

First Published On

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WHAT IF YOUR MIND IS A DATA PORT TO ...

As expanded May 15, 2007

INTRODUCTION:

We need to communicate with our intelligent friends about the really important things in life, those immeasurably vital aspects of our existence that enthrall, awe and move us. But we would be left speechless if we were forced to rely on the quantitative judgments and impersonal descriptions of the empirical sciences. The language of science is inadequate to matters of *deep caring* (including the very passion for science itself). The language of the empiricist is as painfully inadequate outside its proper domain as are the deficient social graces of someone damaged by severe autism.

A disclaimer: I am enthusiastic and optimistic about science, but science is incomplete. From a prison cell in Spandau, Hitler's architect and Reich minister of Defense, Albert Speer chillingly put it this way: "Basically, I exploited the technician's often blind devotion to his task. Because of what seems to be the moral neutrality of technology, these people were without scruples about their activities. (Albert Speer. Inside the Third Reich.") To the moral neutrality of technology, you can add the moral neutrality of science.

Experiments in the physical sciences are carefully contrived arrangements that shut out most of the world in order to learn something particular about a small part of this world's physical operation. Our species equally important "noetic investigations" -- these are our journeys into ethical motivation, esthetic appreciation and spiritual connection -- are extravagantly open to more of the world than can be experimentally proved.

Both sides of the human enterprise are based on faith. The entire scientific enterprise is driven by faith, to wit, an explicit or implicit faith belief in the discoverable coherence and rationality of the world's physical processes. The faith of the artist, and that underlying the quest for moral and spiritual discovery, is that there is meaning and deeper truth outside the narrow confines of the physical processes that make up "the world". Neither style of investigation and communication -- neither the arid discourse of the experimenter nor the songs of "noetic pilgrim" are adequate or appropriate to the other, complementary enterprise.

Below, I use the term *scientism*, now in wide currency, to describe an amalgam of “physicalism” or philosophical materialism (i.e., the notion that matter and energy in the context of the space-time continuum are a complete account and explanation of all that is or ever can be) *and* the quaintly arrogant corollary that only science can serve as an adequate guide to human choices. But science is far from being a developed metaphysical system.

There is a tendency of those who have adopted scientism as a *de facto* religion to erect a cartoon picture of the those who follow religion or other spiritual disciplines. It must be pointed out emphatically that this mindset is not that of typical working scientists who are all too aware of the limitations of the ultimate truth claims of their own disciplines. But to the followers of scientism, religionists are deluded, are lacking in intelligence, or both (Dennett & Dawkins). Note -- Daniel Dennett and Richard Dawkins are members of the anti- religious, anti-transcendence intelligentsia. See *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, by Daniel C. Dennett (Penguin) and *The God Delusion*, by Richard Dawkins (Houghton Mifflin).

But esthetics, morality and all the other ultimate spiritual questions that surround and give meaning to the human experience are more complex than any conceivable set of physical experiments by several orders of magnitude. In these matters of personal consequence we rely on the language of metaphor, allegory and poetry not because our subject is simple minded but because it is so very complex that, in order to communicate with each other about it at all, we need to transcend ordinary language. All great art is the partly successful attempt to transcend mundane language to communicate something important about reality that science, qua science, cannot do nearly so well.

What follows is a very condensed account of a self consistent world model that has gradually emerged in my thinking, study and reflection over the last many years and has – quite frankly – become deeply persuasive to me on a fundamental explanatory level. My starting place was as an intuitive Platonist, if you will; that grew out of cognitive dissonance, my dissatisfaction with the purely material/physical accounts of “Life, the Universe and Everything”¹. This was a sharply constricted World Model in which our species’ loftiest spiritual, esthetic and transcendently compassionate visions could be reduced to “chemistry” (to paraphrase one of the Karamazov brothers). It asked me to deny evidence presented directly to my own cognition that there was much more to reality than that. I got to my present place by a series of small steps, based on a provisional “what if?” sort of faith that became impressively heuristic over time. In the appendix to this piece, I reference some of my research in a bibliography, and I also link to a few of my posted articles that track the development of my thought.

But here, in a nutshell, is my takeaway point: Assume that all creative innovation that occurs over the course of evolution was prefigured in the form of design archetypes of extraordinary, mutually reinforcing power such that, over time and opportunistically, the design of intelligent, empathetic consciousness, the purpose generating, design that would also be a designer, would eventually emerge on the stage of the World. Could not evolution be understood as the process by which this universe generated increasingly information-sensitive systems, the most powerful of which was the

¹ The late Douglas Adams, author of the “Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy” posited a giant computer that brooded for centuries after having been asked “What is the answer to the question of Life, the Universe and Everything?” The computer (Deep Thought) finally came up with the answer: **42**. My own theory is that DT had been at 6’s and 7’s for a very long time....

very recent arrival of human consciousness? Run with those assumptions and entertain them seriously for a time. Then review your own actual thinking as it develops uncensored by the expectations of your peers. I promise it will be an interesting exercise.

