

Facilitating Discourse With Respect To Understanding Consciousness: The Channeling Problem and the Symmetry Solution

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Abstract

With respect to matters of ultimate import, such as the nature of reality, human discourse appears to be deeply divided to the point that the possibilities of meaningful communication become seriously compromised. After pointing out some of the more obvious manifestations of this discursive breakdown, the present study seeks to remedy this state of affairs by proposing a new understanding of the phenomenon of consciousness – an understanding that may dismantle some of these discursive barriers and perhaps facilitate a more constructive dialogue between those who affirm the existence of consciousness as that which may exist apart from material bodies and those who deny that possibility (i. e., usually designated as materialists or as hard-core skeptics).

Introduction

By way of my own background, I must inform the reader that I have no religious affiliation, no relationship with a divine being, and no personal experiences of a paranormal nature. Why then, it might be asked, am I not a skeptic myself when it comes to the issue of consciousness as a reality or dimension of being that is more than epiphenomenal? My answer has three aspects: (1) the logical aspect pertaining to the circularity of arguing that those who claim to possess relationships with some kind of discarnate entity must be delusional by virtue of having such a relationship; (2) the humanistic aspect pertaining to the value of facilitating discourse between people of good will who have no way of

negotiating the rigidities inherent in their respective and conflicting intellectual outlooks; and (3) the 'universalization of symmetry' aspect, where symmetry with respect to such non-spiritual and materialist sciences such as physics may be extended to the relationship between the material and non-material realms of existence.

(1) There is no reason to think that all those who have religious-spiritual-paranormal relationships with some kind of discarnate consciousness are either ignorant, superstitiously gullible, mendacious with respect to their experiences for reasons of exploiting others, or insane. If insanity means a kind of 'out-of-touchness' with reality, there is a logical circularity in assuming that certain individuals must be mad simply because they have experiences of a spiritual nature and refuse to deny them upon being introduced to the materialist metaphors of mainstream science. As for ignorance or immorality as reasons for discounting those who claim a relationship with an independently existing spiritual being, there are far too many highly educated and moral individuals (e. g., John Polkinghorne, an Anglican priest who has written extensively on quantum physics) who are well aware of the reductionist explanations of a materialist vein, but still adhere to the idea of an independently existing consciousness. Indeed, responding to the skeptic's call for extra-ordinary proof for the extra-ordinary claims of the paranormal, one could point to the perhaps more extra-ordinary claim of the skeptics that all who have and accept the validity of spiritual experiences must be ignorant, delusional, and/or bent on manipulating the gullible for personal gain. Some? No doubt. But all!?

(2) Apart from the foregoing reason for my rejection of what I would term dogmatic skepticism, I am also aware of the explosive consequences of discursive breakdown, both within the religious world and also between those who espouse some kind of spiritual reality and those who, in the name of science, hold fast to an anti-spiritual world-view. Of course, one does not have to be a scientist to be contemptuous of religious people, and it is all too easy to throw out the baby of authentic spirituality with the bath-water of religious hypocrisy and fanaticism. A model of consciousness that aims to account for religious divisions as well as be inclusive of a materialist

outlook might take the edge off of the discursive animosity that drives some of the current culture wars (e. g., that between serious scholars working within the realm of the paranormal and those who consider such an enterprise a waste of time). It might also lay the groundwork for a more ecumenical spirituality, without which culture wars tend to become unwinnable conventional ones.

(3) The final reason for my rejection of skepticism comes from the very heartland of science itself, that is, the principle of symmetry, whereby many natural phenomena appear to be organized. By symmetry I am referring to different forms of constancy or invariance (Lederman, p. 66). That is, something tends to stay the same if one attempts to alter that thing in a fundamental way. The symmetry that I will be discussing in this essay is that between the internal and the external or that between consciousness and non-consciousness. What I am proposing here is a kind of reflective symmetry where the 'laws' of internality or consciousness seem to exist as a kind of mirror image of the laws of externality (quantum physics and relativity theory). What is constant or invariant under the transformation of understanding or interpretation from the external to the internal (and, of course, *vice versa*) are the basic principles by which the two realms operate.

By this I do not mean to imply that the internal and the external can be reduced to each other or that one is more fundamental than the other. Instead, I am suggesting that the two realms actually entail each other. For just as one cannot fathom internality without something that is external to it, likewise one cannot grasp externality without some locus of internality, by which the external is defined. Hence, my choice of these two terms, internality and externality, which, by their very quality of mutual entailment, are designed to help in overcoming the Cartesian dualism associated with the radically 'unrelatable' entities of mind (*res cogitans*) and body (*res extensa*).

My goal is not to get lost in an impenetrable thicket of philosophical analysis pertaining to the question of consciousness. It is to present a theory that is geared to facilitating discourse within the religious sphere as well as

within the realm of Western culture as a whole, where secular and religious outlooks are often pitted against each other (Hitchens, Harris, Dawkins, Berlinski). I am hardly the first to put forward integrative overviews (Wilber), but I do believe that a focus on certain heretofore neglected areas may move discourse beyond the current state of stagnation.

