



Quantum empathy: An alternative narrative for global transcendence

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Abstract

This paper proposes an alternative narrative for global transcendence that has spirituality at the core of shaping society. It draws on contemplative practices such as mindfulness, reflexivity and empathy may contribute to closing the gap between self and other. From this, I argue that we have the ability to tap into the harmonic frequency of the universe (quantum empathy) that may bridge across, through and beyond boundaries to link our human experience. At this quantum level, empathy is an entangled, interconnected and indeterminate shared existence that may support the ethical shift in human consciousness to a WE collective. This view of spirituality as a macrolevel organizing mechanism does not present a tool-kit for organizational change, but rather offers a provocation of future system-level possibilities abducted from leading-edge science.

Introduction

*To imagine one as a separate ego, a source of action and awareness,
entirely separate and independent from the rest of the world...
is a kind of hallucination (Jotin Khisty, 2006, p. 300).*

Increasing concerns over ecosystem breakdown, climate change, and inequities surrounding poverty and social justice mean that we need to radically rethink how we organise society (Fremeaux and Michelson, 2016; Waddell et al., 2015). The conventional set of managerial skills seem no longer adequate for the uncertain, chaotic systems that we are currently engaged in (Ripamonti, Galuppo, Gorli, Scaratti and Cunliffe 2015). Indeed, Fournier (2013, 433) states that “neither the state nor the market seems capable of getting us out of these crises and they are in fact at least partly responsible for creating them.” While there has been a

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3 rapid interest in environmental and sustainability movements to attend to these issues, these
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5 approaches continue to follow a linear path of empirical science, in that there is a world ‘out
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7 there’ to fix (Kumar 2013). Nisker (1998) states that these approaches reinforce that “we live
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9 inside the bubble of the ‘self’ as though we are ‘in here’ and everything else is ‘out there’”
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11 (cited in Jotin Khisty, 2006, 296). There is therefore, increasing evidence that we need a new
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13 narrative that returns the focus to ourselves and how we act, as knowing our inner world is not
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15 possible by only observing the exterior world around us (Manz 2015). Scharmer (2009, 154)
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17 concurs that we need to “bend the world of observation back on ourselves in order to truly
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19 know ourselves.” Hence, a path to system transformation may be through the examination of
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21 the interior landscape of ourselves, through exploring our own spirituality and reasons for being
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23 alive.
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28 We know that the inner life is a central focus in the spirituality literature. However,
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30 Karakas, Sarigollu and Kavas (2015) contend that this focus seemingly neglects the relational
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32 aspects of spirituality; that is, how this expression of one’s inner life both influences and is
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34 shaped by connectedness and global transcendence (Driver 2007; Liu and Robertson 2011). In
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36 this paper, *I offer a narrative that connects the inner life with connectedness and global*
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38 *transcendence that is formed on more shared, inclusive and participative ways of being.* It
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40 builds on the spirituality literature in that it begins with inner work in order to deepen
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42 awareness of ourselves and how we act, and forms a ‘relational-self’ that challenges us to
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44 question our responsibilities in creating this world and the effects of these responsibilities on
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46 others (Cunliffe 2011; Manz 2015; McGhee and Grant 2017). This conceptual paper thus
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48 commences by exploring the purpose of interdependence (a world of self and other). It then
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50 moves to how engagement with this relational-self may enhance co-existing within this
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52 interdependent paradigm and identifies certain awareness-based practices that contribute to this
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54 (mindfulness, reflexivity and empathy). Finally, it concludes with a discussion on a system
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3 shift through co-creating with what I call quantum empathy. Quantum empathy draws on the
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5 indeterminacy of the Heisenberg principle and quantum entanglement. Quantum empathy is
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7 important as it has the ability to link the smallest element of quanta with the largest structure
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9 in our known universe (Bojowald 2015; Mercini,-Houghton n/d), and I will argue, is where
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11 energy and matter connect at a harmonic frequency for global transcendence. Hence, this paper
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13 offers a provocation on a future possibility abducted from leading-edge neuroscience science
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15 and quantum physics. It includes spirituality as a macro-level organizing mechanism through
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17 linking practices that lead to a direct-intuitive experience of interconnectedness and
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19 transcendence (Tsao and Laszlo 2019).
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26 **Interdependence**

