

# Deepening the Hilary Putnam's Non Miracle Argument with Ontology of Knowledge (iss.20241110) Jean-Louis Boucon

Let's consider two versions of the Hilary Putnam's (HP) « Non Miracle Argument » (NMA)

*« The positive argument for \* realism is that it is the only philosophy that doesn't make the success of science a miracle » (Putnam 1975a). \* devient «scientific realism» (Putnam 2012: 55) »*  
*« if the theory was not true, then it would be a miracle that it was capable of generating successful predictions and enabling us to gain control over our environment » (Putnam 1978: 18-22). »*

## **1:The Non-Miracle of the knowing subject's Unity**

A primary condition of possibility of any philosophy or any science (in the very sense in which HP conceives them) is life.

One must admit that the permanent success of life owes nothing to science or to any philosophy. Thus, in the very sense of the NMA, the success of science is conditioned by the success of life, which would be infinitely more miraculous than the success of science predictions.

One could object that science predicts the result of specific experiments while life only selects among the happiest results. This is not the case: to be convinced of this, it is enough to consider the persistence of the Unity (physical and mental) of the knowing subject through the billions of billions of microscopic events that converge at each instant in this Unity, to the point that the proposition « I become myself » is a first person certitude above all certitudes. Again, there can be no miracle here in the sense of the NMA.

It turns out that the persistence of the knowing subject's Unity is not only the primary condition of any experience but it is precisely the primary mechanism of any thought, including any thought about the world. My thought it's me and it shall remain One as I remain One.

The same could be said about the persistent unity of Mankind as a condition of any language and science.

Failing to include the “Non Miracle” of life and of the persistent Unity of the subject, leaving the spirit of the subject above the NMA, makes it nothing more than a disguised profession of faith.

## **2:Re-introducing the subject in the founding theories**

For the non-miracle argument to be flawless, the theory that predicts must be founded independently of any prejudice about the physical world. The objects of the theory must not be "idealized representations" of the physical world but pure constructions of the mind. Failing this, one could introduce in a hidden way, in the concepts of objects of the theory, properties linked to our own representation which would make the "success" of our predictions a simple reaffirmation of our prejudices.

This principle flaw would be undetectable by experience since it would be introduced precisely on the basis of prior experiences.

This is particularly true for the founding theories like logic, mathematics, probability.

But even if we suppose a theory free of more or less conscious prejudice about the physical world, the fact remains that a pure construction of the mind is constrained by its reality.

Indeed: if the infinite flexibility or adaptability of the mind to the pre-existing forms of an "external" world is only a self-sustaining illusion, the same is true of our capacity to create the ideal forms of mathematics because these forms are constrained by the nature in reality of the mind that creates. (see annex for a developed statement)

For example; arithmetic, set theory, geometry are based on the principle of logical objects (integers, elements, points) which could exist in infinite number. But these theories have not established that an infinity of objects, each having a distinct meaning, would be thinkable. The impossibility of

thinking the infinite is not a matter of quantity but of structure: Can a mind bound to its unity, that is to say whose logical Whole is subsumed in a "myself", think in itself an infinity of existents? It is permissible to doubt it.

### **2.1 :The elision of the knowing subject**

This leads us to mention another paradox: To construct logical, mathematical, and probability theories, the proposition "events A and B are independent" must be a possible truth and yet objects of a same thought cannot be independent.

This paradox results from a problem at the foundation of theories and of science in general. This problem was already raised, on the subject of quantum theory, by E. Schrödinger who designated it as the *withdrawal* or *elision of the subject* and which can be described as the failure of a theory to take into account the real nature of the mind that states it, of the mind *for what it is*.

Indeed, a mathematical proposition is an act of thought. Such an act is, in essence, dependent on the subject even if the theory in which it participates is coherent and if it is shared inter-subjectively. The meaning of a mathematical proposition emerges from the subject's thought *for what it is* before having meaning *for what it says*.

But the subject's (in particular and in general) thought does not have, in its reality, the formal structures of the world that it describes and we will show how the formal structures of thought *for what it is* and the modes of emergence of meaning constrain and determine the possible forms of thought *for what it says*.

