then in the next. In the beliefs of our ancestors and in the civilizations that contributed to the birth and development of our own, there were prophets who pursued the implications of such understandings far beyond the moral and doctrinal ambits of contemporary monotheism. These were the poets and dramatists as well as the religious, secular, and secular polytheistic thinkers of ancient Athens and elsewhere. What the philosophies and beliefs of the last three thousand years of Mediterranean and European civilizations have in common with the rest of human thought is a realization that love without faith and hope might kill us. This is not because love is not there, but only because love is so hard to find within ourselves without others to help us find it.

Hundreds of millions of years before our cognitive processes could realize themselves within our own species as *ethos, bouleusis*, and *dianoia*, Aristotle's terms for character, decision, and rational discourse, this impulse to love was manifest gregariously, altruistically, and in that care for offspring common to mammals, birds, and dinosaurs. As evolutionary biologists have noted, this instinct must have been especially strong for our nomadic, bipedal ancestors because in the event of injury, without the support of others, such organisms do not survive on one of only two legs. Beyond this, contemporary science speculates that love is what living organisms share with other organisms. E. O. Wilson refers to this as "Biophilia," a sort of completeness or wellbeing which animals can feel in the presence of other living beings. Theories of this sort seem to be an indication that contemporary science is approaching the awareness of our Paleolithic forebears who perceived the oneness of nature and found companionship in everything—the rivers, mountains, and trees, as well in our closer relations, the animals, who were among our first gods and teachers. We understand these things now in the language of our new millennium, but they are what we have always felt. Thus it appears that Dr. Wilson has moved modern biology closer simultaneously to a sense of immanence and to an understanding of an ancient faith, the world's first great religion, which then, as now, acknowledges the unity of life and the divinity of all beings—or as the Lakota say, *mitakuye oyasin*, "all my relations."

Beauty

Before we can speculate productively about monotheistic gods, we might do well to consider the nature and origin of our concept of unity. Over the past three centuries, our conception of oneness has developed to the point that it can serve as a mathematical abstraction able to decompose the unities and certainties that we have inherited and build them back into greater, more unified representations of totalities we will probably never come close to understanding. Mathematics has taken us far beyond the original counting numbers and the primitive idea of unity that resides in the consciousness of our own identities, yet we always seek equations capable of reconstituting the expanding immensities of scientific knowledge within the elegance, simplicity, and oneness of great scientific theories. This is what humans do; long before modern science, our species has returned from the impossibly large things that it finds at the limits of its awareness to the place where beauty and simplicity are most apparent to us—the contemplation of the moral possibilities of our own *ethe.* This is beauty and an expression of the good that requires no thought.

The epistemic power of numbers permitted the quest for unity which led Newton to calculus, and in the 20th Century led to the construction of incredible theories explaining much that we have observed in the post-Newtonian universe. Yet as Nobel Laureate, Eugene Wigner noted in his 1960 essay, "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences," even though our facility with numbers has allowed us to build these theories, it is totally improbable and even "miraculous" that we should be able to do so. The universe is intricate, paradoxical, and vast beyond our imagination, and we would be lost if it were not for mathematics, a form of intuition which allows human reason to become one with existence and describe its necessity in the abstract language of numbers. What amazes Wigner is the apparently human quality of the standards involved in the selection of the formulae that are most effective and productive in our task of unifying the phenomena of experience within a coherent understanding of the universe. That is, physicists are best served by equations that mathematicians have produced for purely for the sake of their beauty, that is for aesthetics, as objects of an abstract contemplation that seeks no further understanding or utilization of its artifact, merely an enjoyment and appreciation of its coherence, unity, simplicity, elegance, and beauty. Therefore the triumphs of human reasoning apparent in great works of mathematics ultimately aim for a suspension of the cognitive process in a pure intuition, appreciation, or admiration of the beauty of the results.

Thus, according to Wigner, physics is best guided by the aesthetic judgments of mathematicians—abstract contemplations of objects that exist only in the minds of mathematicians and others sufficiently trained to apprehend their beauty. For no reason that Wigner can see, the abstract formulation of mathematical beauty is most likely to reveal truths of the cosmos. Human reasoning has discovered in math purely cognitive expressions of the aesthetic which, when reinjected into discourses that seek to expand the human understanding of nature, are more likely to produce more accurate descriptions of reality. Thus such artifacts can serve more practically minded researchers, such as physicists, as tools which in combination with technology can be utilized to model laws that more effectively describe the predictability and consistency of experience. As for the Greeks, the pursuit of beauty leads toward truth.