As you will see, my title is both metaphor and a crude description of what may be the single most important aspect of the emerging human spiritual consciousness.

JBG

MYSTICISM

THE MODEM FOR THE DIVINE DATA PORT

By
Jay B. Gaskill

WHY “MODERN” PHILOSOPHY IS TRAPPED IN OVERCAUTIOUS DESCRIPTION

“Mysticism”, “revelation” and “faith” have bad reputations among those who have adopted a different faith stance, the notion that empirical experiments with measurable physical phenomena can “explain everything”. When taken seriously, this claim is itself a form of religion, that of “scientism”. Ancient Greek philosophy was an integrated compilation of life lessons, introspective revelations and logical reasoning. It was actually useful to the human condition. Modern academic philosophy is less so, because it has been infected with a profound scientific bias and a sense of moral neutrality.

It is as if mainstream academic philosophy has gotten itself trapped in Dostoevsky’s novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, the source of Sartre’s chilling paraphrase, attributed to its author – “Without God, everything is permitted.”

Sartre may have had in mind a passage from *The Brothers*, in Book X, at Chapter 4, where Mitya Karamazov is in jail awaiting trial for killing his father. He’s speaking to his brother, Alyosha, the novice. Mitya has just said that he is “sorry for God” because, “Your Reverence, you must move over a little, chemistry is coming!” Then he says:

"How...is man to fare after that? Without God and a life to come? After all, that would mean that now all things are lawful, that one may do anything that one likes."

P 753 **Penguin Edition** 1880, 1993 trans. Reissued 2003 w/ revisions.

The seeming moral neutrality of much of 20th Century philosophy (and its dismissal of things “spiritual”) tells us that philosophy has “moved over” more than “a little” to avoid a collision with the new secular religion of scientism.

Excerpts from *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mysticism/#1>

The term ‘mysticism,’ comes from the Greek μυσω, meaning “to conceal.” In the Hellenistic world, ‘mystical’ referred to “secret” religious rituals. In early Christianity the term came to refer to “hidden” allegorical interpretations of Scriptures and to hidden presences, such as that of Jesus at the Eucharist. Only later did the term begin to denote “mystical theology,” that included direct experience of the divine (See Bouyer, 1981). Typically, mystics, theistic or not, see their mystical experience as part of a larger undertaking aimed at human transformation (See, for example, Teresa of Avila, *Life*, Chapter 19) and not as the terminus of their efforts. ... Under the influence of William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, heavily centered on people's conversion experiences, most philosophers' interest in mysticism has been in distinctive, allegedly knowledge-granting “mystical experiences.” In the wide sense, let us say that a ‘mystical experience,’ is: A (**purportedly**) super sense-perceptual or sub sense-perceptual experience granting acquaintance of realities or states of affairs that are of a kind not accessible by way of sense perception... or standard introspection.... Mystical experience is **alleged** to be “noetic,” involving knowledge of what a subject apprehends (see James, 1958).

The philosophical take on the mystical experience is typically materialistic (in the sense that brain activities fully explain the mind and matter-energy activities fully explain all the rest) and is unreasonably skeptical. I would strike “**purportedly**”, and “**alleged**” and encourage the reader to listen closely to that inner voice.

MYSTICISM AS A MIND EXTENSION

My own view is that the mind is a bridge state between our merely physical situation (we tend to call it “the world”), and the infinite, partially knowable non-physical realm.

Authentic mystical states represent the apprehension of the numinous level of *reality* (as opposed to a psychological state akin to a trance or “trip”). The most vital and engaging religious traditions are grounded in the life of at least one uniquely charismatic seer, saint, maven or holy person, authentic mystics all. I am persuaded that each of these seminal figures was in contact with the numinous level of reality and carried back to the rest of us revealed truths, insights and moral injunctions so profound that they hold the power to change all human lives for the better.

I am personally convinced that, as conscious beings, we are all capable of achieving a universal apprehension, experienced as the awareness of a part of consciousness that is not fully space-time separated and fully not space-time limited. I believe that we commonly experience this reality within the conscious field, when our “subjective” being seems to soar, as if not space-time bounded at all.

I think that all universal religious knowledge flows from two related insights: the apprehension of the universal unity of being, and the intellectual process of global reality integration, or -put differently - from the Original Mystical insight and the working out of its implications. The process of comprehensive reality integration, once under way, is like a powerful integrating software program that rolls everything together, including the universal essence of conscious being, the

ultimate source of all creative development and the deep structures of reality. This integration is self-justifying, becoming essentially a self validating heuristic faith stance, verified over a lifetime of guided trial, error, and reinforcement. A sense that reality is unified and intelligible is the core faith stance of scientific exploration. It is the foundation of the notion that we mere humans actually can, through investigation and careful analysis, “make sense” of the world.