Thus, after a brief statement of what these areas of neglect may be, I will next develop the foundations of my theoretical approach, then a model built upon these foundations. My concluding section will assess what other problems may be open to solution based on this model.

Issues to be Resolved

When discourse breaks down between secular materialists and those who espouse some kind of higher spiritual intelligence, the former have no small number of critical points, often touching on the lack of substantive evidence for claims about the reality of an independently existing sphere of consciousness that can manifest a direct effect on the physical world. (Braude, pp. 1-58) However, I would first like to add fuel to the fire of their critique by pointing to something that is rarely raised but is perhaps a stronger ground for skepticism. This is what I would like to call the channeling problem, where channeling is the relaying of different spiritual messages from a non-physical realm and the 'problem' appears to be the lack of coherence of these messages with respect to each other. By lack of coherence I do not mean that the messages contradict each other. Indeed, they may convey similar themes (e. g., variations on how we create our reality). By lack of coherence I mean the relative absence of any direct cross-referencing of messages from different higher forms of consciousness with respect to each other. Why would these higher forms not communicate with each other and then make the results of such communication apparent to the one who is channeling or to those receiving the message? If they wanted their messages to be taken seriously, such cross-referencing of material from their respective messages could be relayed to various channels and their validity accordingly enhanced. How often do these higher forms of consciousness, when channeled, make reference to

each other? Moreover, if they do not make such reference, how often do they explain why such referencing would be inappropriate?

While a survey of channeled material would be both interesting and pertinent, such is beyond the scope of the present discussion. Nor is it necessary when one extends the scope of the channeling problem to the area of religious discourse, where the skeptic takes no small delight in pointing to the existence of differing religious messages – messages which are not only non-co-ordinated, but are often contradictory with respect to each other. Thus, the message of Islam challenges that of Christianity, which challenges that of Judaism, let alone those of Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. The essence of the problem here comes in the form of ‘exclusivism’ with respect to the truth of each of the religious messages.

Now, not all religious traditions are insistent on having the absolute key to the truth or saying what I would call the ‘last word’, but from the point of view of the materialist skeptic this fragmentation, which can also be seen in those who channel different manifestations of higher consciousness, must surely cast doubt on the existence of a spiritual realm, the chief characteristic of which is put forward as some kind of unity. Granted there could be many approaches to this unity; but if this were true, then why do not the separate channeling media (be they associated with traditional religions or with New Age forms of spirituality) acknowledge the deeper unity or strive to build it? The skeptic can surely be forgiven for thinking that these messages, purportedly from a higher form of consciousness, are merely expressions of a personal fantasy created by the channeller or prophet (i. e., one who speaks for God). Moreover, the scandal is certainly compounded when adherents of different religious traditions, all espousing the belief in a fundamental unity as the principle of existence, go to war with each other and engage in mutual slaughter in the name of their ‘loving God’.

My strategy at this point is not to reject the spirit or the reality of discarnate consciousness in view of the foregoing criticism, but to develop a theory of consciousness that builds on or would account for this lack of mutual referencing. A

theory of consciousness that fails to take the channeling problem into account in both its New Age and its more traditional religious manifestations is not only missing an opportunity to re-think the nature of consciousness, but also missing an opportunity to facilitate discourse with those who approach the world from a materialist perspective.

For their part, those materialists who make their home in the world of physics build their theories on the basis of the symmetry principle. Yet, if symmetry, indicating sameness under various forms of transformation, is so central to their enterprise, would not these same physicists (and the materialists who ride comfortably in their bus) be open to extending this hallowed theoretical bullwark to the relationship between the internal and the external, between consciousness as mind and non-consciousness as body? Indeed, the very mutuality of these two terms would seem to suggest, if not demand, taking such a step.

What would such a symmetry be like and how might it contribute to resolving the channeling problem pertaining to the absence or lack of cross-referenced messages? To put it in a somewhat summary form, the symmetry would be that of a 'mirroring' wherein the internal and external reflect each other. For example, just as the externalist science of neurology (i. e., the science of the human brain) can account for the internalist reality of thoughts, feelings, etc. via such non-conscious phenomena as those of electro-chemical processes and even of quantum physics, likewise the symmetry principle suggests that internalist phenomena might be able to shed light on some of the mysteries of physics (e. g., big-bang cosmology, wave-particle duality, the higher dimensions associated with string theory, etc.). The internalist phenomena to which I am here referring are those of thought and its dynamics as introspectively apprehended. The reflection would be that of, let us say, hard to fathom quantum processes being rendered more intelligible because they may be grasped as 'expressions' of underlying internalist processes, that is, processes characterized by consciousness and which, by way of their inherent familiarity, make sense to us. Rosenblum and Kuttner move part way in this direction, but stop short of developing a reflective symmetry where the

external, in its manner of behaving, appears to mirror internal processes. Instead, they keep to analogies, one of which pertains to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, where the observing of an object's position changes its motion: "If you think about the content of a thought (its position), you inevitably change where it is going (its motion). On the other hand, if you think about where it is going, you lose the sharpness of its content". (in *Quantum Enigma: Physics Encounters Consciousness*, p. 193)