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30 While there is little disagreement that normative typologies and categorizations have
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32 contributed to the well-being of society, this dominance has largely disregarded the relational
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34 qualities that underpin holistic systems (Overton and Lerner 2014). The need to examine the
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36 whole rather than just the parts is supported by quantum theorists such as Heisenberg (1990,
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38 219) who argues that there is “a central spiritual order of things” that is overlooked when only
39
40 examining the parts. Similarly Frederick (1998, 50) suggests that we have a “religious, spiritual
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42 or even metaphysical impulse... a phylogenetic trait that impels humans to explore and seek to
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44 understand the meaning of their lives within an evolving cosmos.” These impulses lead to an
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46 inquiry regarding a person’s place in the natural order and implies that there are guiding
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48 principles that govern our behaviour (Heisenberg 1990). Complex relationships between
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50 subject and object are therefore entangled and interdependent, and call upon the observer to
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52 always be in-relation to others, through a “reciprocal insertion and intertwining” (Merleau-
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54 Ponty, 1964, 138) of others in oneself and of oneself in others.
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3 At a material level, Naess (1973) argued for the adoption of a ‘deep ecology’
4 acknowledging that we are deeply embedded with each other and the earth, and hence we have
5 a responsibility to act the right way. A deep ecological perspective calls upon an inner knowing
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8 - self-realization – where we have the ability to feel connected with something greater than
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10 ourselves based upon an eco-centric equality, an awareness that we are equal partners in the
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12 ecosystem with other material and non-material beings. Underlying this is an
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14 acknowledgement of the quality of those relationships that we have with the Other. Berry (1999,
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17 4) explains:
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22 There is a single integral community of the earth that includes all its component
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24 members whether human or other than human. In this community every being has its
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26 role to fulfil, its own dignity, its inner spontaneity.... Every being enters into
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28 communion with other beings. This capacity for relatedness for presence to other
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30 beings, for spontaneity in action, is a capacity possessed by every mode of being
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32 throughout the universe.
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38 Interdependence therefore acknowledges that we are mutually entangled through, for example,
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40 biochemical processes, ecological systems, geological forces and our social systems. The rise
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42 in climate emergencies highlights the importance of interdependence and the need for both
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44 individual and collective solutions to emerge. Capra (1999) reminds us of the oneness of the
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46 universe as subatomic particles have no meaning level and can only be understood as a
47
48 complicated web of relational parts. Thus, how does this relational-self exist relative to the
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50 whole?
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56 **Cultivating Relational-Self Practices**

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3 Plante (2016, 136) stated that “[r]esearch has clearly demonstrated that appropriate engagement
4 in religious and spiritual practices and communities can not only lead to better psychological
5 health and well-being but can also improve physical health and even longevity.” He cited
6 studies by the National Institute of Health that concluded that engaging in these contemplative
7 practices can reduce all-cause mortality by 25-30%. These studies provide compelling evidence
8 of the importance of contemplative practices in improving the well-being of society. Yet the
9 question of how one’s inner life may contribute to societal transcendence remains unclear.

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19 In this following section, I review three relational-self contemplative practices that I
20 believe may contribute to this shift in consciousness towards oneness: mindfulness, reflexivity
21 and empathy. I suggest that each of these contribute in different ways to developing such an
22 awareness of one’s own inner platform that may shape and transform a system.

30 31 *Mindfulness*

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33 Ergas (2014, 63) argued that the “taboo of subjectivity” has restricted the scientific community
34 from attending to the “immeasurable domain” of contemplative practice. However, he argues
35 that the “demarcations between religion, spirituality and secularity” have become blurred
36 through the rising interest in mindfulness (Ergas, 2014, 59), which encompasses a variety of
37 contemplative practices that include first-person methodologies. In the following section, I
38 explain the scientific benefits of mindfulness as they enact the Self.

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Mindfulness is rapidly growing in credibility through both its eastern (contemplative)
and western (cognitive) approaches, evident in an increase from 28 ISI citations in 2001 (Tang
and Posner 2013) to over 4,000 scholarly articles published in 2015 (Black 2015). Mindfulness
is a concept that involves an open and receptive awareness and attention of the current
experience. Carmody (2009, 271), for example, defined mindfulness as “intentionally paying
attention to present moment experience (physical sensations, perceptions, affective states,

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3 thoughts and imagery) in a non-judgmental way and thereby cultivating a stable and
4
5 nonreactive awareness.” Similarly, Weick and Putnam (2006, 276) described mindfulness as
6
7 paying “attention to the internal processes of the mind ... [which] keeps the mind steady as a
8
9 stone instead of letting it bob around like a pumpkin in water.” The essence of this greater
10
11 awareness and attention is the inner peace and well-being that comes from observing, reflecting
12
13 and responding deliberately and purposefully (Good, Lyddy, Glomb et al. 2016; Kabat-Zinn
14
15 2005). The corollary of not being mindful means one continues to engage in egocentric,
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17 impulsive and reactive behaviour that amplifies the separation of self from others (Brown and
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19 Ryan 2003; Pandey, Chandwani and Navare 2017; Purser and Milillo 2015; Scherer and
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21 Waistell 2018).

