

Mind of God

A Paper by John Stockford Stone

Attempts by science to reveal the fundamental organizing process in nature are sometimes likened to attempting to read the mind of God. The term is probably used by modern scientists, in the main, as a metaphor for seeking to unravel the profound mysteries of nature. However, it may be used literally by those with religious convictions in attempts to reconcile evidential revelations based on scientific observation with theology based on scriptural revelations. Quantum theory reveals that attempting to read the mind of God is not a very good scientific metaphor. Theology is predicated on certainty (truth), whilst quantum theory is predicated on uncertainty (probability). And certainty, based on an immutable ideal, does not sit well with the essential uncertainty of evolving empirical based knowledge; which implies that science is really attempting to read the indeterminate mind of Nature.

Sacred-Secular Duality

As conscious sentient beings we have a need to understand our state of being, and a desire to attribute purpose to it. This has given rise to perceptions of temporal and spiritual states of reality; a duality which offers both sacred and secular explanations for the state of being. This anomaly persists because, whilst theology cannot deny the validity of scientific discovery, natural science cannot disprove the supernatural underpinning of the central premise of theological truth. However, there can be only one reality, no matter how indeterminate its emergent state may be, and the resolution of the duality anomaly lies in revealing the fundamental nature of that reality.

Science is proactive in that it is constantly seeking new discoveries and reorganizing its worldview in the light of those discoveries. Whilst theology is reactive in that it constantly needs to interpret new phenomenal experience and reinterpret the scriptures in ways which are compatible with the defence of certain core truths held to be incontrovertible. So there exists a kind of *pax disingenuous* between two fundamentally different interpretations of existence, even though there can be only one reality.

At a fundamental level neo-classical science and theology find themselves in a similar dilemma: they are both predicated on certainty underpinned by laws, natural or supernatural; whilst experience, to the contrary, clearly points to uncertainty. Both therefore, while asserting fundamental certainty in their respective rationales, are compelled in

practice to acknowledge the uncertainty of knowledge; a somewhat schizophrenic state of being for both theists and scientists!

Neo-classical scientists might reflect on the following consideration: If nature is predicated on certainty, there will come a time when all the certainties of nature will be known and theoretical science will become redundant. Meanwhile, it is the uncertainty of knowledge which guarantees the employment of theoretical scientists for the indefinite future. Theists' might reflect that every time they re-interpret an absolute truth the more relative and less certain it becomes.

Clearly, theology is a rationale which does not meet our need to understand the organization of Nature, which gave rise to us and to our phenomenal experience and on which our future crucially depends.

Whilst mechanistic neo-classical science is a rationale which does not explain the fundamental process of organization in Nature; nor our need for an understanding of the deeper, more spiritual sense of being which most people feel intuitively, and perhaps need emotionally.

On the other hand **“Nature Mind Theory”** * offers a rationale which fulfils both our intellectual and our spiritual needs. It links our phenomenal experience to a profound affinity with the rest of nature; because we are fundamentally all the same stuff, organized by an emergent, rational Nature Mind. An objective Nature Mind, giving rise to possibility for the subjective emergence of values and morality in terms of empathy and responsibility for survival and common welfare; while offering intellectual and ethical guidelines to follow for a more fulfilled existence and a more probable future. Moreover, in Nature Mind the term fundamental describes a transformational state of being, not a rigid and absolute state propounded by ideologues. Furthermore, since our subjective consciousness is a sub-set of objective Nature Mind, we participate in the shaping of emergent Nature Mind through our ideas and purposive actions. We are therefore, ineluctably part of the historical process of Nature Mind. Also, we can commune with emergent Nature Mind which gave rise to us, not in prayer to an unknowable supernatural entity, but in reflection, meditation, insight and enlightenment. In that way we can gain wisdom through a growing awareness of Nature's rationale and our place in it. So, the essence of Nature lies in the metaphysical realm of Nature Mind; and our access to that essence lies in conscious reflection on our phenomenal experience and in the hinterland of our subconscious where it merges with the oneness of Nature Mind:
That inner self, which dwells far beyond the light, yet shines through to illuminate our being!

By reading the mind of Nature we can rationalize our conscious experience. Through meditation we reach beyond the conscious state of self-and-other, that duality which gives rise to ego and stands in the way

of our connecting with the very essence of Nature Mind. In meditation, by reducing physical and mental perturbation, we seek a lowest activity state to gain insight and enlightenment.

So, where does that leave religion? In general, supernatural explanations for our sense of being and our phenomenal experience have emerged through animism and paganism (which made no distinction between spiritual and temporal reality) to polytheism and monotheism. Eastern mysticism, such as Buddhism, essentially identifies a holistic state of being in which dualistic concepts such as self and other, mind and matter, sacred and secular, are perceived as distractions from the true state of reality.