Knowing is not neutral.

For the subject to know, forms must emerge off his mind. It is not a question of taking up the Kantian concept of *a priori synthetic forms* but of understanding how meaning emerges from the reality of the subject and of highlighting the formal constraints that these modes of emergence of meaning impose on representation.

The epistemic difficulty of this exercise is that it is almost impossible to take into account the formal structures of thought without giving in to the formal prejudices that we may have about thought itself. How can we give meaning to the reality from which meaning emerges?

Without claiming to completely eliminate this difficulty, we believe that the model of a thought "field of probabilistic interdependencies" proposed by the Ontology of Knowledge allows us to highlight some of the formal constraints that thought *for what it is* imposes on thought *for what it says*.

In the following lines we will try to show the main consequences of this model on the possible forms of thought.

### **2.2 :The mind is not cuttable**

As objects of thought, neither A nor B are distinct from the Whole of thought, no more than they are distinct from each other.

To say that the mind is not cuttable means that no continuous cut can be conceived in it, of whatever dimension, that would allow one to disjoin an object of thought *for what it is* from the totality of the mind or to disjoin it from other objects of thought.

To illustrate this, let us suppose a "still life with apples" and compare the painting *for what it represents* with the painting *for what it is*.

For what the painting represents, the apples have an independent existence but not for what it is, that is, in the conditions of possibility of representation. The illusion of disjunction results from rules of perspective that apply to the whole of the painting but do not belong to the "world" (including space-time) represented. Several apples are represented but all emerge from a Unique concept of apple, the same for the concepts of color, circle etc...

### **2.3 :The mind *for what it is* is incommensurable to thought *for what it says*.**

The rules by which the representation emerges from the painting have nothing in common with those that govern the world it represents.

A similar reasoning applies to thought: What thought says emerges from what it is but what thought is is not describable with the forms of what thought says, that is to say the forms of the world as we represent it.

Conversely, what thought says, in our case the proposition "A is independent of B", has no equivalent in what thought is: there is not (in the reality of the mind) a thought of A distinct and independent of a thought of B.

The mind for what it is before having meaning is not commensurate with the (four-dimensional) world that it represents.

#### **2.4 :Thought is not founded.**

The rules by which thoughts take on meaning are neither constructive nor additive.

Thought is not founded by atoms of thought or idea-atoms having a meaning of their own.

The objects of thought do not have "in themselves" the attributes that give them meaning.

In thought *for what it is* there are no objects but only singularities in a field of probabilistic interdependencies, attractors of meaning.

*Note that if we abstain from prejudices from the physical world, pure conditional probability relations ( $P(A \text{ knowing } B)$ ) do not have to be founded either physically or causally.*

*As wrote G. Simondon: "The relation has the value of being".*

These attractors are not disjoint, not mutually exclusive.

#### **2.5 :Meaning is animated by its own nature.**

Meaning is extensional (extrinsic).

Meaning is not specific to the object of thought but resides in the probability laws that link a meaning to other possible meanings, which in turn are none other than probability laws on other possible meanings etc...

*Note that meaning thus defined is not the **subject's understanding** of the law of probabilities of possible meanings, it is that law. It is not the subject's understanding that, interpreting these probability laws, will determine choices, but the meaning that propagates according to its nature, like a wave.*

This probabilistic nature of meaning animates thought in its very essence, without requiring a prior physical time.

There is no thought without change. Let us say that thought is change just as life is change, to such an extent that a state of thought *for what it is* cannot be defined.

This is merely a consequence of the fact that thought is not cuttable.

#### **2.6 :The mind does not contain thoughts, it is the Whole of thoughts.**

The mind *for what it is* is neither the container nor the processor of thoughts and concepts *for what they say*.

The mind does not arrange its objects like jars of jam on shelves.

The mind and its objects are not separate things.

The probabilistic nature of meaning is also the link that unites concepts and thought as a Whole.

What thought says is not "something else" than what it is: what is thought by the mind is not "something else" than the reality of the thinking mind.

What thought says is a mode of order of what it is.

The mind is what it thinks and **becomes** its thought.