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26 There is little doubt that mindfulness assists in the development of human functioning,
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28 as noted above (Plante 2016; Tang and Posner 2011). More precise benefits of mindfulness
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30 practices have also been demonstrated in neuroscience through functional magnetic imaging
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32 (fMRI). Cognitive (Ostafin and Kassman 2012), emotional (Vago and Silbersweig 2012;
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34 Brown, Goodman and Inzlicht 2013) behavioural (Glomb et al, 2011) and physiological
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36 benefits (Hölzel, Carmody and Vangela et al. 2011; Jack, Boyatzis and Masud et al. 2013;
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38 Kang, Jo and Jung et al. 2013; Lazar, Kerr and Wasserman et al. 2005) have all been confirmed,
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40 which Good et al. (2016) suggest can be realized in the workplace through improved
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42 performance, relationships and well-being.

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47 As noted above, the mindfulness literature cites two core characteristics: an open and
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49 receptive *awareness* and *attention* to the current experience, often called being present in the
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51 moment (Pandey et al. 2017). Increased awareness is an introspective process of reflecting on
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53 one’s core values, identity and beliefs that can result in an improved frame of mind, positive
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55 mental outlook, and ability to think of new solutions (Brown and Langer 1990). Gardner,
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57 Avolio, Luthans, May and Walumbwa (2005) found that increased awareness enhanced value
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3 identity and achievement of motives and goals and hence also increased mental clarity. The
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5 second element, attentional stability, stops the mind from wandering and ruminating on
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7 personal troubles (Smallwood and Schooler, 2015). Further studies also demonstrate
8
9 physiological impacts. For instance, fMRI scanning under conditions of mindfulness confirm
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11 reduction in stress cortisol levels and increased activity and thickness in the pre-frontal cortex
12
13 associated with emotional regulation (Lazar et al. 2005). Kang et al. (2013) found that
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15 experienced meditators displayed structural differences in both white (where learning takes
16
17 place) and grey (processing and cognition) brain matter to inexperienced meditators.
18
19 Dickenson, Berkman, Arch and Lieberman (2013) too identified how mindfulness training
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21 through focused breathing under conditions of fMRI improved cognitive attention focus. Hence,
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23 scientific research is overwhelmingly conclusive that mindfulness enhances human functioning
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25 to develop meta-level capacities.
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31 This evaluative approach to mindfulness offers us a *toolkit* to own our experience, to
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33 take responsibility for how we act and to monitor the effect of our actions to develop our self-
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35 realization. Hence, mindful awareness, as an act of thoughtful attention and introspection,
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37 allows us to become impartial observers, to stand outside of ourselves and evaluate our actions,
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39 or as Purser and Milillo (2015) state, standing near and guarding the mind. Schwartz, Stapp
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41 and Beauregard (2005, 4) too confer that “perhaps the essential characteristic of mindful
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43 observation is that you are just watching, observing all facts, both inner and outer, very calmly,
44
45 clearly and closely.” This implies that we become a witness to our experiences, as we develop
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47 a detachment from our own internal troubles and misfortunes that become just ‘things’ being
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49 observed (Glomb et al. 2011). Being mindful therefore allows us to create a different
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51 relationship with these objects, both inside and outside of oneself (Purser 2018; Scherer and
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53 Waistell 2018). This western understanding of mindfulness has been greatly supported by
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55 neuroscience, and according to Ergas (2014, 59), is “shaking the world in a profound way.”
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3 To summarise, in this section I have demonstrated how science, particularly supported
4 by outcomes from fMRI research, is informing the benefits of contemplative traditions through
5 a growing interest in mindfulness as it enables us to be the observer of our experience. I have
6 argued, and will expand further in the following section, that this is a step towards moving
7 from an ego world to a more relational awareness of others.
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17 *Reflexivity*