Monotheism is the most potent since it posits a single revealed truth, linking the past to the present state of being, which subsequently defines a one true path to the future wellbeing of its followers. Monotheism becomes profoundly integrated into the cultures of the societies in which it arises, and those to which it is subsequently exported. So exclusive forms of belief become entangled with, and are consciously associated with, race, clan or nationality. A truly potent mix! This raises inevitable inter-cultural problems between followers of different belief systems rooted in revealed absolute truth, with race and nationality overtones. A truly explosive mix!

Ironically, there are faint echoes of such conflicts within science, as scientists set up different belief camps (nature v nurture, for example) and conduct intra-academic warfare. Fortunately, the only casualties of such exchanges of verbal grapeshot are the combatants' egos. Argument is fundamental to science, but scientific truth is no more than confirmed hypothesis; and when it lapses into dogma it ceases to be science. Scientists who attack religion from a basis of certainty in their own interpretation of reality do a disservice to secularism by transforming the agnosticism of atheism into the dogma of anti-theism. As has been demonstrated, scientific interpretation of reality is essentially probabilistic, never certain. To assert a rebuttal of religious certainty on the basis of scientific certainty is unscientific. It asserts science as a kind of secular religion. It is unscientific to assert as fact that God does not exist; although it is scientific to ask for empirically verifiable evidence that God does exist. Science can only offer alternative explanations for the state of being which are more probable. Moreover, atheism is not anti-theism: to not believe is not the same as denying all possibility of religious truth. Secular belief or disbelief based on any scientific interpretation of reality can only ever be probabilistic, never certain. The most probable explanation of the central premise of revealed monotheistic truth is that humankind creates a deity in its own image to explain its state of being from an anthropocentric and largely masculine

perspective. A deity perceived as a patriarchal figure, ruling over a sacred domain and a temporal creation (Heaven and Earth). Images which reinforce hierarchies in the temporal societies which gave rise to them; with many of the indignities inflicted on women in the temporal domain given sanction in the sacred domain. Women, defined by men, perceived as subservient, idealized as sexually pure and fitted almost exclusively to motherhood, domestic roles, and the service of men.

Furthermore, Nature is perceived as a gift from the deity to mankind: a domain in which mankind is licensed by the deity to rule under spiritual ordinance, with a final promise of an afterlife of eternal bliss if the ordinance is obeyed in the temporal life. A very seductive explanation of being and purpose; although if paradise is such a patriarchal hierarchy quite why it should be attractive to women is a matter for conjecture! However, religion provided an essential mythos upon which to base codes of morality, conduct and law; a shared belief necessary to bind together civilised societies and enable them to develop. It also provided a power base for ruling hierarchies, who co-opted it to legitimize and defend their rule, based on superstition and fear of heavenly retribution for non-conformity.

It could be argued that it is the believed religious sanction, giving Man under God dominion over the rest of Nature, which is the root cause of the way modern industrial society treats Nature as a human resource, with cavalier disregard for the ecological and moral consequences of our rapacious behaviour. On the other hand, much of the great classical art and architecture was inspired by religious dedication; and religious scholarship contributed to a foundation of learning out of which science itself emerged. Religion is therefore a transient explanation of the state of being: an essential stage in the emergent state of consciousness by which we have slowly rationalized our existence.

In this critique of the sacred and secular explanations for the state of being, it is proper to confirm that there can be no definitive explanations, either sacred or secular. Science and religion offer fundamentally different ontological explanations for the basis of our experience.

However science can only offer an explanation of human experience as natural phenomena, and can no more disprove a supernatural theory for the state of existence than religion can empirically prove one. Even if one accepts Nature Mind Theory in full, it is perfectly legitimate to argue for a supernatural origin of Nature Mind. Legitimate but completely unnecessary! Supernatural explanations for our temporal state of being require an eternal intelligence or creator. Time in Nature Mind Theory starts with a singular event, giving rise to the expansion of Nature Mind as a field of maximal logical possibility, and concludes with a singular definitive event. It is a cycle which then repeats. So Nature is entirely

complete in itself, without the need for a supernatural, eternal prime mover. The only reality is the metaphysics of logical possibility, giving rise to the process and realization of patterns of spacetime events which we perceive as the physical Universe.

Since our purposive actions are dependent upon our world view, then, if we are to achieve realistic objectives, our world view needs to correspond to a profound understanding of the nature of Nature and our place in it.

That way, we may survive as a species for as long as possible.

Religion essentially offers an explanation for existence based on the dogma of certainty, while progressive science offers an explanation based on probability. In a Universe of ineluctable uncertainty of knowledge the wise person looks to the most probable explanation until a more probable one comes along.

*** See my paper on Nature Mind Theory**

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