What religion calls deity has many names, and many mystics decline to name that which was apprehended because to name is to own or limit. This holy “other”, however named or not, can be viewed as the ultimate essence of being, partly instantiated or replicated within the core of our local being and constituting its parent, non-local source. This is deity as the “Holy One” or the “holy oneness.” Depending on the particular tradition and the sophistication of its current theology, this general view is very close both to traditional and aboriginal² religious insights. The association of this locus of being with the source of all creation is a closely allied intellectual insight and I believe lies at the heart of the original Torah account.

Therefore I find it hardly coincidental, (nor should anyone find it particularly surprising), that the many recorded accounts of human encounters with the numinous level of experience over the last five millennia (from Moses, the Buddha, the Hassidim, the Christ, the saints, seers, shamans, mystics, artists, musicians, and scientists, the skeptics during unguarded moments, the ordinary people in their “mountaintop experiences”, and most children during their thoughtful innocence) are deeply consistent. Filtered though various cultural traditions, these reports seem to record the same insight, in essence that beyond the immediate physical-material reality, there exists a deeper being that is benign, of central normative significance, and of intimate and ultimate reality.

Can we dismiss this body of evidence as “unscientific?” Can we ignore the data, disregard the consistent, repeating nature of the human numinous experience, or marginalize the wisdom of five millennia? We can at our peril. Or we can accept this large body of information for what it is: the witnessed accounts of the contact by intelligent conscious beings with a transcendent reality level revealed directly to cognition.

All the clerical hierarchical structures and all the positivistic skeptical postures are trumped by this evidence, especially when it is experienced directly. But the seduction of evil, which always draws its inspiration from power lures, reaches inside the institutions of religion via the illusion that official labels of ecclesiastical virtue can confer righteousness in fact.

And for the ecclesiastical bureaucracies, the temptation to monopolize our access to the numinous is almost irresistible. Yet it must be resisted.

The seminal and life-changing experience of the numinous level of reality is primary evidence. It is first hand experience of the existence and relevance of a universal, moral, creative level of reality. In its universal relevance we find meaning and purpose. In its universal nature we find peace and compassion. And in its felt, benign presence (should we be graced with consciousness of the

² I am particularly charmed by this pigmy chant, “In the beginning was god, today is god, tomorrow will be god. Who can make an image of god? He has no body. He is a word which comes out of your mouth. That word! It is no more; it is past and still lives! So is god.” As quoted in *Sacred Texts Of The World*, edited by Ninian Smart & Richard D. Hecht, p 348. Crossroad Publishing 1982. ISBN 0-8245-0483-6.

attention of ultimate personality), we encounter the holiness that, in the mystical tradition, remains unnamed, but in all spiritual traditions is hallowed above all things on earth.”

Portions of this section were taken from my article about Religious resurrection posted at <http://www.jaygaskill.com/resurrection.htm>

A Personal Aside -- MYSTICISM IS A SOURCE OF RELIGIOUS VITALITY

Religions need from time to time to be rescued from their own ecclesial bureaucracies. A brilliant early example took place in the 3rd and 4th century. Celtic mysticism survives as a world religion because of its tacit adoption by branches of Christianity that originated in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Think of a river fed by Judaism, Greco-Christianity and the Druids. Celtic Mysticism survives today within tiny pagan cults. But it acquired “legs” as a powerful subtext of Christianity, especially as it is practiced within some of the Protestant Churches of Ireland, Scotland and England. Many of the English-speaking churches of the Anglican Communion (including the American Episcopal Church) tend to incorporate the spirit of Celtic Christianity in both worship and doctrine.

The history of this influence is complicated, but two distinct Christian figures stand out. The first was censured by the RC, and the second was sainted. Go figure.

Pelagius (c. a. 354-418)

Pelagius, who came from somewhere in Britain, was both an RC priest and a Celtic monk. He shaped the character of the Celtic Christianity by stressing individual free will and each person’s ability to improve as a spiritual being outside of the church’s institutional grip. As a contemporary of Patrick in Ireland, he disagreed with Augustine’s doctrine of original sin. He believed that our nature was not tainted by the sin of Adam and that we earn hell or damnation on our own. Of course Pelagius was condemned by the RC for opposing Augustine’s doctrine that man could be saved only through the Roman Church

Patrick (387-461)

St. Patrick, Patricius Magonus Sucatus, was born in Kilpatrick (a village near Dumbarton, Scotland). He died March 17, 461.

Because of Patrick’s ministry, Irish Christianity is joyful, earthy, and celebratory in contrast with the Roman version of the time. Patrick did not reject the natural world. Patrick did reject a theology of sin, and stressed the goodness of creation. Patrick’s Celtic Christianity has been described as “fleshly and incarnational”.