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19 In this section, I argue that while mindfulness is primarily concerned with the serenity of the
20 individual (the Self, as noted above), it begins the process of connecting this self with the Other.
21 As we develop the skills of ‘being the witness’, we can begin to stand outside of the experience
22 and are more able to see and feel from others’ perspectives (Glomb et al. 2011). This stance
23 assists in closing the gap between self and other as we become more integrated citizens of a
24 shared world through developing an ecocentric awareness (Naess,1973; Jotin Khisty 2006).
25 Indeed, in being ‘reflexive’ we begin a journey of being aware of this other. As we engage in
26 an inter-subjective space where there is no self and other, but a mutual intertwining of both that
27 is more akin to the eastern view on mindfulness. Purser and Milillo (2015) critique western
28 approaches to mindfulness, arguing that mindfulness is not reducible to a cognitive or
29 psychological state as noted in the previous section, but rather, like reflexivity, is an ontological
30 shift in the way we see the world. Radical reflexivity and eastern approaches on mindfulness
31 are therefore both concerned with the quality of the mind and wisely directed attention that
32 assist in “remedying the cause of worldly suffering and oppression” (Purser and Milillo 2015,
33 17). In focusing on this inter-subjective third space between us, we deepen our awareness of
34 differing worldviews, supporting Merleau-Ponty’s (1964, 138) view that through the
35 “reciprocal insertion and intertwining” we become others in oneself and of one in them.
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3 Cunliffe (2011) concurs that the subject/object problematic is misplaced, as both
4 subject and object are always in a mutual dynamic of being shaped by the other. The subject
5 needs an object to interact with, and the object is meaningless without being interpreted by a
6 subject, as earlier evidenced by our quantum physicists (Heisenberg 1990; Merleu-Ponty 1964).
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8 As already noted, most of our research has conventionally focused on the scientific method of
9 a rational objective world, something that is 'out there', external to self (Overton and Lerner
10 2014; Scharmer 2009). While there is a growing appreciation of qualitative socially constructed
11 approaches that examine what knowledge is and how we frame our reality, there is much less
12 attention given to how we mutually co-construct and negotiate our different ways of being
13 (Cunliffe 2011). Reflexivity is therefore not so much a tool, as a way of being in the world
14 that emerges from an ontological shift in our realities. It is a critical examination of the
15 assumptions, practices and impacts that are embedded in our actions. While cognitive-based
16 mindfulness is a process that may assist in developing reflexivity, reflexivity supports
17 negotiating the connected, inter-subjective space between self and other. In mutually co-
18 constructing the space between us, eastern perspectives on mindfulness offer ethically imbued
19 'right' ways of action that focus on reducing actions such as hurtful speech, lying, bullying and
20 violence (Purser and Milillo 2015; Scherer and Waistell 2018). Thus, in being reflexive, a
21 quality that Purser and Milillo also refer to in their discussion on mindfulness, the negotiation
22 of that connected space between us is respectful and gracious.
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47 In summary, radical reflexivity deepens our awareness of the self-other relationship,
48 acknowledging that together we shape and mould our environments. This suggests that we are
49 deeply embedded in the world around us reminding us of Naess' (1973) understanding of deep
50 ecology. While we experience and shape the world as free actors, we can also share the world
51 in a mutually gracious relationship. Hence, we are not wholly in control of our own actions,
52 because we act connectedly in response to others and they act in response to us (Cunliffe 2011).
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3 This supports the argument that we have the presence and capacity to shape the world as a
4 result of our interplay with the relational self. We are reminded of Heisenberg's (1990)
5 assessment that the micro cannot be understood in isolation but rather shapes and is entangled
6 as a whole.
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14 *Empathy*

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16 The third relational-self practice that may contribute to global transcendence is empathy.
17 Empathy is a passive acknowledgement and observation of the experience of another involving
18 both affective and cognitive states. In the last section, I suggested that being reflexive is a way
19 of being in the world that acknowledges self and other as mutually co-constructing processes.
20 In this section, I argue that the interconnected qualities of empathy continue to deepen the self-
21 other relationship through concern for others. Indeed, most religions stress the importance of
22 concern for others, evident in the Golden Rule that intersects across religions. Yet Chan-Serafin
23 et al. (2013) claim that there have been few religious studies examining this concern, although
24 there is evidence that prayer itself can have positive impacts on health and well-being (Simão,
25 Caldeira, and De Carvalho 2016). Hence, we turn to scientific explanations to assist our
26 understanding in reframing why empathy is central to an interconnected and yet transcendental
27 shift.
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44 Oberman and Ramachandran (2007, 316) define empathy as “a function of one
45 individual experiencing the same feelings as another individual through an appreciation of
46 similarity.” Empathy is therefore the capacity to experience and relate to the thoughts, emotions,
47 or experience of others and involves a heightened awareness of otherness (Pandey et al. 2017).
48 In a synthesis of empathy research, Zaki and Ochsner (2012) identified three characteristics of
49 empathy: experience sharing, mentalizing and pro-social concern. Experience sharing relates
50 to overlapping neural systems between one's own internal state and the one being perceived
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3 (affective neural resonance). Mentalizing asks a subject to comment on others' states, a process
4 of self-projection that involves midline and superior temporal structures (cognition). We also
5 know that empathy enhances pro-social behaviour as it builds social interaction through
6 motivating individuals to cooperate, to share resources and to help others (de Vignemont and
7 Singer 2006; Lamm, Batson and Decety 2007; Van Lange 2008).