With respect to the channeling problem, resolution might come in two complementary ways. On the one hand, symmetry suggests that consciousness be taken as having an independent existence that is nonetheless somehow reflective of the physical realm (just as the physical realm must be taken as having an independent existence, the structure of which somehow reflects what takes place in the area of consciousness). On the other hand, inasmuch as channeling involves some kind relationship between the channeler and what appear to be higher dimensions of consciousness, the failure of messages being cross-referenced with respect to each other might be symmetrically linked to the ways in which higher dimensions might function in the physical realm

The significance of the foregoing approach needs to be placed in a wider context – a context that must be contrasted with the more familiar strategy of explaining the phenomena of consciousness in terms of physical processes. It is all too easy to ignore that if one explains states of consciousness by relating them to the externalist realities of brain function, the discourse of knowledge has a direction – that from external to internal. While this very direction could be legitimately taken with respect to channeling (and all the phenomena associated therewith accordingly co-related with the externalist electro-chemical processes of the physical brain), symmetry suggests that the discourse of knowledge may also move in the opposite direction, that is, from the internal to the external. Hence, we would be taking channeling as a non-reducible internalist reality and noting what externalist phenomena may be elucidated thereby. If the latter seem to be less paradoxical or problematic than they did before internalist realities were applied to them, that could only be because one has shown

that the internal is in this context foundational with respect to the external.

At this point, however, one is certainly entitled to ask how using the channeling problem to shed light on some aspect of the external world (e. g., higher dimensions) has resolved the issue of messages being for the most part not cross-referenced with respect to each other. Have I not moved away from the problem by directing knowledge toward the external, the demands of symmetry notwithstanding? If the internal is a realm with its own integrity, do I not wish to explain internalist phenomena in their own terms? The simple answer to the last question is that I do, but in order to give internalist phenomena the legitimacy they deserve, to show that they first have the substance to be taken seriously, I have to show that they can function in a foundational manner and that can only be done by illustrating how they may shed light on externalist phenomena.

Given our present position in the evolution of Western Civilization, externalist approaches to knowledge are more or less authoritative because of their success in explaining a multitude of physical realities. That success allowed them to proceed toward the realm of the internal, even to the point of denying its existence. Symmetry, if not logic, prevents me from adopting a counter-position where I would deny the external in favor of an ontologically privileged internality. However, a successful foray from the internal to the external may lend the internal that measure of legitimacy that would justify the development of an internalist science with its own set of laws – a set of laws that may, by the principles of symmetry, have bearing on the external world. More to the point, laws are based on concepts; and for these concepts to be taken seriously, that is, to play a role in the widest sphere of discourse, their own foundational depth has to be established in a manner that is not only respectful of the materialist position, but also possesses what might be called a symmetrical resonance with concepts rooted in the externalist sphere.

In this regard, it is important to emphasize that the model to be developed does not aim to exploit the quantum theme of consciousness as observer collapsing the probabilistic

potentials of some wave function and thereby creating 'material' reality in the process. While this idea of 'quantum collapse', put forward by Goswami in his *Physics of the Soul* (2001), is interesting, it suffers from what I would call unidirectional reductionism – this time the reduction being one where the material world is seen as an epiphenomenon of consciousness. Despite his credentials as a physicist, Goswami is likely to alienate scientific materialists by such a stance and thus undermine discursive possibilities, which, if they are to come forward, should be based on a more egalitarian balance between internal and external orientations.

Theoretical Foundations

Before the model can be put forward, it is important to define key terms so that a coherent view of both the internal and external realms may be developed. Consciousness has always been notoriously difficult to define, but that very difficulty is itself significant. Why are certain things, ostensibly more distant from us than our consciousness, so much easier to define? We seem to have little problem defining animals, rocks, automobile parts, etc. even though they are in a less intimate relationship with us than our very thoughts and feelings, which are the main constituents of human consciousness. The answer lies with the very nature of definition itself as opposed to that which is to be defined. That is, to define something adequately one must stand outside of it or, in our terms, be 'external' to it. Thus, if something offers resistance with respect to the effort of defining it, that thing must be of a nature that we cannot stand outside of. It must be 'internal' in its very essence.

The internal does have meaning, but that meaning can only be misconstrued, if not lost entirely, if one seeks to define the internal via the external, that is, to reduce it to the external by attempting to stand outside of it. But if a term appears by its very nature to be indefinable, what use can be made of it? Two complementary approaches may be taken. First, we can ask what qualities the internal has by contrast with the external. In other words, instead of reducing the internal to the external via the reductive protocols of neuro-science, I am seeking to

understand the internal in its own terms. Secondly, we can relate our own experiences of thinking and feeling to those aforementioned internalistic qualities and see what we may learn in the process.