#### **2.7 :The Unity of the subject imposes itself on the Whole of thought**

Without harming its rational evidence, the Cogito can be generalized in the form: "The proposition "I am, I exist" is true each time any proposition emerges in my mind"

Similarly in the CRP, Kant tells us in substance: "the persistent unity of the subject's mind is the condition of possibility of all meaning."

Thus, the existence of the One mind of the subject is the prerequisite for all thought.

In its probabilistic expression, the existence of the subject's mind would be written:

"probability of I knowing I = 1"

The proposition "I become myself" is a prior certainty and its meaning subsumes all possible meanings for the subject, in their probabilistic definition.

Everything that the subject can think is forced to merge into the prior certainty of his One existence. Thoughts emerge in the subject by probabilistic separation and ordering of the possible modes of fulfilling the becoming-self, weighted by their probabilities.

### **2.8 :Existence is not universal but relative to the subject**

The thought of a concept (ex:a red apple (Ra) exists) would be written:

probability of Ra knowing I > 0    abbreviated in:  $P(Ra|I) > 0$

The thought of an existent for the subject is what fulfills the relation of necessity:

$P(Ra|I) = 1$

and since I exist:  $P(I|I) = 1$

from which we deduce:  $P(Ra|Ra) = 1$

The subject thinks as existing the red color of this apple (this apple is red (Ra)).

The existence of an X for the subject results from a singular configuration in which possible modes merge into a necessity,  $P(X|X) = 1$ , not necessary in the absolute but necessary into the existence of the subject (as seen above).

All possibles are subsumed in all existents which are subsumed in the existence of the subject.

The existence of All that exists (the Universe) is conditioned by the existence of the subject.

« I exist » is therefore the first axiom of any theory.

It follows that even in a theory, the pure thought of an existent (for example a point O of geometry) is not dimensionless *for what it is*: not only does the necessity  $P(O|O) = 1$  give the existence of O the character of a monodimensional becoming but the modes of fulfillment of this necessity (the contingent paths from O to O) separate into infinities of infinities of dimensions.

*For what it is*, the thought of O is an attractor of meaning attached to the Whole of thought by relations of probability.

**3:The theory of relativity** provides us with a good example of the difficulties associated with the elision of the knowing subject.

We will see that taking into account the knowing-subject, the theory of Relativity is incompatible with its own conditions of possibility.

Let us quote A. Einstein

*"[...] according to the Special Theory of Relativity[...] The four-dimensional continuum is no longer objectively divided into sections that contain all simultaneous events; the "now" loses its objective meaning for the world that extends into space. From this comes the fact that one is obliged to objectively conceive of space and time as an indissoluble four-dimensional continuum, if one wants to express the content of objective relations without resorting to superfluous arbitrary and conventional procedures[50]"*

Über die spezielle und die allgem eine Relativitätstheorie (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1917).

Republished in The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), vol. 6, doc. 42.

*"And since there are no longer in this four-dimensional structure any sections that objectively represent the 'now,' the notion of becoming does not disappear completely, but it does become complicated. It seems, therefore, more natural to represent physical reality as a four-dimensional being instead of representing it as has been done up to now, as the becoming of a three-dimensional being." [51]*

Einstein (1999), op. cit. in n. 5, 167.

Original text: *"Da es in diesem vierdimensionalen Gebilde keine Schnitte mehr gibt, welche das "Jetzt" objective repräsentieren, wird der Begriff des Geschehens und Werdens zwar nicht völlig aufgehoben, aber doch kompliziert. Es erscheint deshalb natürlicher, das physikalish Reale als ein*

*vierdimensionales Sein zu denken statt wie bisher als das Werden eines dreidimensionalen Seins.»*  
Cf. Einstein (1996), *op. cit.* in n. 5, 529

**3.1:** Before even appealing to Relativity and the absence of an objective universal present moment, a few minutes of rational reflection force us to admit that the synthesis of the billions of relationships that constitute the representation of a present moment of the world cannot be instantaneous if we consider the subject's thought as the state of an object in the world .

In the subject, the thought of the present moment has a temporal thickness.