14 The discovery of mirror neurons through functional magnetic imaging (fMRI) offered
15 further scientific insights into what contemplative practitioners have advocated over the
16 centuries. fMRI research has opened a window into witnessing the shared brain circuits and
17 coding that stem from shared experiences with others (Keysers and Fadiga 2008). The same
18 neural substrates are fired whether experiencing a situation or observing it. When the same
19 brain circuits are activated through either execution or perception, we can experience another
20 through an appreciation of similarity (Oberman and Ramachandran 2007). Gallese (2007, 148)
21 confirmed that mirror neurons, often called empathy neurons, are “a common underlying
22 function mechanism... [that] mediates our capacity to share the meaning of actions, intentions,
23 feelings and emotions with others.” As an underlying functional mechanism, Iacoboni (2009)
24 suggested that mirror neurons embody the interdependence of ourselves and others, acting as
25 the glue that connects us in a mutual dependency. Thus the “reciprocity of our actions constitute
26 meaningful bonds within an inter-subjective shared space” (Gallese, 2007, 147). Trout (2009)
27 reiterated that the discovery of mirror neurons confirmed the role of empathy in acting as a
28 bridge that connects us to one another. He emphasized that this is not a process of dissolving
29 boundaries but of bridging boundaries to enhance shared meanings and understandings. I argue
30 that through engaging in mindful and reflexive practice noted earlier we can contribute to this
31 shared connection and mutual understanding of an interconnected universe.

32 Hence, I posit that empathy does more than enhance prosocial behaviour as it creates a
33 shared experience that holds the possibility of creating a new social order. Zaki and Ochsner
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3 (2012) acknowledged that these discoveries have only begun the journey in our understanding
4 of the role of empathy. This was confirmed by Baron-Cohen (2011) who identified at least ten
5 empathy circuits in the brain, but also pointed out that the relationships between them (and
6 possibly more circuits) are currently unknown. Therefore, what I suggest in the next section is
7 not intended to be ‘facts’ and truths’, but rather a future possibility for a shift in narrative in
8 that it develops the metaphysical qualities of a spiritual ontology.
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19 *A quantum perspective of empathy*