With respect to the first approach, we can immediately note that the internal has associations of contiguity, continuity, oneness, integral unity as opposed to the external, that which is outside our sphere of consciousness and which has associations of discontinuity, fragmentation, otherness, etc. Note that this is a description requiring much in the way of qualification since the contrasts between contiguity and fragmentation are not absolute but relative to specific situations. For example, for two individuals to be in a room together implies that, with respect to a third individual outside of that room, there is a relative contiguity or shared space between them. In other words, they are in a state of internality with respect to the boundaries of the room and that which exists outside of or beyond those boundaries. Moreover, that state of internality can only be increased if the two individuals share a common language; and if they share a common history, that state is qualitatively increased by a certain magnitude. What may be described as consciousness at an individual or intra-personal level becomes an extension of the contiguity or shared space that characterizes internality, where experiences are integrated at a more intense level and boundaries articulating externality become more occult and harder to pin down. Thus, while there is a boundary between wakefulness and sleep and possibly between the unconscious and the conscious, that transition point is not something that is normally open to one's inspection. Contrary to this, external boundaries are not hard to identify even within the integrated functioning of a living organism (e. g., a cell within an integrated multi-cellular organism has the clearly defined boundary of the cell wall).

With the foregoing in mind, we may avoid a strict externalist definition of consciousness and confine ourselves to suggesting that it connotes a common space of relative contiguity. Relative to what? Relative, at some point, to that which is external to that common space of contiguity. In other words, if the contiguous is the internal, it necessarily entails

the external. From a human point of view at least, consciousness as internality entails non-consciousness or 'other consciousness' (i. e., other human beings with their own internalist dimensions) as externality. Moreover, externality only makes sense in terms of some kind of internality. For while we can imagine a universe bereft of life and consciousness, that is, a universe of rocks and the atomic constituents thereof, such an imagining quickly degenerates into a kind of nonsense insofar as rocks and their atomic constituents are themselves constructs of the mind, a locus of internality.

If anyone objects to what might appear to be a shot-gun marriage of internality and externality (or of consciousness and the material world), allow me to suggest that human discourse demands it. Indeed, the idea and functioning of human discourse is indeed essential to fleshing out my understanding of consciousness. First, the problem of being incapable of imagining a universe without consciousness is not some kind of cheap philosophical parlor trick, but an experience of the limits of human discourse. We simply cannot talk about an external world without constructs linked to the conceptual world of consciousness. Second, moving away from the limits of discourse toward how discourse functions within those limits, we touch on something that seems to characterize internality as the sphere of contiguity – namely, creativity.

That consciousness has a link with creativity – and this is the second part of my characterization of consciousness as internality – can be seen in dreams, whereby a whole world appears to be conjured up by the dreamer. So great is the power of this 'internal' creation that the dreamer often accepts as real the most fantastic objects and events imaginable, that is, until the moment of wakefulness when the amazing images are dismissed as merely the 'stuff of dreams', that is, of 'unreality'. If one questions the bland acceptance of these creations so at odds with the world of wakefulness, we may put forward the sense of contiguity which is the internalist underwriter of a sense of reality. Hence, gaps, fissures, cracks, empty spaces are endlessly and seamlessly filled with images, feelings, experiences, etc. so automatically that the totality of

these constitutes a world. Left to our own devices, that is, to an intra-personal realm where consciousness can engage in a more or less spontaneous discourse with itself or with those parts of itself placed in abeyance during the waking state, a world is created, and it is the very absence of gaps or breaks that lends to this created world its sense of reality.

What characterizes the waking state and lends it whatever air of reality it appears to possess is likewise a sense of contiguity, but here that contiguity flows not from an external world of fragmentation which challenges it, but from the linguistically mediated discourse which we have with other centers of consciousness. A world is created as humans discuss their evolving relationship with the external world and develop a consensus thereby. There is nothing terribly mysterious about this. Science is itself a part of this discourse as is the article you are now reading. But unlike the dream where creativity is unrestrained in filling any and all gaps with the result that fantastic imaginings are accepted as real, the waking state is characterized by an encounter with the external. Only human discourse as a culturally, historically and linguistically mediated process can fill the gaps and create a viable sense of the real. But even here the contingency associated with this endeavor is all too apparent. For as Kafka has suggested in his writings, humans can create a world so rife with gaps and fissures that a sense of dream-like unreality begins to press upon the co-creators of this modern world.

Dream-like? Did we just not put forward the idea that dreams were taken as real because of their inherent contiguity? Where is the break, the gap, the discontinuity? Precisely in waking up to a world where other centers of consciousness and their world creations must be taken into account. If all these centers cannot reach agreement, the shock of being ripped from a place of continuity to a place of discontinuity manifests as a sense of unreality that is dream-like only insofar as the dream has proven itself to be an illusion upon waking and the waking state is so rife with discursive fissures that it lacks a security-bestowing sense of reality. What is lacking in the so-called waking state is a sense of consensual unity that lends to experience an air of compelling reality.

