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Idols of the Mind vs. True Reality

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PART 1

Uncertainty and Unknowing.

“[Isaac] Newton’s goal was incomparably more vast than the discovery of the ‘mathematical principles of natural philosophy.’ Newton wished to penetrate to the divine principles beyond the veil of nature, and beyond the veils of human record and received revelation as well. His goal was the knowledge of God, and for achieving that goal he marshaled the evidence from every source available to him: mathematics, experiment, observation, reason, revelation, historical record, myth, the tattered remnants of ancient wisdom.” B. Dobbs, *The Janus Faces of Genius*. Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 7.

It was from the wide breadth of his learning, yet intent focus to comprehend True Reality that led Newton to humbly remark:

“I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the **great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.**” – Isaac Newton, from Brewster, *Memoirs of Newton*

In mathematics the N-body problem for $N > 2$ bodies interacting according to an inverse square law was well known to Newton. This played a great role in his conception of the order and stability of the solar system. The later development of chaos theory by Poincare and others recognizes this problem as well as initial condition errors that are fundamental to computer simulated stability calculations over reiterations of billions of years. Ejections and collisions have been found to be possible within 5 billion years by these methods. Newton’s prescient uncertainty about this led him to state:

“For while comets move in very eccentric orbs in all manner of positions, blind fate could never make all the planets move one and the same way in orbs concentric, some inconsiderable irregularities excepted which may have arisen from the mutual actions of comets and planets on one another, and which will be apt to increase, till this system wants a reformation.”

This reformation or correction of the orbits had to come from somewhere. This led him to integrate his alchemical vital principle and Biblical wisdom with his mathematical knowledge as presented in his “General Scholium,” in *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (1687).

“This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent Being. [...] This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all; and on account of his dominion he is wont to be called “Lord God” [pantokrat?r], or “Universal Ruler”. [...] The Supreme God is a Being eternal, infinite, [and] absolutely perfect.”

A quote attributed to Albert Einstein, for whom the mystery of nature was not an alien idea, states:

“The human mind is not capable of grasping the Universe. We are like a little child entering a huge library. The walls are covered to the ceilings with books in many different tongues. The child knows that someone must have written these books. It does not know who or how. It does not understand the languages in which they are written. But the child notes a definite plan in the arrangement of the books – a mysterious order which it does not comprehend, but only dimly suspects.”

Courageously embracing the unknown Einstein always understood, “As our circle of knowledge expands, so too does the circumference of darkness surrounding it.”

Werner Heisenberg gave us the famous Uncertainty Principle. It does not refer to some limitation of our knowing/measuring capacity but to an intrinsic ambiguity in reality that cannot be overcome. Here are some of the interesting things he said about uncertainty and unknowing.

“Not only is the Universe stranger than we think, it is stranger than we can think.”

[*Across the Frontiers*] “The existing scientific concepts cover always only a very limited part of reality, and the other part that has not yet been understood is infinite... The first gulp from the glass of natural sciences will turn you into an atheist, but at the bottom of the glass God is waiting for you.”

Modern science, or inquiry into the unknown, had its beginnings in the Christian West because of a faith that Reason or rational principles could be found in God’s creation. It is the task of this article to understand why modern science today has turned away from and failed to comprehend this Reason in the world, that is similar to the *nous* that Anaxagoras conceived as ruling the world.

PART 2

“We have to remember that what we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.... I think that modern physics has definitely decided in favor of Plato... The atoms or elementary particles themselves are not real; they form a world of potentialities or possibilities rather than one of things or facts.” [Werner Heisenberg]

Explanation and Correspondence

Eclipses of the Sun were once predicted using the geocentric epicycles of Ptolemy. They are now described in terms of the heliocentric orbits of Copernicus. Some ancients knew that they could chase away the Moon dog from eating the Sun god whenever they would beat their gongs.