Now if there is no primary atom of thought, if thought is unfounded, how can we define this thickness? Should we consider milliseconds or years or millions of years?

**The representation by the knowing-subject of the present moment of the world is not present in the knowing-subject.**

Indeed, only if we consider the meaning as an Actual law of probabilistic expectations, neither physically nor causally founded, can we grasp its apparent immediacy.

*To figure this, consider a billion playing cards laid down on a table. Once you have flipped a thousand of these, laws of probabilities are Actual with no consideration of time. These laws are the meaning of the Existing experience and time is only needed for the meaning to expend according to these probabilistic laws and become new experiences.*

*Thought is not the conscious understanding of that, it is that very Transaction from Actual to Existing.*

*The Knowing-subject does not think Bayesian inferences he is a wave of Bayesian inferences.*

**3.2:** It is impossible for the knowing subject to "represent physical reality as a four-dimensional being".

The idea of a being that, in one way or another, would contain time is impossible for the subject. The necessity of the passage of time does not reside in the "external" reality, nor in the physical nature of thought, but is due to the extensive nature of meaning.

Certainly our thought produces the concepts of formal objects (for example the bloc-universe or the line of universe) and the operating modes supposed to transcribe the four-dimensionality of reality as needed by Relativity, but when the subject thinks the bloc-universe, this very thought is a part of him, which Exists only in the present of his experience and becomes as he himself becomes.

The same is true of all the objects that populate our reality. The mind cannot think of what is future or past as an *Existent* but only as an *Actual Possible*.

The only duration that can Exist for the subject is its measure by means of a present comparison.

**We can represent the statement of the Relativity but not the world as stated by the Relativity.**

**3.3:** The subject cannot think of his own reality (physical and mental) as a four-dimensional being. The "*I exist*" excludes the Existence of any other I.

**The subject who states the Relativity cannot represent himself in accordance with the statement of the Relativity.**

**3.4:** Einstein compared the existence of the subject (considered in the third person) to a *line of universe*.

Note: For clarity, let us call "bloc-subject" the subject represented according to the 4 dimensions of the bloc-universe .

This concept of line only makes sense if we consider the subject as a persistent Unity, with no more meaning than the simple digit of information: "it becomes itself".

If we want to account for the subject in its interdependence with the world, the idea of line no longer holds because in the bloc-universe the bloc-subject is indistinct from the lines of universe of the atoms or photons that will be attached to it, at least for a certain time of the subject. The bloc-

subject is indistinct from what determines it and what it determines.

The physical reality of the bloc-subject is therefore not a line in the bloc-universe but a singularity that involves the whole part of the bloc-universe that is correlated to it.

According to the brilliant intuition of G. Simondon the subject is individuation. To represent individuation according to the 4 dimensions of the bloc-universe we will speak of bloc-Individuation.

The subject's thought participates in the same reality as his physical reality. The subject's thought for what it is in reality must therefore be considered as an integral part of the subject's bloc-Individuation, that is to say integrating everything to which he is correlated.

However, we have this empirical evidence that the knowing-subject's thought represents him and the world as a being(s) present and in the process of becoming.

Relativity therefore requires us to distinguish two aspects, one incommensurable to the other, of the same reality: on the one hand the subject bloc-Individuation: singularity in the bloc-universe and on the other hand the knowing-subject: being present and in the process of becoming.

For the theory of Relativity to deserve the qualification of description of reality, we must therefore explain how off the subject bloc-Individuation, which is deduced from the theory as being the reality of the subject, emerges the meaning of the knowing-subject, condition of possibility of the theory, that is to say (according to the logic of the Cogito) that the statement of the theory implies the existence of the knowing-subject.

**The statement of the theory of Relativity proves the existence of the knowing-subject while the theory itself implies the subject as a bloc-Individuation.**

The difficulty is not only ontological, it is also epistemological: How does a thought emerge from a four-dimensional being that represents itself and represents the world as a three-dimensional becoming\*?

What consequences does this emergence have on the representation?