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21 Drawing on Heisenberg’s work, Tackney et al. (2016) note that science can no longer claim
22 impartiality because the role of the observer is inseparable from its epistemological and
23 ontological foundations. Thus, quantum indeterminacy tells us that uncertainty at the smallest
24 quantum level means that we cannot clearly identify and predict outcomes at the macro level:
25 changing one will change the whole, depending on what went before (Mercini-Houghton
26 n/d). Indeed, we noted that prayer can have positive impacts on health and well-being (Simão,
27 Caldeira, and De Carvalho 2016), indicating the presence of something non-linear and
28 transcendent. Thus, at the sub-atomic level basic forces of nature are different ripples on the
29 string of existence (Capra 1999), and entangled particles remain connected so that actions
30 performed on one affect the other, even when separated by great distances (Tu et al. 2019).
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44 Each ripple or wave can be in a different place at the same time, suggesting effects of
45 non-locality, discontinuity and randomness (Bohm 1980). Not only does this challenge the
46 view of our classical world as linear, fixed and measurable, but supports a view of the world
47 as fluid, entangled and subjective where vibrating electrical and magnetic fields of energy
48 travel through space in the form of waves (Green 2004; Lord, Dinh and Hofman 2015). Have
49 you ever experienced telepathy or pre-cognition? You may think of a friend and then they
50 suddenly phone you (telepathy), or dream of something and then it happens (pre-cognition). Is
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3 this experience just coincidence? How can we explain positive healing outcomes from prayer?
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5 Quantum physicists posit that thoughts are waves of information travelling through space at
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7 the sub-atomic level and that when we are fully present and self-aware we are capable of
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9 receiving this information (Bohm 1980; Capra 1999; Green 2004; Lord, Dinh and Hofman
10
11 2015). Therefore, what we previously thought of as empty space is in fact a magnetic field of
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13 information-exchanging energy, of which we are part. Merleau-Ponty (1962, 243) confirms
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15 that we were “imaging (space) as some sort of ether in which all things float ... [rather] we
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17 must think of it as a universal power enabling them to be connected.” Hence, subatomic matter
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19 may be an entanglement of excitable interconnected energy within a field of continuous flux
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21 and constantly exchanging information. This suggests that the processes of an interconnected
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23 universe may have a significant role to play in the shaping and organizing of society than
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25 previously acknowledged.
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31 Metaphysicists such as Bohm (1980) and Capra (1999) claimed that this interconnected
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33 energy functions coherently at a particular frequency and that the natural state of the universe
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35 is towards order and greater coherence. Zohar and Marshall (2004) suggested that this unified
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37 resonance is a frequency of 40 Hz, which is the gamma frequency of brain waves that are
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39 associated with increased brain activity and a heightened state of awareness. There is also
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41 growing evidence that engaging in contemplative practices supports broader, more visionary
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43 thinking in the gamma-state, observed in advanced practitioners (e.g. Cahn, Delome and Polich
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45 2013; Travis and Shear 2010) Is it possible that when we are aware and conscious, we may
46
47 experience this unified sense of oneness? Further, is this the experience of the sacred that most
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49 religious texts refer too (Chan-Serafin et al. 2013), this mystical feeling of awe and
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51 connectedness? Merleau-Ponty (1964, 10) noted that all experiences, thoughts and sensations
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53 can be “caught up in the fabric of one sole being.”
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3 Because of the shared experience now understood through the discovery of mirror
4 neurons, I argue that there is a further function of empathy: it connects us at a subatomic level.
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6 In feeling and experiencing another's pain and joy, it becomes our own (witnessed in the
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8 execution/observation function of empathy in fMRIs) forming an interconnected confluence
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10 within the unified quantum field, possibly an experience of the sacred. Alongside affective and
11
12 cognitive qualities, empathy may also have a more significant function – it may connect us at
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14 the quantum level of coherency and be part of the entangled process for global transcendence
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16 emerging through its possibility.
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24 **System Transcendence**