Each of these examples have something correct or confirming about them even though they imagine different realities corresponding to them. In Part 1 it was mentioned that Newton’s conception of the solar system included God as necessary to guide the alchemical vitality that was intrinsic to the order and movement in the universe. The mathematical bones of Newton’s *Princlpia* were abstracted by modern physics and converted into a mechanical model of the universe. The apparently same corresponding observations were used to validate both theories although they referred to very different imagined realities.

A map corresponds to an actual terrain and can help one navigate one’s way through the real terrain depending on its accuracy. However, the map can never be considered a substitute for the actual terrain since a two dimensional visual map can never represent the lived actuality that is experienced in a real terrain. A reflection of reality in a mirror may accurately depict the objects being reflected, but one who makes a journey “through the looking glass” will not discover the real world but a wonderland of mere exaggerated imaginations like Lewis Carroll’s Alice did.

Atomic Theory and Quantum Theory provide imagined wonderlands that possess some observations or correspondence with true reality. To some degree each is logical, self-consistent and complete, although Godel would object to either being at the same time consistent and complete.

If we carefully consider what science is doing here, we discover that anthropocentric or egocentric conceptions of reality – reality as it is “for us” or for me – are being erected in place of true reality as it is “by itself and for itself.” In other words, a subjective conception/theory that is “for us” is being erected as a reality “in and for itself” yet is actually opposed to objective reality as it is in and for itself. It seeks and has some correspondence with true reality and if the subjective conception corresponds with the objective reality the truth is considered to have been reached. This is called the correspondence theory of truth. However, there are problems with this as we noted above, in that different theories may have some correspondence with objective observations and yet still refer to different imagined realities.

The real problem arises when these different Idols of the Mind [Man-made images/ideas/conceptions that are for us in our subjectivity] are presumed to be outwardly objective and venerated as the True Reality [Reality “as it is” or “by itself and for itself”]. Explanations consist of descriptions in terms of the chosen theories assumed as real, even though they are abstractions from the true reality. Because they are abstractions, they never comprehend the concrete reality they merely represent.

Part 3

“Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” [Romans 1:20]

“As for grass and such . . . the biologists are doing fairly well in explaining their measurable properties.” [Stanley Klein]

Measureable properties are observations of True Reality that we perceive and incorporate into the realm of our subjectively constructed theory/ideas/idols which we think allow us to “explain” the original objects of true reality. Of course, measurement only involves the quantitative superficial outer husk of things, thus it cannot give us a genuine explanation of the essence that courses through a blade of grass producing and making it what it is. Such idols cannot comprehend the ‘Invisible qualities’ of the living teleological process at work in the formation of inexplicably complex molecular structures that their models are unable to reconcile. Of course, lacking any semblance of life or consciousness such mechanical/dynamical models are incompatible with any sort of Reason in the world – God.

There is no excuse for such naiveté. It is a failure of scientists to understand what they are doing, and how to properly approach True Reality. As Fred Hoyle said, “There is a coherent plan to the universe, though I don’t know what it’s a plan for.”

Sir Francis Bacon, one of the earliest fathers of science, warned about creating idols and what should be avoided:

Idols of the Tribe (innate to finite Man) – Deceptions of the subjective mind and imperfect senses are intrinsic to us. Mere imaginations gain the dignity of reality and are mixed with facts so that they become inseparable. Idols are molded from these compounds.

Idols of the Cave (the well of the individual mind) – An individual who is dedicated to some particular branch of learning interprets everything according to the colors of his own narrow field and experience. If the only tool you have is a hammer you treat everything as a nail.

Idols of the Marketplace (semantics or words) – Words make private thoughts public. But when bombastic words are substituted for thoughts one believes he can convince his opponents by out talking them. This arises from pure vanity that drags the dignity of philosophy and science into the mud.