**\*Is the knowing-subject a wave of meaning running through the subject bloc-Individuation ?**

If the meanings of time and space appear to the *knowing-subject* while his own meaning emerges from the subject *bloc-Individuation*, are they not, as Einstein himself suggested, the product of the modalities of emergence of meaning rather than the image of a 'real' space-time ?

In such case, should we not raise the question of four-dimensionality of the real and of its dimensionality at all ?

**Shouldn't we consider the subject's reality as a mere singularity in a domain of probabilistic interdependancies ?**

This would include the subject into the Non Miracle Argumentation in favour of realism

## Annex

Question to an AI:

How to interpret the following sentence: "*Indeed: if the infinite flexibility or adaptability of the mind to the pre-existing forms of an "external" world is only a self-sustaining illusion, the same is true of our capacity to create the ideal forms of mathematics because these forms are constrained by the nature in reality of the mind that creates.*"

Answer:

This sentence is a dense philosophical reflection on the nature of the mind's relationship to both the external world and to the abstract realm of mathematics. Here's a breakdown of the meaning:

1. ***Infinite flexibility or adaptability of the mind***: This phrase suggests the idea that the human mind seems to be infinitely capable of adapting to and understanding various forms in the external world. It's as if the mind can continuously mold itself to fit pre-existing structures or patterns that exist outside itself.
2. ***A self-sustaining illusion***: The sentence proposes that this perceived adaptability might not be a genuine capacity but rather an illusion. In other words, it may seem like the mind has boundless flexibility to understand the world, but this could simply be a self-reinforcing perception rather than an actual property of the mind.
3. ***Parallel in mathematics***: The author then draws a parallel to mathematics, suggesting that the mind's capacity to create "ideal forms" (abstract mathematical concepts) is similarly limited. Although mathematics might feel like a realm of pure invention, free from external constraints, our ability to conceptualize mathematical forms is actually limited by the intrinsic nature of our minds.
4. ***Constrained by the mind's nature***: The final phrase asserts that the mind cannot create mathematical forms entirely freely, as it is bound by its own structure and limitations. This implies that mathematical creativity is not wholly independent but is shaped by the mental "nature in reality," meaning that even our abstract ideas are, in some way, grounded in the fundamental capacities and structures of the mind.

In summary, the sentence suggests that both our perception of the external world and our creation of abstract mathematical concepts are shaped and constrained by the mind's own nature. We might think that we are freely adapting to or inventing these forms, but in reality, our mental faculties have inherent limitations that shape what we perceive or create.

Several philosophers have explored similar ideas about the relationship between the mind, reality, and mathematics : I.Kant, GWF. Hegel, E. Husserl, L.Wittgenstein, A.N. Whitehead ...

The Author : Jean-Louis Boucon  
mail : [boucon.jean-louis@neuf.fr](mailto:boucon.jean-louis@neuf.fr)  
Blog : <http://jlboucon-philosophy.over-blog.com/>  
tel : +33682072266

Références :

**Publications by the author :** available in pdf on [Philpeople.org](http://Philpeople.org)

- Ref ODC [Introduction to the ontology of Knowledge](#)
- Ref RLPS [Logico-philosophical summary of Ontology of Knowledge](#)
- Ref AiSUM [Summary by an AI of the Introduction to OK](#)
- Ref PLOC [The philosophy of language and OK](#)
- Ref BOIR [Beyond the Opposition Idealism vs Realism](#)
- Ref TRANS [The OK and the transcendental](#)
- Ref SOLI [Is OK a solipsism ?](#)
- Ref LOGEX [From Logical to Existing](#)
- Ref LAMG [The OK, Logic, arithmetics, set theory and geometry](#)
- Ref BQOC [Beyond Qbism with the OK](#)
- Ref FQAQ [Four questions about QBism and their answers by OK](#)
- Ref MOND [The OK and the form of the world](#)
- Ref TSWK [Time space and world as knowledge](#)
- Ref CNT [A natural concept of time](#)
- Ref BLOC [Bloc universe and indeterminacy](#)
- Ref CQOK [What means Continuous and Quantified within OK](#)
- Ref ToM [Transcendence of Meaning iss.20240718](#)

Published Book:

Ref UPF : *L'Univers n'a pas la forme*  
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