The key question is how this sense of reality is to be established in the so-called waking state. It can only come about via a discourse that commands as high a level of agreement as possible, for in that agreement the cracks between individualized centers of consciousness have been filled in and a coherent world created. Clearly this is not an easy project for consciousness since its creative activity is beset with challenges, the chief of which might be termed a kind of premature closure of the discursive field in the interests of one group maintaining power over another. For example, religious discourse, which was arguably dominant in Medieval Europe (6th to 14th Centuries), generated a coherent world favoring certain class and gender relations along with attendant architectural, musical, etc. genres. While the Church hierarchy stood at the top of social pyramid, its position did not go unchallenged by a more secular aristocracy and later by those who felt that the predominantly internalist discourse of Catholic Christianity failed to include in an adequately integrative manner the rich gamut of experiences originating in the external world. Without going into details, one can note that the sense of contiguity arising from an imaginative synthesis based on symbolic analogy with respect to Christian themes underwrote the prevailing sense of reality and indeed provided a form of compensation for the lack of a more dynamic engagement with the realm of the external.

To achieve something approaching universal agreement with respect to the external is the task of science; and to the extent that this has been achieved with the aid of mathematical formalization and experimental testing, the civilization constructed in its wake has adhered to its principles as if to a religious form of unification. But just as the contiguity of Medieval culture suffered from a failure to include aspects of the external world, so does the contiguity of contemporary scientific civilization suffer from a failure to include aspects of the internal world. It is precisely to remedy this unbalanced situation, which I believe lies at the heart of our discursive crisis, that I have articulated the aforementioned symmetrical contrasts between internal and external, where creative contiguity characterizes the former and a relative

fragmentation the latter. While creativity is not absent from the external world (from the gravitationally based congealing of galaxies to the more intricate burgeoning of life in all its complexity), the unities associated with externalist phenomena are radically different from the internalist ones generated by intra- and inter-personal discourse. While the latter lacks the spontaneity of the former, the creativity emergent from human discourse articulates the unities which characterize the external world. (Characterize? By whom or even what? By some form of internality.) Contrary to Locke (in his *Essay On Human Understanding*), one might take the external world (rather than the internal one) as a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) on which humans write or even project (via discourse) the visions of unity that are the very stuff of contiguous internality, one form of which is human consciousness. Indeed, without that external dimension, the internal one would have no outlet for its creative aspect.

In any case, creativity brings us back to the channeling theme. Those who channel are the means by which something new is being brought into the world. The higher consciousnesses, which are ostensibly the source of the messages, are creating visions that often have unity as a key theme. Indeed, some of these higher consciousnesses, in the context of traditional religions, may be god-like creators themselves. What is it about internality, a place of unity, contiguity, common space, etc., that prevents channeled messages from being more self-referential?

A Model Of Consciousness

Given that the framework for our model is internality as creative contiguity, which generates a sense of reality by virtue of discursively constructing that which bespeaks unity, we begin by asking if there is any content to this aspect of reality. Simple introspection tells us that the main inhabitants of this realm are thoughts (including feelings) and concepts of differing degrees of generality (including the somewhat fluid abstraction known as personal identity). Returning to our symmetry theme as it pertains to internal-external reflection, the thought-concept nexus may be linked to the external world via the organizing principle of dimensionality.

Let us recall a key quality of the external world is that of dimensions, wherein points are contained by lines, which are contained by planes, which are contained by volumes, which are contained by higher dimensions, one of which may be time in the form of relativistic 'space-time'. Reflecting this back on the constituents of the internal sphere, one may note that thoughts and concepts may be organized along similar lines. That is, simple thoughts and feelings such as 'white', 'pain', etc. may be considered as the first dimension of consciousness. They are contained by the second dimension of concepts, such as 'color', 'disease', etc. If the aforementioned dimension may be characterized as that of 'simple conceptuality', a third dimension may be called that of 'theoretical conceptuality' and includes such conceptual chains as that of 'color as light of a particular wave-length within the electro-magnetic spectrum' and 'disease as a malfunction of certain cellular processes within a given metabolic system'. Is there a fourth internal dimension matching the external space-time one that seems to function as a kind of discursive limit for human existence? I believe there is, and it may be understood as the historical dimension of conceptual discourse that contains the foregoing dimensions along with earlier (and presumably later theoretical developments, toward which we are pushing by way of a speculation on the most appropriate direction of future discourse). In other words, the fourth dimension of internality is a kind of reflection on our theoretical discourse, including perhaps a reflection on said reflection.

Could we go further and reflect on what I just described as 'reflection on said reflection'? Here we seem to be approaching the dimensional limits of discourse; and just as materialist physicists might propose a mathematics of higher dimensions in string theory, an internalist theorist of consciousness might propose higher dimensions of consciousness – dimensions to which we normally have no direct access by virtue of our 3-4 dimensional minds. However, channelers do appear to have such an access; and, given the logic of our dimensional model of internality, we are in a position to account for the lack of cross-referencing in the messages derived from higher dimensions of consciousness.

