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The Concept (Soul) in Living Organisms

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In addition to any content, another essential element must be the order or form of that content. Content implies a container. Generally, the container is not thought of as having any determinate influence upon the content. This is a mistake. If we have a bowl-shaped container, the marbles at the bottom will form a concave shape. A square-shaped container will exhibit the marbles in a planar pattern. Thus the container does influence the order or form of its content. Similarly, the Concept(container) of an object (content), shows a similar influence. Thus there is a causal influence of the concept on the content, and as far as the form the content takes is intrinsic, the Concept is not only externally causative but intrinsically constitutive of the object as well, i.e. its essence.

For example, a cow, a dog, and an elephant are all animals. Take away the conceptual essence of “animality” from these objects and we can no longer say what they are. It is not that the classification “animal” or “mamal” is a mere nominal reference. It is what is essential to or intrinsically constitutive of those objects.

In constructing a house, for example, clearly a concept (idea) is an essential cause of the final structure that the house assumes. In making a pot out of clay, the concept the potter has of a pot is causally connected to the formation of the pot. Thus we have ample experiential evidence that concepts are capable of being causal forces or influences on matter. This manifestly evident feature of actuality is totally neglected or ignored by modern science when ALL the forces of nature are limited to the merely physical and chemical.

A laptop computer can never be explained merely in terms of its physical parts. Without an apriori concept in accord with which the parts are causally ordered by an engineer, we

remain unable to properly explain the existence of such a machine merely in terms of its physical parts and physical forces.

It should be clear that physical and chemical explanations of natural phenomena are therefore incomplete, and that conceptual causality is a required element in explaining natural artifacts, which we can call intentionally constructed objects, or objects that bear the imprint of intention, or purpose, as opposed to naturally formed objects. And this purpose is also defined in what we are calling the concept. Thus the purpose (or concept) acts as a cause in the formation of the object. Another term we may use for purpose is End – what something tends toward, or for which it is int-ent-ed.

Aristotle proposed this type of quite realistic understanding when he ascertained that there are four causes required to explain objects in nature: material, formal, efficient and final. He also gave the following as an example of the insufficiency of material causes:

“If we limit our explanation of the formation of a wall to its material causes, then we might attempt to explain it by saying the stones being heaviest formed the foundation at the bottom, the bricks being lighter came next, and the wood at the top being the lightest achieved its appropriate place. If we accept this purely material explanation invoking only physical causes (of heaviness in this case), we have neglected the most essential cause – the movement and arrangement of the material parts for the purpose of providing shelter, i.e. the original concept or that end for which the whole project was conceived.”

This conceptual “cause” is not found among the physical and chemical laws and principles of matter, yet who can deny the essentiality of such a cause whenever we consider the formation of a wall in actuality. To dispense with the concept as such a cause therefore seems to be utterly without justification in the real world.

To attempt to “explain away” concepts by eliminativist and reductionist appeals to instinct, habit, genetic disposition, etc. neglect to address the fact that all such “attempts” are also concept-driven. Even physicalist explanations are concept-laden and dependent on a particular intellectual stance. To say there are no concepts is to deny that content must of necessity have a container in order to be a content. A “known” object cannot be isolated from the act of knowing or knowledge and the agent of such act, the knower. These are necessary conclusions of logic.

In philosophy, the manifestation of purpose in nature is traditionally called design. With the advent of the conception of DNA in biology, the pattern of amino acids that constitute DNA has come to signify pattern or arrangement of molecules in organisms, and with that the interest in probabilities for the formation of specific arrangements or sequences of amino acids by chance. This association of design with pattern or arrangement is a narrowing down (one might say, dumbing down) of the design concept to pattern or configuration rather than purpose, End or concept. The central dogma of biology holds that DNA “codes” for the formation of essential proteins within a cell. Codes signify information, and thus information theory has become associated with DNA. This informational aspect being non-physical and non-chemical seems to turn us more closely back to the original conceptual cause that has traditionally occupied the philosophers of nature.

Inorganic materials also form specific patterns as we find, for example, in snowflakes. Here, the innumerable patterns exhibit exquisite designs that are apparently created by random agglomeration of water molecules, according to the specific stereochemistry (shape) and stoichiometry (molecular bonding) of the molecule. Such formations may be called unintelligent design since they are a function of mechanical (regulative) principles, whereas the design of artifacts exhibit what may be called intentional or intelligent design. The word intelligent is required to indicate intention or purpose since the word “design” on its own has come to mean mere pattern according to modern interpreters.

Living organisms are a special case of what we may call intentional objects, but they are not formed by any apparent external intelligence, as in the case of an artifact.. Their intentionality is intrinsic to the organism itself.

For example, the most common intentionality/purpose for organisms is survival. Living objects actively pursue life and avoid whatever attempts are made to kill them. They tend to multiply or reproduce themselves, preserving their species. And organisms produce their own parts or members from themselves, unlike artifacts which are created from already existing parts that do not depend upon the whole of which they are parts. The parts or members of an organism serve a function or purpose in the organism as a whole, and the organism as a whole seems to create the parts to serve itself, as much as the parts share in creating the whole and other parts. Thus the intentionality of an organism is entirely internal to the organism, unlike artifacts which arise from completely external intentional forces, or conceptual causes. Therefore we can say that the intention/purpose/cause/concept (or soul) is fully intrinsic to an organism and essential to its generation, maintenance, development and formation.

The three categories of mechanical, chemical and teleological analysis, where teleology refers to objects that have an (internal or external) intentional or purposeful nature, have traditionally been applied to the study of the divisions of physics, chemistry and biology, respectively. While teleology is required to understand natural objects such as artifacts, internal teleology has been neglected in biological explanations, as is generally the case in modern science. Yet causes of intention/purpose are not eliminable even in our ordinary understanding of natural things as mentioned above.

The main problem seems to arise because while objects explicable in terms of mechanical or chemical causes do not require or depend upon teleological causes, the automatic assumption that such explanations apply to biological systems is not at all necessary. For example, probability analysis of the letters in a book will not yield any information about the content of the book. Material analysis of the book will not yield any information about its meaning. Such analyses may be consistent, but they do not provide a complete explanation of the book. Likewise, physical and chemical analysis of organisms may be consistent in accordance with their respective principles, yet at the same time provide incomplete description of the totality we call organisms.

“Why don't Darwinists who say that DNA came by chance do the math to prove their claim. Isn't it scientific to back one's claims in science by doing the math? Yet, those who do the math always conclude that chance is not sufficient to prove evolution of DNA by chance.”

– [Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Ph.D.](#)

“The wise man must not be ordered but must order, and he must not obey another; but the less wise must obey him”

– **Aristotle**

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