St. Patrick was a universal man: a vital and loveable holy person whose life transcended his time, place and denomination.

I am a Judeo Christian who is particularly interested in recovering Christianity's lost heroic dimension. Much more remains to be said about that post-modern devaluation of the hero and its impact on the contemporary iterations of Patrick's religion. Some of the elements of recovery would include:

- The absolute obligation to oppose evil as explicit in Gospel teaching;
- More emphasis on the hero in Jewish tradition (e.g., David, Isaiah, Elijah) as preserved endorsed in the Gospels;
- More attention to the heroic elements in the Jesus narratives themselves, especially the resolute challenge to Roman authority, the consistent moral integrity under pressure, the retention of grace under torture, and the ultimate post-execution triumph over evil.

This is probably why, among other reasons, I have always found aspects of Patrick's life and teaching compelling on a deep, visceral level.

For an excellent account of early Celtic Christianity, I recommend Tom Cahill's discussion of Patrick in his book, "*How The Irish Saved Civilization.*"

Portions of this were taken from <http://www.jaygaskill.com/BLOGARCHIVE.htm> (October 11, 06)

MYSTICISM AS OUR WAY THROUGH THE ICE

You are invited to embark on a conversation *about* ultimate being that can lead to your own private dialogue *with* ultimate being. I invite my secular humanist friends into this conversation to engage in intelligent mysticism .

At the core of the simplest and most universal form of belief in God is the personal encounter that is beyond argument. At some point in our lives, if we are only sufficiently alert and receptive, we experience the recognition of the integrated, universal center of reality...*as Ultimate Personality*. Some of us register this experience as mere awe and wonder at the universe and at our individual insignificance, dismissing the sense of encounter with a ultimate personality as a psychological projection. For others the recognition of the ultimate being-as-ultimate personality invokes in us a sense of awe and wonder that, beyond all formal logic, trumps doubt with primal experience.

As you will soon see, one aspect of this vision (the sense of the oneness of being as a culmination of the ultimate integration of reality) is not so terribly far from that of those humanists whose ethos is deeply rooted in the tradition of science and classical wisdom.

The modern humanist vision amounts to a contextually enriched version of the "human is the measure of all things" ethos. Both deism (which is the notion of a remote deity, the first mover, the architect whose traces are discovered by science) and theism (deity as Personality in active relationship with physical reality) invite a radical expansion of that vision.

Consider this an invitation to escape the quasi-solipsism implicit in a cramped version of what science typically means by "human". For most humanists, "human" represents nothing more nor

less than the tool-making, language-empowered species of primates that emerged within the last .5 million years to dominate the third planet of an otherwise obscure Class M star on the spiral arm of the Milky Way Galaxy. All humanists are invited to consider a larger vision: to see “human” as the local instantiation of something far more general, far more intrinsic to the warp and woof of ontology than the strict materialist and “accidentalistic” ethos. This is the notion of human as a *non-local universal*. We need not wait until the Star Trek talking-alien scenarios unfold in some distant high tech future to grasp that our own species here-and-now development is something profoundly more universal than an absurd, cosmic error.

I believe that those who claim that the arbitrary choice of the isolated autonomous individual is “the measure of all things” are on one side of a divide. Universal humanists (those who reject the accidentalistic ethos in the sense just described), deists, and theists are on the other.

Of there are very few atheists in life’s foxholes. But this little collection is not about those urgent moments when we find ourselves alone and in terrible peril, the moments when agnosticism dissolves into conversion and atheism melts into wild and desperate hope. And this is not so much about “prayer” in its classic form: the shouted or silently urgent petition that translates roughly to “Save me!” as it on hearing the answer “I am here. The focus is less on our petitions for divine intervention, at least as they are commonly understood, but on *contact* with Ultimate Being and the implications of achieving that contact.

Initializing Your Modem

My radically ecumenical view of religion in a nutshell: ***All religion, liturgy and spiritual practice are software.*** Each of us lives inside a biologically created, ultra-wideband receiver, coupled with a self organizing processor of immense power. Without equally powerful heuristic software, our receivers would be engulfed in an incomprehensible torrent of data input from infancy to death. We are saved from insanity because of our ability to locate the messages embedded in the noise.

Within the constant babble of sensory input, chaos, random ideas, and urgent demands for our attention, we are able to locate the messages that unlock the circuits and pathways that “connect the dots” of experience and existence for us and make sense of them. These are the instructions that form our core operating system. Awareness is initialized as our “start up” system boots up, and our minds awaken to the stream of events that surround us. Our core operating system operates to localize us in time and space.

Consciousness is the extension of this core operating process to encompass our relationships with the world. Our minds generate a series of reality models. This process of epistemological refinement and adjustment is a life-long enterprise for most thinking adults.