Inasmuch as we understand one dimension (either in the internal or external sense) as being higher insofar as it contains lower ones, we can understand higher consciousnesses as those which contain or perhaps encompass lower ones. Now because consciousness as internality is characterized by creative contiguity directed via discourse toward unity, it stands to reason that a higher consciousness is that which has a more inclusive sense of unity and a greater creative power. Those who receive messages from these more all-encompassing manifestations of consciousness must accordingly be impressed by this sense of what might be termed hyper-integration – an integration of scope and power beyond the 3-4 dimensional capacity of human minds – and are likely to experience a sense of being subsumed by something greater. Whether that subsumption be in the form of faith or of love or of awe-inspiring wonder is irrelevant to this discussion. What is relevant is how these higher manifestations of unity would relate to each other.

Given the logic of the model, these manifestations would be hard pressed to distinguish themselves from each other. How indeed would they be in a position to gain perspective on each other when they are interlinked by virtue of their greater closeness to what might be called infinite unity? Indeed, they probably flow into each other without knowing it. However, those who receive the messages (and not necessarily the channelers) are in such a position although up to now they appear to not have availed themselves of the opportunity presented thereby.

From a symmetrical perspective, higher dimensions in both the internal and external sense appear to be conflated or squeezed together. String theory discusses this conflation in terms of ‘strings’, vibrating in 10 or 11 dimensions, that form the ultimate material foundations of the external world. Higher dimensions in the context of internality would entail manifestations of consciousness that, by virtue of their greater attunement or closeness to the whole, would have trouble distinguishing themselves from each other; and because of that difficulty the cross-referencing of messages would be difficult, if not impossible. In other words, the channeling

problem points to the dynamics of how higher dimensions of consciousness might function with respect to each other.

Obviously my approach would be offensive to many 'believers' who take their messages from a higher or even ultimate form of consciousness to be definitive and absolute. Contrary to this, my model of consciousness seems to be suggesting that any form of higher consciousness, no matter how unified, creative, and infinite, may be distinguished from something I would call the 'whole'. While the latter may be taken as everything that is, that has been, or that may be in an atemporal sense, the former emerges from that field of possibility to the extent that it (the higher form of consciousness) can have an identity and can create. In other words, the logic of my model demands that the whole is a kind of internalist analogue to the zero-point field of quantum mechanics. Just as particles pop in and out of existence in the so-called vacuum of externalist space, symmetry points to an internalist analogue where 'thoughts' emerge and disappear with a corresponding arbitrariness.

What kind of thoughts? They could hardly be like those that emerge out of human experience because human consciousness would not yet be present. What does transcend human-like thoughts are the 'trans-human' ones of mathematics – pure quantitative concepts and the relationships following therefrom. Unlike the former, which may or may not come together in the form of integrative unities, the latter are by their very nature tightly connected. Mathematical relationships are perfect embodiments of unity or oneness inasmuch as the equality sign (i. e., '=') bespeaks the inner identity of internalist concepts that may appear radically different from each other. Sometimes the identity may be proven by way of a given set of axioms, and sometimes it may not (that being the point of Gödel's theorem). However, one can imagine that if enough of these 'sticky' concepts come together, their mutual adhesion would prevent or mitigate against a sinking back into the 'whole'. If a certain critical mass of mutually attractive concepts be reached, the need to creatively express the possibilities inherent in these ideas becomes irresistible. The next step would be the symmetrical

inversion of the great inflation associated with big bang cosmology – namely, the great deflation or conflation whereby this mass of concepts makes a kind of separation from the whole and thereby generates around itself a kind of empty space or external screen upon which the ideas so far developed within it may be expressed.

Now I realize that the foregoing is nothing less than the most breath-taking speculation. However, this aspect of the model, which may be termed the theory of ‘theo-genesis’ (i. e., the birth of the divine or ‘higher- consciousness’ creator), may be taken seriously if one considers how much light it sheds on a variety of issues.

(1) Whether there is more than one universe in what Susskind (in *The Cosmic Landscape: String Theory and The Illusion of Intelligent Design*, pp 293-324) has termed the ‘mega-universe’, the applicability and explanatory power of mathematics to each one of them is accounted for by the idea that coherent separation from the whole is more likely to be accomplished by the concatenation of ideas that strongly adhere to each other. Mathematics embodies such principles of conceptual adhesion to the highest degree.

(2) The idea of oneness or unity going hand in hand with creativity may not figure in all mythological accounts of the origin of the world, but the connection makes sense in the context of higher consciousness. Higher dimensionality with respect to consciousness entails more than the transcendence of human consciousness, which is limited to integration at the level of 3 to 4 dimensions. It entails a greater degree of closeness to the ‘whole’ – a closeness that interferes with the creative aspect of consciousness unless elements of that whole unify themselves or perfect their potential for unification, for it is only by way of such self-unification that significant creation can occur. The whole in and of itself is not unified because, as an all-encompassing totality symmetrically linked to the externalist zero-point field, it must comprise ideas, thoughts, etc. that do not always jibe or cohere. It is not pure chaos. It is order and chaos intermingled.