Idols of the Theater (sophistry) -Putting on a show, arguing in terms of popular familiarities that are false. Because what is obvious or familiar has not been carefully thought through, as Hegel writes, “. . . what is **familiar is not** on that account **necessarily known.**”

PART 4

“. . . thought is only true in proportion as it sinks itself in the facts; and in point of form it is no private act of the subject.” [GWF Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*,§23]

Withdrawing from reality to be with one’s subjective thought alone, is a detachment from the substantial content of True Reality and becomes a conceit or superiority to it. This type of freedom from the content must be given up, and instead of arbitrarily directing the content of one’s own thought one’s freedom should be sunk into and pervade the content of reality, letting thought be directed and controlled by Reality’s own proper nature of which our essential selves are but a part and manifestation. We do not lose anything thereby except our false sense of self [false ego], but rather gain our true identity and real freedom.

Free agency does not reside in us as separated from reality, but within true reality itself in which we participate. Reason is in the world, a universal rationality that is also intrinsically particular to us individually and to all. By abstractly considering the self as separated from the reality and superior to it, we actually depart from that universal Reason which is the basis for all rational Men to come to accord. “Come now let us reason together.” [Isaiah 1. 18]

Religion teaches all to surrender to God, the Supreme Reality, from Whom reason and wisdom originate. Wisdom is not a property of the universe, although we find life and intelligence in Nature. It is a quality of a Person, the Divine Personality of Godhead. Just as consciousness and intelligence pervade our body’s activities, so God’s Personal energy pervades and forms the whole Reality with life and intelligence. Not only does religion teach surrender of our false egos to the true Reality of God, but also teaches us how to learn by attending to revelation of the truth in order to know it, rather than encouraging the tendency impose and project one’s self imaginings onto reality, taking oneself as a separate subjective agent against a passive objectivity that lacks its own agency and ability to reveal itself. Reality as possessing personal agency can reveal Godself to us if we adopt the attentive patience that allows the veils of self-centered egotism to dissolve by practice of meditation, surrender and service.

Reality is by itself and for itself, means that the Absolute (God) is its own origin and has its own purposes for itself. Thus Reality cannot be impersonal. To judge good and bad by our self-centered perspectives will not bring us closer to Truth but entangle us further in the misconception of separate interest. This is something each individual has to understand for themselves. To try to force another to this conclusion is itself something that can only arise from misconception and lead one further into delusion.

Part 5

“If we want to attain a living understanding of nature, we must become as flexible and mobile as nature herself.” – Goethe

Experience is the uniting mediator between subject and object. Hegel calls this following of the experience of consciousness Phenomenology. This leads to the development of true Science or science of the true. This is not easy for the abstract analytical modern

scientist to comprehend, yet Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is there for guiding the study of this method.

To study the Whole as a whole and not merely in its parts requires an immersion into that which forms/informs us. The part cannot be understood apart from its unity with the whole. Here we have to deal with a logic of the unity in difference of part and whole. It is not an impersonal abstract unity or oneness that is intended. God is not one with Nature as in Pantheism. God is transcendental to Nature as much as immanent within it.

The soul is transcendental to the body yet immanent in it, as we can observe when the body dies the soul or life leaves the body behind. The soul is not the body yet at the same time it expresses itself in and through the body. The same soul remains transcendental to the body through all its changes from child to youth to old age. In the same sense God is transcendental to the universe while remaining the universal Mind or Spirit of which the living entities are particular determinate beings of that Spirit.

Deepak Chopra only goes as far as acknowledging universal consciousness, and thus ends in an impersonal unity as the highest. However, he does not comprehend the individual or universal ego or "I" because for both the finite particular consciousness and universal consciousness there is also its true unity and possibility as self-consciousness. This necessity of self-consciousness is explained by Kant in his *Judgment of Pure Reason*.

In order for consciousness to be consciousness of an object, it must be capable of being conscious of itself, or self-consciousness which is what is meant by "I" or ego. It is this concept of self-consciousness that Kant called the unity of apperception that provides the possibility for the consciousness of an object or the unity of the two. Possibility (concept) and actuality (content) are always correlated in this way, so one cannot talk about possibility in an abstract manner [as if it meant *anything* were possible] without reference to its actuality. Aristotle is famous for stating that the actual is needed for the conception of the possible.