The range and power of conscious awareness – its very capacity to encounter and explain the world -- is leveraged by several learned or acquired software sets, among them: pattern recognition, logic, context apprehension, and – most significantly – the recognition of other minds and the capacity to communicate via language. We would be forever trapped in the worldview of the infant, living as marginal animals, but for the cumulative power of this software legacy.

The arch materialists have failed to explain life, universe and everything because the conscious mind (our conscious states) can neither be understood nor explained solely in mechanical, materialist terms. The materialist explanation fails because *consciousness is the bio-interface between two interdependent realms or phases of existence*: (a) the material realm, the venue of matter, energy, physical events and interactions; and (b) the non-material realm, the venue of form, order, relationship, mind and intentionality. Neither realm is complete without the other. Neither can exist without the other. The conscious mind is the bridge state of the universe, the active, real time link between the realms of material and non-material. Even the passive mind occupies both realms, resting like an amphibian in a puddle, partly submerged, eyes blinking in the dawn sky. Like the amphibian, many of us see the “sky” without understanding it.

At some point in our development, each of us encounters a “God signal”. These signals are easy to miss, especially when we are distracted by the raw struggles for existence. And they are easy to misinterpret without their accompanying software. But we have been given the primal password. It is: “I AM”. That password is the least subtle of all the “God signals”.

That primal password is easily misunderstood, misinterpreted or missed altogether. Recall that at “start up” our minds experience the state of awareness via self-location in time and space; and that this threshold awareness is closely followed by the growing awareness of our individual separateness and vulnerability. The discovery of our own separateness and vulnerability is no illusion, but neither is our perception of the reality of the minds and feelings of the other beings with whom we interact.

The key to “getting” the primal password is a language embedded in the higher functions of conscious being. The special, *universal* property of the “I AM” password/message, its out-of-time, out-of-space quality, is signaled by a “validation tag”. This is an authenticating recognition code (like that appended to internet messages) that is decoded by a pre-installed language in our own operating systems. Those of us who “get it” have consciously recognized the essential non-locality of the “I AM” message, i.e., that it is not sourced solely from within, and that it is not coming from a self-localized and vulnerable consciousness. In this sense, our intuitive knowledge that “I AM” message originates outside ordinary space-time *is* the password.

Though all intelligent beings are able to *notice* the universal quality of the original message, many will ignore, marginalize, explain away or forget the experience. Some apprehend the universal quality of “I AM”, but decline to take the insight beyond a sort of proto-mysticism, the kind of mindset captured in “I don’t know if there’s a God or not, but there might something more to this life than we can see...”

All authentic spiritual and religious thought and experience begins with a sense of contact with the numinous. The term *numinous* is out of favor in secular circles, but can be loosely defined as describing the quality of contact with a presence that inspires awe and reverence-- in effect numinous describes the quality of an encounter with the *holy*.

When the primal password is finally understood as our first apprehension of the authentic universal presence, it is also intuitively understood as having core significance for human life. “I AM” *as*

universal illuminates the mystery of living consciousness in the world. So the primal password unlocks a powerful implication:

Universal being exists both inside and outside our separate conscious fields; both inside and outside our separate space-time frameworks; and both within and outside the space-time framework of the universe itself.

Opening the Software Package

Imagine receiving a God receiver software pack. The package arrives with a notice: “Password sent by separate mail”. At the top of the shipment, you find a small package marked “**N.A.P.**” This is your *Numinous Access Protocol*.

Inside the first box, the “NAP”, you find a set of ten instructions:

Close all conflicting programs--
Cancel the mundane claims on your mind;
Release your ego concerns;
Dismiss your fears and envies;
Suspend your disbelief systems.
Become calm, focused, non-distracted.
Bring your attention to the password, “I AM”.
Expand “I AM” to include your immediate loved ones.
Expand “I AM” to include your ancestors.
Expand “I AM” to include the loved ones who will live after your death.
Open up your “I AM” context to include all your successors and descendants, known and unknown.
Open the context of that unnamed person’s “I AM” to include the universal self.
Think of the universal self as mirrored in you.
Cultivate a state of attentive reverence and wait. Contact will follow.

I’m sorry to tell you that the task of initializing the “NAP” in a modern mind is not easy. It presents a set of problems that our medieval and ancient ancestors would find as perplexing as the computer metaphors I’ve been using. This happens because we modern minds are running several conflicting programs that they did not, among them the daily barrage of distracting influences that assault modern sensibilities. The primary barrier is our well-embedded disbelief systems.

The Face Under the Ice

Albert Einstein was a closet deist.³ He saw what other scientists have called the “mind of God” in the order of nature and its rational accessibility and organization. Einstein saw nature as a masterwork of brilliant predetermination, a vast clockwork mechanism to which science was the key.⁴ The theistic idea of a *personal* deity, a being to whom we might turn for solace (and even

³ Deism is distinguished from theism by the remote designer deity model in the first instance and the active, present and involved deity model in the second.