(3) The model reiterates the intrinsic connection between the internal and the external albeit from an internal perspective rather an external one. The key idea here is the

congealing of higher consciousness in a manner that generates a non-internalist space around it. In short, externality is a product of the great conflation of a higher and more inclusive form of consciousness, an identity-generating concentration by which the principles underlying the creation of an external world are perfected and expressed in that place of emptiness arising from the withdrawal of the internal.

(4) Implied in the model is a process by which creativity may be understood from an internal perspective. I am referring to discourse in the broadest sense, where discourse is the process by which different areas of consciousness jointly co-create a world in response to and in conjunction with the challenges of that which is external to it. We have already touched on this with respect to dreams where a world is constructed via the non-verbal interchange between consciousness and unconsciousness. In the waking state, individuals use language (spoken and written discourse) in an evolving cultural context to develop a consensus with respect to the nature of reality. Higher consciousness may be engaged in world creation by way of three types of discursive process.

(A) Discussion with itself

This first type, to the extent that it can be understood at all by those limited to the lower dimensions of consciousness, may be apprehended in the form of myth. In *Genesis*, for example, God creates the world via a kind of speech: 'And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light'. (*Gen. 1, 3*) Since nothing else exists, except perhaps the void, God can only be addressing God's own self – something akin to dream creation where an individual is non-verbally constructing a world via a non-verbal self communication involving that person's consciousness and the unconscious.

(B) Channeled discussion with lower forms (forms with a lesser number of dimensions) of consciousness

Those individuals who are oriented toward the internal are more open to receiving messages from a higher form of consciousness, but for the message to get through to a wider group there has to be a process of translation of its meaning

into terms that connect with the external orientation of most people. If, on the one hand, the channeler has actual experience of the unity being relayed, such individuals often become transformed into exemplars of faith. They are in a position to inspire those hearing the message of unity and oneness with the possibility of a life lived in fearlessness and love because there can be no real threats in a world where all is held together in the loving embrace of the 'Father'. If, on the other hand, the one who relays the message does not have such experience, the message is more abstract and its inspirational power more muted although by no means absent.

In either of the above discursive situations (A) and (B), we are entitled to ask what the point of the conversation may be. If the essence of consciousness as internality is creative contiguity, situation (A) is an expression of that creativity at the level of constructing a world on the field of the void, that is, on the externality generated by the great conflation where the divine identity is itself formed via separation from the totality (or whole) and by the very nature of that which it has created. Here I am suggesting we are what we create. However, discursive situation (B) indicates a need to continue the process of divine (theo-genetic) identity formation via the development of a consciousness at a lower dimensional level that nonetheless has a power to engage or challenge the higher dimensional being. After all, discourse with oneself can only go so far; and if creation can only take place via discourse, the higher consciousness has to have a worthy partner and that can only be one capable of offering some kind of challenge, even and perhaps especially to the point of disobedience.

Does human consciousness with its 3-4 dimensional structure fit the bill? If, as the myth states, humans are in God's image, the possibility of discourse is there. More importantly, human consciousness, by its very distance from the whole, has the potential of relating different emanations of the whole (higher dimensional expressions of internality) to each other – something that higher consciousness creators cannot do because, from their point of view, they are incapable of distinguishing themselves from each other. (Higher internal dimensions may be tightly bound to each other in a symmetrical analogue to the external sphere of string theory).

To sum up, my model suggests that higher consciousnesses need lower ones, not only to get some kind of perspective on themselves, but also to continue the discursive process associated with creation.

(C) Non-Channelled Discussion Where Lower Forms of Consciousness Articulate Their Relationships With Higher Forms

If, as the foregoing states, the higher needs the lower and we are the lower, it is important to understand the nature of human discourse with respect to these creative manifestations of higher consciousness, and formal religion points to some obvious aspects of the relationship. To begin, humans have an understandable need to formalize their discourse with the divine. That means the message or the inspiring messenger are singled out for veneration, which often leads to distancing. In other words, humans tend to engage in a discourse of 'transcendentalization', which has the effect of freezing the divine out of the mainstream of human life. As a way of minimizing this, a second aspect of religious discourse is the insistence on uniformity, that is, the creation of a common space of orthodoxy. The cost of this substitute for the unity or oneness, which higher consciousness embodies in its essence, is a loss or diminution of discourse. Because a living discourse with the divine would allow for ongoing participation in the world-creative process, the loss of a more open and spontaneous discourse for the sake of orthodox uniformity entails a further alienation from the divine.

At this point one might ask, why God, as a higher and ostensibly more powerful form of consciousness, does not intervene and correct those who would diminish the possibilities for a more authentic interchange. The logic of discourse itself gives an answer. If discourse degenerates into some kind of domination, whereby the more powerful controls the less powerful, there can be no experience of joint co-creation of the world. God must follow our lead and respond to the relationships enshrined in most formal religions. If that means we must suffer from an absence of the divine in our lives, then so be it. After all, if God made us as independent

participants in an ongoing discursive project, God must let that process work itself out. Likewise, if the discursive relationships we have with the divine and with each other have engendered a dissatisfying world, it is up to recognize this and change it.