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26 Awareness of quantum empathy may therefore provide a possible narrative for a new social
27
28 order as it integrates self and other to enact a system shift of consciousness. Quantum empathy
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30 may be the relational quality that underpins a holistic system (Overton and Lerner 2014),
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32 stemming from contemplative practice. As noted above, quantum empathy enables the bridging
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34 across, through and beyond boundaries to extend the limits of normal experience for global
35
36 transcendence. This additional function of empathy may form a shared experience - the glue
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38 that organizes a coherent society with empathy enhancing access to that unified existence. Such
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40 a perspective would suggest that we are hard-wired for a higher form of empathy that can make
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42 us better as a collective consciousness as we make more informed 'right' ways of action (Purser
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44 and Milillo 2015). This also confirms Heisenberg's (1990) that there is a metaphysical impulse
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46 that steers our behaviour. In closing the divide between self and other, we may become more
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48 altruistic, evident in the rapid increase in co-creative partnerships, social and conscious
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50 enterprise that characterize this shift. Supporting this growth in altruism, new insights from
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52 neuroscience demonstrate that the same neural pathways fire whether you experience pleasure
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54 or whether you are helping others (Skuse and Gallagher,2009), through the release of the feel-
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3 good chemical, dopamine (Kashdan and Silvia 2011). This again confirms that altruism and
4
5 cooperating with others is central to human sustenance (Korten, Egel and Pavlovich 2017;
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7 Tomasello 2000; Waddock, Pavlovich and Egel 2018). Quantum empathy may then be the
8
9 sacredness, the metaphysical impulse that Heisenberg (1990) and Frederick (1998) noted
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11 earlier that may shape and influence an evolving universe.
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15 To add further support for this theory, I use an exercise in the classroom that
16
17 demonstrates this shift from empathy to quantum empathy. I show a photo of a newborn baby
18
19 and there is generally a good deal of mentalizing – with most people agreeing that this baby is
20
21 very cute. I then reveal that two hours after the photo was taken, she was rushed to hospital for
22
23 brain surgery. There is immediately a collective shift of energy in the room and this shift goes
24
25 beyond the individual experiencing and prosocial concern that characterizes empathy. There is
26
27 a stillness that is hard to describe – no-one moves, the room is silent and the energy feels
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29 heightened. I then ask everyone whether they feel this shift in energy and inevitably most
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31 people feel it, but they cannot explain it. I then suggest that this is what quantum empathy feels
32
33 like – where we come together as a collective presence.
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38 In developing this concept of quantum empathy, I therefore integrate these relational-
39
40 self practices in Figure 1, responding to the comment from Karakas et al. (2015) that the
41
42 spirituality literature often overlooks how the expression of one's inner life influences
43
44 connectedness and global transcendence. Figure 1 illustrates the overlay between these
45
46 concepts. As I have argued, mindfulness (inner work) places self at the centre of inquiry and is
47
48 a *toolkit* for reducing ego-centricity and self-interest; reflexivity (connectedness) is an
49
50 *ontological shift in awareness* of the interdependence of the self-other relationship, and
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52 quantum empathy (transcendence) is the harmonic frequency that can shape a *collective new*
53
54 *world* order based upon cooperation and social justice. Through these relational-self practices,
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3 we can harness this universal power of excitable interconnected energy (Merleau-Ponty 1962)
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5 for a system level shift in co-creation.
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10 Insert about here - Figure 1: Societal transcendence through relational-self practices
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15 What becomes important in creating this narrative is the expansiveness that stems from these
16
17 relational-self practices. Each of these practices can expand global consciousness, evident in
18
19 the broken lines (in Figure 1) on the edge of quantum empathy indicating that our experience
20
21 and awareness can extend. Hence, in this narrative I have identified quantum empathy as an
22
23 enabler of societal transcendence through its expansion of the connection between self and
24
25 other. Liu and Robertson (2011, 37) concur that this expansion can happen “intrapersonally
26
27 [inner work], interpersonally [connectedness], and transpersonally [quantum empathy], and
28
29 demonstrates a sense of interconnection with human beings, nature, all living things, and a
30
31 higher power.” They further explain that by connecting with a higher power, (quantum
32
33 empathy), the vertical boundaries are elevated to connect self beyond the secular level to an
34
35 ontologically “higher realm of consciousness beyond the ego” (p. 37). At the horizontal level,
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37 they note that we may embrace others into the self to transcend the demarcations between the
38
39 artificial separations of ‘us’ and ‘them’.
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45 The practices discussed (mindfulness, reflexivity and empathy) become significant in
46
47 that they are all founded on this space-in-between, beyond the ego. In being consciously part
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49 of an inter-subjective universe of excitable energy, we have the ability to harness this into
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51 creating a future note yet imagined. Indeed, Walsh and Shapiro (2006) state that “meditative
52
53 disciplines particularly value and cultivate transpersonal states in which the sense of identity
54
55 extends beyond (trans) the individual person or personality to encompass wider aspects of
56
57 human life.” Thus, mindfulness contributes to self-expansion; reflexivity to our experience of
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3 connectedness with others, and quantum empathy supports the shift in human consciousness to
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5 a WE collective through operating at the coherent frequency of the universe for global
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7 transcendence.
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10 11 12 **Conclusion**

13
14 In this paper, I have demonstrated that at the quantum level we are entangled and
15
16 interconnected, and what happens to others impacts on ourselves. This purpose of this paper
17
18 was not to provide a tool kit on how to change management, but rather a provocation on a
19
20 future possibility for a system shift, acknowledging the need to radically rethink how we
21
22 organize society.
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26 I offer three contributions from this paper to extend this understanding of the relational-
27
28 self. The first is in identifying the relational-self practices that may assist in this shift
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30 (mindfulness, reflexivity and empathy), each of which already have strong scientific
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32 scholarship confirming their role in the development of human functioning (Cunliffe 2011;
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34 Good et al. 2016; Iacoboni 2009; Plante 2016). This contribution revealed the importance of
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36 returning to first person ontologies and methodologies in our research. It demonstrated the role
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38 of contemplative practice that is contingent on virtuous and ethical action in the shaping of
39
40 society. This has implications for how organizations are managed and a re-questioning of their
41
42 role and purpose in this reshaping process – as change-makers within a broader system, rather
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44 than one based solely on capitalism (Giacalone and Thompson 2006). Second, drawing on
45
46 quantum physics, I have proposed the concept of quantum empathy as a harmonic frequency
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48 of the universe where everything is fluid, indeterminate, entangled and interconnected. At this
49
50 quantum level, there is no separation between self and other, with the relational-self being both
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52 I and We through entanglement. This is a result of non-locality at the sub-atomic field, where
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54 waves of information travel through the universe beyond the world of matter. The reshaping
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3 of society can potentially occur through realizing the sacredness of this space through
4 contemplative practice. Such metaphysical impulses may lead to an inquiry of what a person's
5 place in the natural order might be. Finally, I contend that through engagement with these
6 relational-self practices, a sense of expansiveness may emerge to shift human consciousness.
7
8 This suggests that the non-locality, indeterminate and entanglement of information at the
9 quantum level is the harmonic frequency of the universe (Bohm, 1980; Capra, 1999). Thus,
10 through quantum empathy, we have the possibility to address issues of ecosystem breakdown,
11 climate change and inequities of poverty and social justice. This system is one where
12 responsible global citizens participate in creating a shared world of possibility where everyone
13 has the opportunity to grow and prosper through quantum empathy as a macro-level organizing
14 mechanism.