The totality of finite "I's" or "We" also has its universal essence, i.e. since every "I" calls itself "I" there must be a universal "I." Thus God, the universal "I" is also self-consciousness and not merely consciousness.

PART 6

Free Will and the Fall

"If men were born free, they would, so long as they remained free, form no conception of good and evil." Spinoza, *Ethics* Prop. LXVIII.

Proof.—I call free him who is led solely by reason; he, therefore, who is born free, and who remains free, has only adequate ideas; therefore (IV. lxiv. Corollary) he has no conception of evil, or consequently (good and evil being correlative) of good. Q.E.D

By remaining united with the universal Reason of Divine Reality/God the duality of good and evil does not arise. Only when Man withdraws from universal Reason into the particular individuality of subjective understanding (eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil) is he thrown from the Garden of Eden of unity with God by disobeying His commands (departing from universal Reason).

One who is free knows that everything is alright because of one's unity with the divine Reason that rules the world. This freedom from duality of good and evil and of life and the fear of death is possible for one who's particular will is dovetailed with the universal.

One is free to reject universal Reason and live according to one's own separate egotistic reason and will, but this is the cause of irrationality and evil in the world. The labor that Man and Woman are punished to endure is actually a blessing, for by such manual labor

in the world as much as the labor to properly learn about true Reality they come to release themselves from self-centered subjectivity and unite with the universal objective Reality that they abandoned due to choosing to cultivate false self-centered understanding withdrawn from universal Divine Reason/God.

PART 7

“The truth is the whole. The whole, however, is merely the essential nature reaching its completeness through the process of its own development.”

GWF Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*

“I and mine“

The truth is the whole. The part is an abstraction or untruth if it is taken in its isolated identity, It is not what it analytically appears to be. It has its identity only in relation to the whole. To grasp the part from the perspective of the whole a new method is needed distinct from trying to understand the whole from its parts.

The whole has its finite parts. It is not that the part (finite ego) ever vanishes like some Buddhists think, or merges into the whole and becomes the whole (*mayavada*). The whole always contains its parts but they are not separated in isolated identity, which is their false egoistic sense. Rather they are understood in relational integrity with the whole. This relation is called love, where there is a lover and beloved on both sides.

Because the part has its true identity as a part of the whole there is a natural affinity of the part for the whole. In its highest or most perfect or satisfying form this affinity is called love, which can be experienced most fully in human form, although every partial being as part of the whole feels this affinity.

The false “I” is the sense of identity of a part of the whole separated. unrelated to or withdrawn from the whole. There is no such separate identity in reality, it is merely brought about by an abstract conception of “I and mine.” The feeling of having a mind of its own or owning anything arises from this sense of mine. The I is even more troublesome because it thinks “I am” and thus considering itself the whole thinks “I am God.” It thinks in terms of its separated self as “I am a human, American, white, etc.” But no man is an island unto himself, all are a piece of the whole.

No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.

Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, John Donne (1684)

It is false because the true identity of the part is as integral unity with the whole – in religious terms as servant of God. By pulling away from this unity one’s true self or identity is lost. The problem is one thinks he loses his freedom by submission to God, when in fact he gains it for the first time. That’s why it is called liberation/freedom or salvation.

Freedom requires necessity for it to exist. If one travels a road without observing rules or laws chaos, caprice and destruction would result, not freedom to go where one wants. Such freedom without necessity would be abstract and not real.

The concept of matter or materialism arises when the environment experienced as separate from the divine spirit or God is imagined as having its own separate real being. This creates the imaginary field of separated energy where everything is considered external to everything else and separate from everything, all possessing abstract identity or a false identity only. It is [assumed to be] what it is not, and is not what it is [assumed

to be]. Aristotle gave the example of a hand, when detached from the body is not a hand, since it does not serve the function of a hand, which is what we mean by hand.