Yet this does not explain mathematics whose power, or "unreasonable effectiveness," remains for Wigner "a miracle" which has presented us with riddles and indicated how we might solve them. As in Sophocles' telling of the Oedipus myth, solutions to riddles can be the surface of an imponderable and intractable enigma. Oedipus is said to have provided as an answer to the Sphinx's riddle the word, "*anthropos,"* or "human being." The problem was that his simple answer to a simple riddle explained nothing about the more perplexing questions that remained concerning the nature of the Sphinx, the identity of Oedipus himself, or even *anthropos* for that matter. Similarly, however far our mathematics will take our understanding into the depths of the cosmos, it would be for Wigner an even greater "miracle" to understand our ability to use mathematics for this purpose. Consequently, the more evident the power of unity becomes as mathematics brings our increasing knowledge of the universe within the expanding wholes of our theoretical vision, the more evident it becomes that we know this power only as an effect of something else that is much more difficult to understand or even identify. Thus we are left with questions but no answers to the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics for the natural sciences. But this is very similar to the wisdom brought back to Socrates from Apollo at Delphi, and it constitutes the possibility of Socratic self-knowledge. To know themselves, truly wise humans must realize that they are not gods, and as such they can know very little. Yet this poverty of human knowledge has immense value if it is properly identified and honestly interpreted as an awareness of the limits of what it is possible to know. This awareness of limits allows people to appreciate the immensity of all that they do not understand, and such an appreciation, in turn, leads in the direction of even larger things never known for certain and never understood in their entirety—truth, beauty, and goodness.

Like Plato, Wigner sets out to examine the problematic but undeniable and finally inexplicable connections between beauty and truth, but in the end he must repeatedly affirm the miracle that our understanding is able to survive and even thrive in the midst of immensities that it cannot fathom and of which it does not even "deserve" an awareness. The sublimity of such visions finally derives not from the answers that have been provided, but rather from the ability to define as relevant the immensities of the questions that must remain unanswered. Like Plato, Wigner does not provide any conclusive or definite answers, *episteme*, or science, he only digs another very large, deep hole in the universe. For lack of a better understanding, I would say that this is also what beauty does for us when we do not try to possess it or understand it but content ourselves to be aware of its presence. This also constitutes the beauty of Wigner's observations about mathematics, and it is what beauty shares with all other unresolvable mysteries. In Kantian terms beauty reduces the cognitive process to a state of pure intuition, perception, or openness uninterrupted by the discourse of thought. If we are to speak of unity here, I believe we are only entitled to do so either in terms of intuition or otherwise in terms of the great mystery beyond thought held in common by philosophy, science, mathematics, art, ethics, mysticism, spirituality, religion, and all else that is valuable to homo sapiens sapiens.

Truth

As we become more aware of our inability to comprehend this mystery, we are led to wonder if mathematics, the soul of modern science, is not just one more blind man. If creation revealed itself to Newton through calculus, why did Newton reciprocate with alchemy? What if mathematics is ultimately a way our species has discovered to open itself to future mysteries which, at our present stage of evolution, we cannot even begin to imagine? Will we ever evolve to the point that we can comprehend mathematics' connection with the reality it allows us to understand? We might note in this regard that chimpanzees and gorillas are wired for symbols, but in nature they have no way of discovering this capacity. Rather, they must be taught the use of symbols by primates who have evolved to point where the use of that capacity has become instinctual. If we do not eliminate these remarkable beings from our planet, they might well evolve to the point that the power of symbols becomes for them a language instinct. We should also note Jane Goodall's observations in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* concerning the rituals through which chimpanzees appear to address sublime events of nature such as great storms or waterfalls. She suspects that these behaviors are the manifestation of some rudimentary animism and sense of awe. Do we too have cognitive potentials we are not advanced enough to identify? Whether or not this is the case, we still experience awe, and in the bases of human perception there is a tendency towards an anthropic vision. We tend to see intelligence in the intelligibility of nature, and to see in nature's coherence purposes, reasons, and, traditionally, agency, agents, and creators. In current non-theistic thinking, things which happen "as if by design" do not need to entail an intelligent designer. The intelligence that seems apparent throughout the ecosystem and throughout the cosmos may, like human intelligence itself, be an emergent property. But this says nothing about the likelihood or possibility of the emergence in nature of either intelligence or even self-organizing complexity. If we are justified in pursuing this line of argument, this appearance or effect of design by emergence may be no less of a miracle than the capacity of mathematics to make scientific coherence out of such arguments in the first place. If there is not an abstract animism at work behind the subtly anthropic concept of self-organizing universe, is the probability or improbability of such possibilities any less miraculous or even awe inspiring than the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics?

Did our concepts of cosmos, the soul, and the gods emerge when our ancestors were able to connect their feelings of wonder, awe, and purposiveness, as well as the intimations of agency and design with the symbolic potentials of self-expression offered to them by their evolving linguistic capacities?