How might such a change take place? We can begin by recognizing that whatever may be gained from a discourse of transcendentalization and orthodoxy with respect to that higher form of consciousness we call God, much has also been lost. In this regard, the model I have been developing might account for the tragic silence of God before the suffering of the innocent. Instead of taking the easy road and denying the existence of God and perhaps any manifestation of consciousness existing beyond the physical realm, I seek to account for this silence by understanding it as the result of a discourse that has pushed God out of our lives. In other words, God cannot intervene in the context of a discourse that has either denied God's existence or has affirmed it as something intrinsically alien to human experience. Of course, such a discursive framework does not preclude the odd saint or mystic (e. g., Francis of Assisi, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, etc.) managing a personal discourse with the divine despite the larger cultural constraints discouraging such possibilities.

By the same token, much is lost by a discourse of 'sanity-denial' that hard-core materialists must implicitly adopt with respect to those who refuse to give up their discursive connections with higher forms of consciousness. What else can the materialist do when confronted with intelligent people who show no evidence of desiring to manipulate others for gain and who nonetheless claim to have a connection with an internalist reality? At the very least, the materialist must assume an emotional immaturity on the part of the spiritually inclined or else they must acknowledge the reality of an independently existing internal realm of being – something that directly contradicts their materialist stance. Thus, what the rigid materialist loses in this discursive situation is the possibility of living in a world of mutually affirmative interchange. What I mean by this is a world where the materialist does not have to deny the value of a large part of

humanity in order to maintain a consistent position. The devaluation may be kept under the table, so to speak, as we maintain facades of civility, but it is inescapable as long as the reality sense of one group (and all that is based on it) is disavowed by another.

I am not suggesting that in order to maintain a world of mutual respect, the materialist must give up her project of seeking to understand the mind by way of the brain. Let us recall that if we take symmetry to the farthest degree, explaining the internal by the external is as valid as going in the reverse direction. What I am suggesting is that the materialist and the spiritualist engage, not in a discourse of mutual denial, but in discourses of learning from each other – learning with a view to co-creating a richer and more inclusive world.

Conclusion and Implications

I can well understand how the foregoing model may have offended the very parties I am seeking to bring together. On the one hand, the materialist may see me, despite my protestations of irreligiosity, as some kind of closet proponent of intelligent design bent on opening the door to a wave of anti-scientific irrationality. On the other hand, individuals of a spiritual bent may be outraged at what appears to be the model's attempt to limit the power of God – to take the internal as real, but at the cost of having laws or principles that challenge the faith-based foundations of any and all religious orthodoxies.

Yet the offense I am giving to all is meant to point out that discursive rigidity is what both of the aforementioned parties share in common. If consciousness creates the world, not through any magical or irrational process, but through culturally mediated conversations stretching back in time and pushing forward into the future, discourses of rigidity are bound to engender a world characterized by misunderstanding and mutual devaluation. Again, I am not suggesting universal agreement as the standard of a viable discourse. Instead, I would hope all parties to the conversation that is culture be aware of and take responsibility for their

discursive tactics. If, after such awareness is gained, we continue to go on our old paths, we can at least go in the knowledge of the price we are paying.

Finally, as hard as this assumption of world-creating discursive responsibility might be for the materialist, I suspect it would be immeasurably harder for the spiritualist who, unlike myself, has had direct experience of higher dimensions of consciousness and has been subsumed thereby. The present discourse is by no means intended to deny such experience. Indeed, by the logic of the model, the experience is not only affirmed, but the unifying exclusivism that goes with it is understood as following from what appear to be the principles by which higher dimensional expressions of consciousness must function. That is, if God, as one expression of such higher-dimensional consciousness, claims to be the 'only' God; and the channeler-messenger, not only receives, but also experiences such a message, the exclusivism of the religious tradition that follows from the message makes sense. However, because the model puts forward the idea that internalist beings closer to the whole must have difficulty in distinguishing themselves from each other, those like myself who are outside the direct experience of the message perceive an opportunity for the messages to be integrated, for the exclusivism to be transcended in a discourse where the different experiences of the 'one' God (i. e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and the different experiences of other spiritual realities are all correlated.

Who would do this? Who would undertake such a project that is nothing less than a means for facilitating spiritual growth, not only with respect to humans, but with respect to those higher dimensional beings who must depend on us to know each other? It cannot be undertaken by those who need the support of a God who is all-knowing and perfect. Such a God would not need our help anyway. It can only be undertaken by those who have the courage to forego such a beneficent security and who are willing to do what a superior being cannot do for itself – to act as a kind of support for the gods.

This burden is a hard one, and I am reminded of Bernini's famous sculpture of Aeneas leaving the burning ruins of Troy,

his former home destroyed by the Greeks. He carries on his shoulders Anchises, his aged father, who is himself holding the household gods. At the feet of this over-burdened hero stands his young son, Ascanius. There is a terrible sadness on the face of Aeneas – a sadness that cannot be alleviated by the knowledge that he is fated to found a new city and build a new home.

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