⁴ Elsewhere, I deal with the implications of the discovery that the universe is not as predetermined as Einstein thought, and advance the notion that the so called random processes and indeterminate elements in reality operate as a sort of portal through which creative innovation emerges into what otherwise would be a rigid, innovation unfriendly

intervention), was ruled out by his monistic,⁵ deterministic world view. This impersonal view of deity probably originated with Spinoza. Einstein and Spinoza shared the world-view that what we call God is revealed in nature.

For those who share the deistic perspective of Spinoza and Einstein, God is little more than the remote architect of nature. I find an over-the-top materialism lurking within this perspective.⁶ Its implication is that all of us who must live in the “real” world of matter and energy can admire the grand *design* but extract no moral information from its designer, much less any help or solace.

But materialism is not the final, complete model of “all that is, seen and unseen.” Materialism, itself, must accommodate to the reality of *information* as the primary, essential operating element in nature. I am certain that the current century will chronicle the demise of arch materialism.

Here is an idea I’ve developed in much more detail elsewhere. [See “The Ghosts Outside Plato’s Cave” for more.] Essentially, I believe that *information*, in the very largest, most comprehensive sense of that word, is the metaphysical glue that binds what we call material reality and all the rest of existence.⁷

Imagine a conversation with someone whose enlightened scientific mind is at least willing to entertain the possibility that there is more to life, the universe and everything than the mere material. Our friend begins...

Okay, you might have persuaded me that strict, comprehensive materialism is an incomplete view of things. After all, there must be a better explanation of my own mental and spiritual states than biochemistry, electronics and physics alone provide.

I can also agree that the realm of information is something real, in the sense that it represents some level of existence beyond the narrow mechanical realm. I can conclude that this realm exhibits rational order (after all, how else do our rational minds that understand it); and that it even exhibits a form of beauty (we scientists and mathematicians agree that the notion of theory “elegance” is

deterministic regime. If a degree of indeterminism and inherent unpredictability are the necessary features of a universe that is capable of growth, then the downsides, the disasters and evils of the world can be accepted as a necessary price of a universe open to ongoing creation.

⁵ Strict theological monism fails to separate God from the natural world; in one form, it tends to deny the possibility of true evil because, after all, “all is of God.”

⁶ Materialism, the mental disease of the intelligentsia in the current age, holds – in its extreme form – that everything, absolutely everything, is matter and energy and the space-time regime within which matter and energy operate to cause events. There is no real room in this account for moral judgment, a human soul, nor – really – any basis for valuing life itself (except as one’s own inclinations to want to live lead to pro-life coping strategies based on a calculation of advantage).

⁷ This is the result of an analysis of “all that is, seen and unseen” that led me to the insight that all reality is relational in its essential nature; that even the space-time bounded realm of events is made of interlocking relationship sets between the forms exhibited by matter and energy, and the very large scale, fundamental relationships between them; that the webs of relationships in such a relational universe include the location-separation and directional relations of space, the before-after separation and time-arrow directional relations of time, and so on. We experience this “binding of all realms” on the stage of our experience. Our minds bridge the material realm of space-time events with the not space-time bounded realm of pure relation and form; the mind occupies each; therefore the mind’s “beingness” is partly mortal and partly not.

an important insight in to the nature of this realm of information. I might even agree that the realm of information might hold design archetypes, in the sense of optimal engineering solutions (think of the streamlined teardrop, fish and rocket shapes). It is a stretch, but I also am willing to concede that these design archetypes may include the master blueprints of conscious intelligence, again in the same sense that there is probably a set of ideal designs for cognitive processing, awareness, and so on. But all this can be said about any data base, can't it?"⁸

After all, a hard drive might contain the plans for a concert hall, the design parameters and specs for a hundred musical instruments, texts on music theory and appreciation and the scores for and best recording of all of Beethoven's known musical output. *But the data base remains a data base.* It is not conscious. It is not alive. You can use it because you are conscious and alive. But you can't pray to it (except as a self delusional game) and it can't love and nurture you in the way that a living being can.

The view just sketched essentially is a version of classic deism, the watchmaker God, who set things in motion, becomes essentially non-involved and therefore irrelevant. In this view, it is as if the realm of "heaven", i.e., of pure information,⁹ exists behind a barrier of translucent ice, in a pond we can remotely study but never swim in nor taste.

What is the core problem with this view? The answer is imbedded in our particular vision of what is truly real. I believe it matters greatly whether you see reality as primarily material, primarily non-material, or – as now I do – as a perfect construct of relationships that ultimately include the entire realm of matter and energy as a subset.

Back to our deist's main point: Granted, the hard drive is a *thing* constructed of matter and energy that *holds* information. But I believe that the information that it holds (here the product of great art, the understanding and appreciation of which imports an entire context that distils values and human experiences from several centuries) *is a reality that enjoys a multi-ontological status*. By "multi-ontological" status, I mean that the information exists in our conscious minds; **and** it occupies and gives form to what we call physical reality; **and** it fills (indeed *constitutes*) the infinite realm of relationship and form that contains both our minds and the physical reality in which they enjoy that special state of existence we recognize as mortal life.