Perhaps our descendants will look at mathematics in much the same way that we now regard mythology—as a form of primitive cosmological intuition valued more for its expression of purely human truths than for its description of reality. Pythagoras is said to have sacrificed 100 oxen to the muses in gratitude for the theorem that taught him the language of numbers. Perhaps this sacrifice was in recognition of the fact that he did not own the numbers; he could not understand the source of his knowledge, only that he had it; he did not deserve such a revelation; and he was grateful to the goddesses that allowed him to have it. Any deep understanding of the universe is, perhaps, an awareness of the much greater profundity of what is not known, will not be known, and probably cannot be known. Is Wigner's attitude any different from that of Pythagoras in this regard? And where are we now? Does modern mathematics finally find in unity a limit against which we can only hope to rank the incompleteness of sets and the incompleteness of human understanding? Is our hope of understanding the universe becoming ever more fragmentary as our mathematics removes us ever further from the optimistic visions of unity once espoused by philosophers and mystics? —Is the unity that was once thought capable of governing and subduing totalities however large beyond human comprehension or however infinite now merely a measure against which we mark the death of certainty, the decay of finitude, and the impossibility of ultimately knowing who we are or where we are from? Is mathematics at once our road to the future and our path back toward the *apeiron*?

Is life simply one accident that happened for no reason in place of an infinitude of other possible and no less probable or improbable but otherwise pointless accidents? Is what we are today the inevitable consequence of the accident of a singular universe that among billions of possible universes proved amenable to life? And what if even in this exceptional universe, life itself is the remotest of all possible accidents? Would it be any more or any less remarkable if we were, on the other hand, to discover that life is the rule and not some vanishingly small exception? What if we should discover that life in the universe is no less innumerable than phytoplankton once was on the surface of the earth's seas? Even if our physics merely permits us to understand life as an accident, we might yet discover that life and all it entails, including love, to be the inevitable consequences of light, water, and carbon chemistry and an accident that could not avoid happening on earth or anywhere else in our universe sufficiently hospitable to life. Do we understand enough about our universe and its probabilities or even about our own mathematics to distinguish between accidents and inevitabilities? –If the evolution of life is found to be governed by accidents whose probability differs from that of a coin flip, Dr. Wilson's biophilia might be found immanent in matter itself, and this would be a truly great mystery. In such a case, as with Platonic thought, would the presence of the unanswerable questions remaining after a realization of such a magnitude reconstitute our newly apparent lack of explanations as an epiphany if not merely as a demand for a better paradigm?

As in Sophoclean ethics and religion, there may be no answer to what a human is, what destiny is or will be, the nature of accident, or the nature of universe and our relation to it. But we must still care about all these things, and it is in our constitutional openness to what we do not know that we inevitably will care about these things. But by virtue of our evolutionary endowment, we must also care about the fortunes of individual human beings, the fortune of nature, and the future of our planet. As surely as our senses of wonder and awe drive us to understand our place within larger schemes of things, we also experience our concerns for other people at the level of our emotions even prior to thinking about what we are going to do for them. We instinctively seek to empathize, identify, comfort, embrace, reconcile, reunite, establish what we have in common, and build communities. Thus, even before unity becomes an abstract philosophical or mathematical thought, its idea remains as the ground and the goal of ethical feelings, thoughts, and relationships. Thus we find a gregarious, conciliatory, and unifying force or instinct prior to reason manifest through the affects. But what about unities beyond reason intimated again through the affects such as wonder and amazement implicit in recognitions of what exceeds the understanding? Might we find in our studies of both

human identity and the universe paradoxes large enough to provide a common ground surpassing the limits of doctrine and ideology and perhaps human understanding itself? —Paradoxes large enough to encompass and absorb our ideological and doctrinal differences and yet remain hospitable to the good will and mutual respect we share with all people through our common humanity? Kant had much to say about the tendency of sublime natural immensities, such as those of great waterfalls, storms, or the expanses of the Milky Way, to suspend us within their grandeur rather than reduce us to a sense of our own inconsequence. Might our emerging millennium find in modern formulations of paradox the ground of a spirituality in which science and religion, theistic and non-theistic traditions, can find refuge, solace, unity, and a common place of renewal?

The Mystery

The elephant may function well as a metaphor for the differing beliefs of the great monotheistic religions, and, indeed, the diverse traditions beyond such beliefs including the positive and secular understandings of science, mathematics, and modern humanism. Yet the universe is large and old, our brains are small, and we did not begin thinking systemically and epistemically until twenty five hundred generations ago when the acquisition of modern language commenced at the start of the Paleolithic revolution. Whatever mathematics may be, we are still human and human reason is only human. Thus, metaphors may be as close as our species can come to truth. As for our mathematics, do numbers even now speak languages we do not understand? Perhaps to this day the language of Pythagoras is no more than one finger of a single blind man, a member of a primitive species, raised amid uncountable nations of blind men, past, present and to come, all attempting to grasp even greater mysteries, and maybe the great mystery itself—the mystery the Lakota call "Wakan Tanka." Nevertheless, as long as we remain human or even mortal, all such efforts may finally produce nothing more than additional stories about elephants.