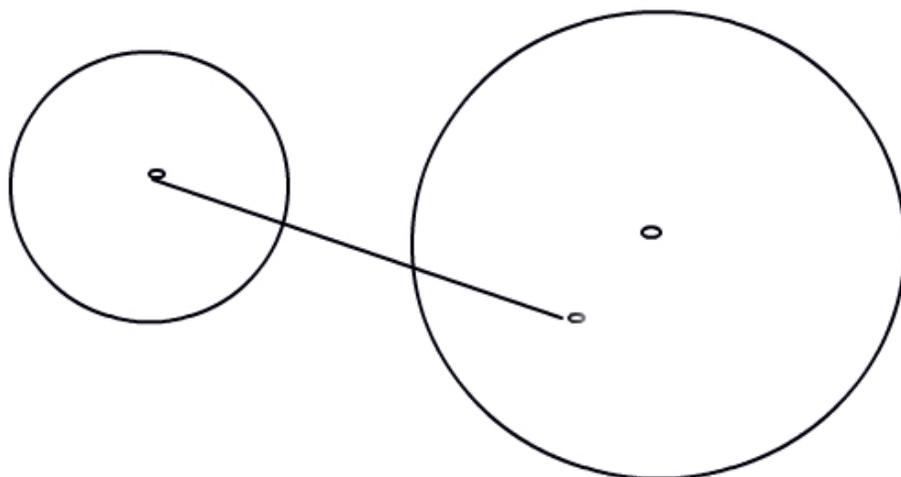
The whole which the false self withdraws from now appears as transcendental truth to him. The soul is his real identity within the whole that remains undeveloped or dormant because he is developing a purely separated material life and neglecting his spiritual life. The material body is thus really an illusion that has its real spiritual existence as part and parcel of the whole or God. It misconceives itself as material when in fact it is really spiritual when comprehended in its true unity with the whole/God.

Because the parts of a machine are brought together by an agent or agency outside and apart from the parts themselves, the parts do not of their own accord form themselves into a machine. The parts or members of an organism however have their agency within them as the soul which has its identity only in relation with the divine whole.

The analytical understanding cannot deal with integral wholes and therefore cannot understand the soul or God. The material body is illusory in the sense that it cannot be understood in its true identity without knowing its relationship to God. Analyzing its composition in terms of separated molecules or neurons is also illusory. To understand how to go from an untrue or partially true part to its truth in the whole a method developed by Hegel called conceptual thinking is required.

Reproduction is not merely concerned with individuals, it involves the genus or genus process. The universal that determines the species is not changed when particulars under the universal change, die, reproduce according to their “own kind” or species. Without connecting the individual organisms with their species we may wrongly think they can evolve into any species by chance. But this is not how individual and species are related to each other. The species determines how the individuals will appear and controls their reproduction, growth, and so on. They are not independent to become what they want by choice or by chance.

Everyone calls themselves “I” so “I” is a universal, although each means only oneself. In the same way each organism is identified with its species, although we mean its own particular organism – for example, a dog and not canine in general. Thus the universal and particular cannot be separated from each other. Similarly individuals who identify only personal reason independent of universal Reason are misconceiving their true identity. At the same time universal and particular are related, they are not the same but a unity in difference. The universal by itself is as abstract as the particular by itself. At the same time their relation can only be comprehended within a higher unity, the higher Self or Supreme Individual.



Ego centric
False ego

Theo centric
True reality

If we were to picture the situation we would have a circle with God in the center, a theocentric conception, and the finite individual self somewhere inside the circle related to the center. If the finite individual is withdrawn from the circle and placed outside of it with a circle drawn around itself, the egocentric conception, this would represent the materially or mentally conceived world made of illusion or imagination. A line connecting the self in the theocentric and egocentric worlds exists. To re-establish one's true identity one has to give up the egocentric mentality and its world and humbly attempt to re=enter the true Reality of Rational theocentric conception and actuality.

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