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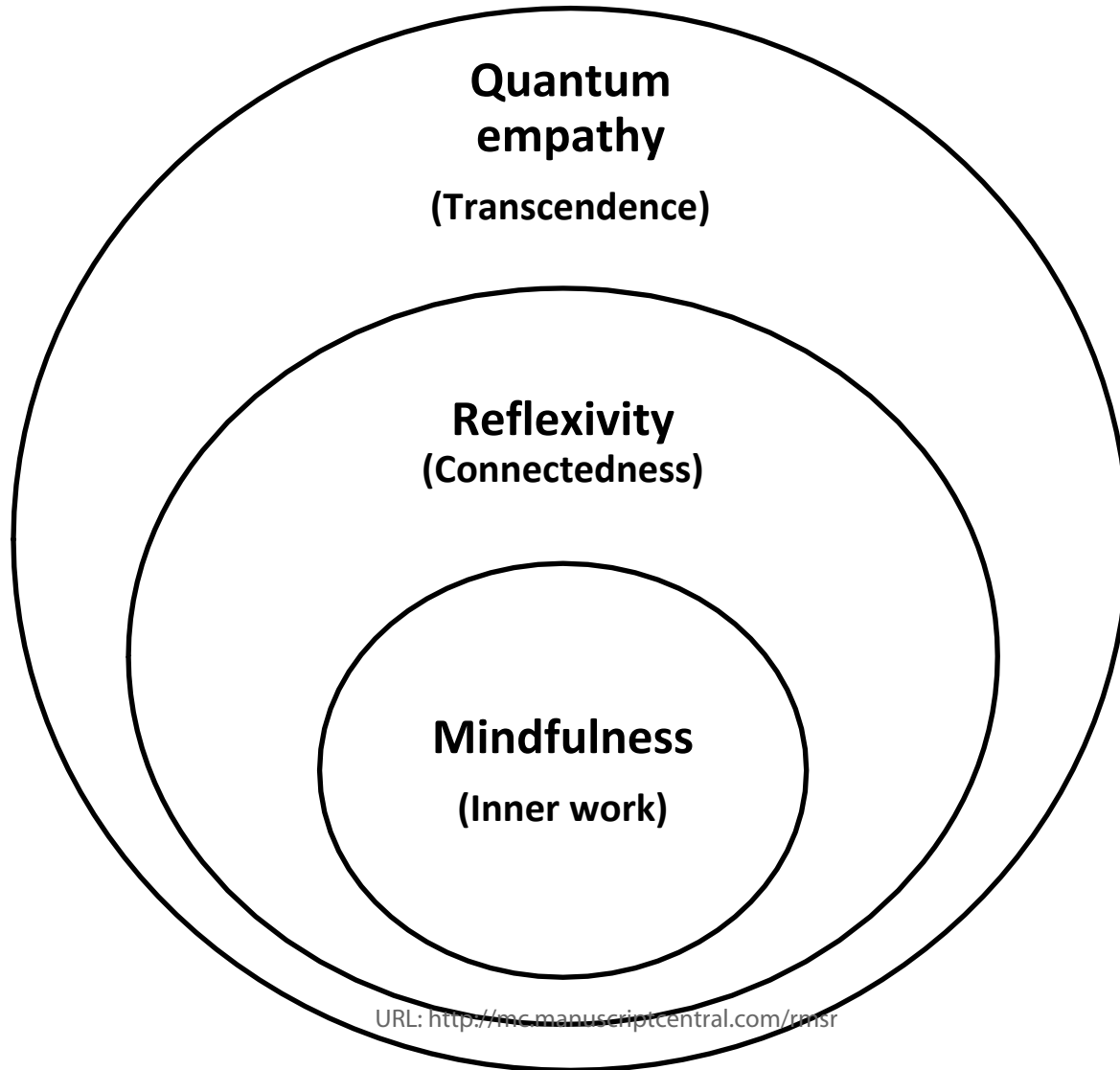
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Figure 1: Societal transcendence through relational-self practices



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