The deist's example is ruined by the fallacy of reduction. The realm of *information as universal* has no bandwidth limitations whatsoever. It can hold – and I believe does hold – everything that has ever happened, including the complete conscious narratives of every thinking, feeling creature who has ever existed.

⁸ A reference to physicist David Bohm's "implicate order" and Daniel Dennett's "design space" is needed to complete this line of thinking. [Citations to these two thinkers and my comments are included in "The Ghosts" appendix.] Assume that the realm of information has the same ontological status as the material realm (think of Plato's forms), then can we rule out that all physical entities, processes, or manifestations represent a design archetypes contained in the information realm?

⁹ The debt to Plato's realm of pure form is acknowledged.

If you can make the metaphysical leap represented by this vision of universal information¹⁰, then you will have overcome the arch materialist fallacy. By itself, this doesn't get you into a deistic or theistic mindset, but it does clear away some of the most important mental obstacles to a deeper understanding of ultimate reality. Please stay with this metaphysical leap for a moment longer.

Assume that ultimate reality at its core essence is wholly relational in nature. If so, then space-time materiality represents a particular set of relational loops, and our *own conscious being represents a special relational state that necessarily touches, incorporates, and includes relational reality aspects both within space time and outside it*. I believe for anyone who pauses long enough to think through the essential questions at this stage, one further insight --that *all reality is integrated* -- opens the door to the solution to the whole puzzle:

Information constantly changes phase between the relational regime we call physical reality and the meta-reality from which the physical (finite) realm of being is continually abstracted. Conscious being is the venue in which that phase change takes place in space-time material reality.

This idea requires reflection, introspection and self-testing. You may want to read on and come back to this later.

When we are able to see the ultimate realm of reality as filled as it is with or constituted of ultimate information it cannot be **less** real than that which is abstracted from it (i.e., our immediate material world is abstracted from the larger, ultimate relational reality, or created from it, if you prefer). Instead, it is much more satisfying – both as explanation and as a plausible model – that the realm of information, enjoying a robust co-ontology with the realm of our immediate experience, is **at least as real** as the material realm it temporarily inhabits. Moreover, the ultimate realm, the ur-source, if you will, of all information not yet fully expressed¹¹ must be even **more real** than the transient material world we inhabit at the moment.

If you stay in this line of thinking for a moment longer, I invite you to consider implications of the notion that the realm of information *is not space-time limited*. This first implication is that this realm contains *the master archetype of conscious being* which *a fortiori*, is not space-time limited either.

Consider that all states of conscious being that occur within space-time bounded physical reality serve as venues of value assertion and creation-innovation. This is another way of saying that we may value rocks but they don't / can't value us. We may invent a sling with a rock but the rock invents nothing.

Once we accept that the *ultimate* information is a source of value and creation that exists *outside* space-time (as well as within it), we are necessarily drawn to the implication that *value and creation themselves transcend the non-conscious or pre-conscious physical / material world in which we find ourselves*.

¹⁰ In another set of writings, I tend to use the term "*in.*formation*" to express this idea that information has a universal status as the ultimate "stuff" of reality.

¹¹ You can also look at ultimate information as the ultimate well of creativity.

Can we exclude the valuing function from the form/order/design of conscious being itself? Hardly.

This brings me to ancient religious insight that we –as conscious, feeling beings – resemble a divine being or archetype. These insights combine to recommend the view that this divine-local correspondence of the contours and nature of being is a simple core truth of existence, much like the observation that a bird’s wing resembles a particular elegant, universal solution to the problem of achieving flight in atmosphere under gravity. Of course, the human mind does more than operate in a purely mechanical way. We conscious, living beings have the value-making faculty, and we make decisions based on that faculty. Hence we may reasonably expect to locate the ultimate value source of the universe within the nature of ultimate being. This leaves open the deist-theist question, restated: Is ultimate being archetype, as in mere design, or is ultimate being **alive**?

Our values inherently subordinate non-life to life, and non-conscious life to conscious life. Put another way, the value faculties of living conscious intelligence places the mind at the top of a hierarchy of biological functions for our bodies (organism) and therefore the value function of the mind is at the apex of a normative hierarchy for our surroundings (society and ecology).¹² This is another way of saying that the beings capable of caring are the enactors of the value hierarchies of reality contained in the ultimate realm of information. The conscious, intelligent mind has three closely related faculties that further the agenda of individual life and beyond that, of life itself: conscious foresight, conscious empathy, and conscious creative innovation.

