
# Science Buzz Cafe # 556

## Monday 6 PM • November 3rd, 2025

## The HopMonk 'Abbey'

230 Petaluma Ave. Sebastopol, CA

Host, Daniel Osmer (daniel@economicbuzzcafe.com)

6 PM • Come Early for Food & Drink • RSVP $7 • DOOR $10

# Reality is Not What it Seems:

### A Scientist's Journey to the Intersection of Buddhism and Modern Science

# A Talk by Carl B. Pilcher, PhD

**Former: Science Director for Solar System Exploration & Director of the NASA Astrobiology Institute at Ames Research**

For 2500 years, Buddhism has taught that our perceptions of the world around us are illusory. It teaches that things we perceive as permanent are not. That properties we regard as intrinsic are not. That separations that seem apparent to us, such as between ourselves as subjects and the world of others and objects, are not what they seem. In roughly the last one-and-a-half centuries, science—particularly relativity and quantum mechanics, but also biological and cosmic evolution—has begun telling us many of the same things. In this talk I will share some of my journey as a scientist, new to Buddhism, who has been drawn to the connections between these two approaches to understanding reality.

Carl has been on a sciene track most of his life beginning with a serious devotion to chemistry in high school. From chemistry, his scientific journey has taken him through astronomy and planetary science, biology and astrobiology, and most recently modern physics. He began his career at the Institute for Astronomy, University of Hawaii, studying planets and moons in the outer solar system. In 2013, Carl retired as Director of the NASA Astrobiology Institute (NAI), headquartered at the NASA Ames Research Center in Mountain View. Carl's journey in Eastern teachings began a decade ago in studies with a Hindu teacher. He joined Dharma College in Berkeley, an organization founded by the Venerable Tarthang Tulku, a Tibetan Buddhist Lama, about 5 years ago. Since then, he has made understanding the connections between Buddhist and scientific world views a major focus.