Who are we and what do we know? Or in Dr. Charles Townes words, "What is personality? What is consciousness? We don't know." What dreams may come? "If you don't know what [a person] is, it's hard to say" what will come next. Yet, "as science encounters mysteries, it is starting to recognize its limitations and become somewhat more open." We might all seek communion within greater paradoxes if not greater understandings. Science seeks the unity of nature's particular laws within the simplicity of a system that devolves from a very limited set of fundamental forces and principles. Wigner is amazed that mathematics is a form of intuition and discovery that defines and delivers such unities in ways that are as beautiful as they are improbable and even "miraculous." But the miracle of unity expands at least as rapidly as our understanding of the universe. What is the unity of nature, what is the unity of God, and what is unity? Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of modern India says that unity is that which escapes duality. As in the *Advaita Vedanta*, non-duality or *advaita*, is the unity of cause and effect, God and the individual self. Still all concepts of philosophers and scientists, including nature, God, and even unity, are only concepts. This is something that philosophers and scientists can talk about, but until they get to what comes next, that is all they will ever do. Is beauty a reflection of a truth we will never understand, or are the truths we constantly reformulate in science, ethics, and religion echoes of an ineffable beyond which we can only begin to apprehend as a mysteries and in doing so, recognize our common value as individuals? What is the unity of a mystery? Possibly all attempts to explain mysteries will lead us back beyond wonder and even awe to an uncanny sense of some inexplicable *ethos* simultaneously present in the universe and in the very structure of our thought.

Will we ever see face to face? I have been told we will, but even at that point we will still be facing a mystery. The footsteps on the shores of the unknown do not belong to us, and contrary to Eddington's assertion, our naïve assumption that they could be our own is merely a precondition for our finding them there. Ultimately, we must leave the strange footprints where we find them and become one with their mystery. Our ability to perceive such footprints means that their mystery lives in us as well. As in Sophoclean drama, our awareness of such mysteries finally constitutes us as rational and ethical beings, and amid these mysteries we will find our destinies, our truths, and our gods. If the mystery persists, we will never have exhausted the meaning of nature, the meaning of God, or the meaning of unity. Originally, however, the necessities of finding and sustaining this unity were quite likely very easy to understand. I believe that our species' first conceptual awareness of unity came as a self-conscious realization of the incompleteness of life without others.

But to conclude this reflection upon the validity of the elephant metaphor, I must appeal to yet another metaphor: specifically, Einstein's account of a very large cat. When asked by a child how radio worked, he replied that the propagation of radio waves is quite similar to an electronic transmission sent over a telegraph line. A telegraph wire, he said, is like an extremely large cat with its head in Los Angeles and its tail in New York. You may pull the cat's tail in New York, but you would have to be in Los Angeles to be aware of its displeasure—initially, at least. *(If presented with this opportunity, I would advise against taking it. The cat may, in fact, be relativistic and capable of returning the favor within a very small fraction of a second.)* Radio, he continued operates in exactly the same way. "The only difference is that there is no cat." We have to forget about the cat because in the case of radio, the cat does not exist, and there is no cat.

But we cannot deny the existence of radio.

Does God exist, and is there only one God? The answers to such questions are as varied as the diversity of the human spirit, and I regard them as redundant. Any consensus would probably mean the end of mystery, the triumph of doctrine and idolatry, the end of science, the end of freedom, and a severe restriction of the free expression of love. Now as ever before, we humans remain nomads, the shores of the unknown every day grow larger, and the odyssey continues. But as always, we seek answers, we need each other's support, and I do not believe that the existence of any god, anybody, or anything will be properly affirmed without love. Kindness seeks the one in the all as well as the community and the commonality of all beings, all things, and all our relations. We must search for an inclusive generosity, a home for our kind, a tolerance, and a common ground for people of all faiths and all beliefs in good will. We must remain open to dialogs, seek them wherever we can, and we must build strong secular democracies that can guarantee the freedom of all people to choose their own beliefs and to practice them without persecution. —With the great monotheist and Enlightenment intellectual, Thomas Jefferson, we must stand "against every form of tyranny over the mind of man," religious or secular. Finally, we must find a meeting place for peoples of all faiths, beliefs, and nations, we must construct communities of trust and respect, we must share, we must care, we must act, and we must build bridges, all of which are the mission of the International Institute of the Bengal Basin, and its patron and advisor, the Nobel Laureate, Dr. Charles H. Townes.