The notion that archetypical meta-conscious being and our own individual, separate conscious beings occupy parallel hierarchical *normative* positions within their respective environments is compelling. Our own, innate value assertions-- the survival imperative, life affirmation, the creative drive, and the innate predisposition to employ conscious intelligence to foster these innate affirmations combine to produce a natural normative hierarchy: me over the inanimate; me over my food; my creative activities over stasis, and so on.

There is every reason to expect that the meta-archetype of all conscious, living being would be similarly organized *vis a vis* its environment, “ruling” over the realm of information and the realm of the material alike. In relation to this universal realm the universal being (or archetype) would necessarily occupy the apex of a normative hierarchy, but in place of the cramped and limited perspective of any separate human conscious intelligence, we should expect to find a truly universal perspective. [This is the source of human moral error. See fn 6.]

This is another way of asserting that the value function of conscious intelligence produces normative hierarchy in a sort of cosmic bootstrap; that life and consciousness-affirming value trump the contrary value orientations in the pre-Darwinian orientation of pure *form provided only that one principle is allowed to dominate: fecundity trumps sterility*.¹³ This quickly leads us to the idea that there are necessary parallels between the properties of the drives and motivations of any biological intelligence and their originating archetypes in the realm of information.

¹² Leave aside, for another discussion, the obvious problem that our understanding and implementation of values is often flawed.

¹³ This notion is not that difficult. What **is** the plan / design for null world, a world without life, development or growth? There is none, by definition. In this primal sense, fecundity **is** the God impulse, the primordial command – “Create! Multiply! Extend! Diversify!” From this all other things of value followed.

None of this makes a tightly logical or necessary case for the existence of deity, of the existence of *actual* universal being as opposed to, say, the inchoate design of being *qua* being. But it is a coherent and reasonable case for the existence of universal conditions that are consistent with a deity-model that is very close to the original Judaic concept. Consider: Man made in God's image translates to hu-man-s (i.e., as intelligent, biological conscious beings) *made* (as evolved from archetypal forms) *in the image* (i.e., in the design-form) *of God* (as deity / meta-being resident within and outside the realm of information).

No one is going to be able to demonstrate the existence of God (however described or named) in mere words. No argument, however structured, can substitute for authentic experience. Which brings me to my point: *We are not without data on this most important of all questions.*

A compelling sense or experience of contact with a benign meta-personality occupying a deep, ultimate level of existence is so common to the human condition that reports of the encounter fill an entire library. The reports (which share a remarkably similar signature, once the cultural differences are accounted for) go back to the very earliest of all recorded human experiences. These are not reports of an abstraction, or a purely intellectual inspiration. They are chronicles of individual *encounters* with a being (sometimes described as a state of being) worthy of worship, *one with the unmistakable signature of a caring persona.*

These are not described as casual “buddy” or “guardian angel” encounters. The witnesses tend not to describe a visible person or being. These encounters tend to be life altering moments. The witnesses encounter a presence, begin to apprehend the nature of the occasion, then a sense of awe and wonder follow. When doubts don't intervene to cloud someone's ability to apprehend the experience, witnesses find themselves flooded by a benign, piercing illumination.

Here is a personal bit of advice. You will be making a mistake if you dismiss this experience (when you encounter it), if you deny it (if for example you are told about it by someone whose word you can trust) or if you marginalize it (as when you have accepted the account as someone's sincere witness, but retain misgivings). Whether you reject these experiences on nominally rational, materialistic, or arbitrarily skeptical grounds, you will be rejecting primary information of great value.

Now, let me return to the image of a scientist peering through the milky layer of ice, trying to see the outlines of the “fossil God” inside.

I want you to really look at that face under the ice. Take your time....

The face is **you**.

It is God who is trying to break through.

{=I strongly recommend the writings of the physicist turned Anglican priest, John Polkinghorne, retired President of Queen’s College, Cambridge, U.K. Much of Polkinghorne’s work explores how divine involvement in the physical world can be reconciled with theoretical physics. ^{14=}}

APPENDIX

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¹⁴ John Polkinghorne wrote of the necessary consequences of divine love having made a universe with the architecture of separate being, like its creator, rational in nature. “The gift of love must be the gift of freedom, the gift of letting-be, and can be expected to be true of all creatures to the extent that is appropriate to their proper character....It is in the nature of humankind that sometimes people will act with selfless generosity but sometimes with murderous selfishness...Not all that happens is in accordance with God’s will because God has stood back, making metaphysical room for creaturely action.” *Belief In God In An Age Of Science*, John Polkinghorne, Yale University Press, 1998, ISBN 0-300-07294-5. Polkinghorne also wrote that the free will and free process defenses have limitations. “I do not pretend that these considerations remove the deep mystery of the existence of suffering and evil in the created order, though they do seek to show that it is not gratuitous.” *Serious Talk, Science and Religion in Dialogue*, Trinity Press International, 1995, ISBN 1-56338-109-5 (pa).

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