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Greed. Love. Wisdom, and Labeling of the Self

Claudia Westermann, Netochka Nezvanova

Summary: The basic question has not changed since Greek antiquity: What is reality made of? How can a mind really be sure that any other mind exists, or for that matter, the world? In this paper we discuss the processes by which brains learn and reach wisdom.

Nullius in Verba (On the Words of No One)

This is the motto of the world's oldest scientific academy, the Royal Academy of London, founded in 1660, which is explicative of a shift towards an approach that is still valid today: seeing is knowing. The inventions of the microscope and the telescope and the progress which was made through their constructions initiated the triumph of the "immediate view" in the beginning of the 17th century.

The exact dates for the inventions of these instruments of improved observation are unknown. It is known that lenses were used very early as burning glasses in the 5th century BC, as reported by Aristophanes. The magnifying effect of a glass filled with water was reported by Seneca the Younger in the first century AD. And a study in optics made by the Arab mathematician Ibn al-Haytham (965-1040), translated to Latin in 1270 as *Opticae Thesaurus Alhazeni*, is the first known to use the so called "scientific method" in which experiments were undertaken to prove the thesis that the eye receives rays of light instead of emitting them. In the introduction of the *Opticae*, Ibn al-Haytham writes that his methods will involve "criticizing premises and exercising caution in drawing conclusions" while aiming "to employ justice, not follow prejudice, and to take care in all that we judge and criticize that we seek the truth and not be swayed by opinions." ⁽¹⁾

With the development of the scientific method to prove or disprove a thesis by use of experiments, humanity entered into the modern times of empiricism and ostensive evidence.

Socrates □[...] and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?
[...] And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Glaucon □Yes, he said.

Socrates □And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?
And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy, when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

Glaucon □No question, he replied. ⁽²⁾

Perhaps the question of what reality is made of has not changed since Greek antiquity. Yet, from the arena of a dispute over the question of reality, experts reported that the scientist Albert Einstein had the last word and finally won against the philosopher Henri Bergson.

In the modern times of the immediate view the shape of reality is the one of victory.

Nullius in Verba (On the Words of No One)?

The rectangular room is painted in bright white. No window or door disturbs the continuity of the walls. However, there must be openings in the ceiling since natural light enters the room from above, along the walls, as funnel-shaped rays.

I am ONE. I walk to be, ALWAYS
THE LAST in my sequence.
My memories are operators to my dreams

Brains learn by stretching forth and changing themselves through self-organizing, chaotic dynamics. With advancing years and the accumulation of experience, brains reach a threshold and undergo a state transition, such that on passage, there is a remarkable coming together of all that is past, an awareness of global interconnectedness between the accumulated recollections and understandings over the years. This is the state of wisdom.

Not everyone achieves this state of mind, and it is not communicable in words or by teaching, but it is there and has been written about, and when one arrives, one knows that the future has joined with the past to make a circle outside time.

Brains arise not as isolated entities, but as units in societies, ranging from pairs to empires.

Loneliness comes with the unity of brain function.
Hope, with brain growth to wholeness in maturity.
Love, with the most intense form of reaching to connect.

Loneliness comes with the unity of brain function.

[...] we cannot [...] suppose that we are not while we doubt [...];
for there is a repugnance in conceiving that what thinks
does not exist at the very time when it thinks. ⁽³⁾

And René Descartes continues with what shall mark the beginning of the modern Western philosophy:

Cogito, ergo sum. (I think, therefore I am.) ⁽³⁾

There once was a painter--a brilliant painter,
who mastered the art of replication and the depiction of the beautiful.
Yet he was lonely, he felt that there was no one alive who
could understand him, no one capable of perceiving his entire being.

One morning he wept in his garden, crying to god to send
him someone who might comprehend his full beauty.
That day, he painted a new canvas, a portrait of an unknown and
stunningly beautiful woman. When he had finished, he cried to god
to give her sentience, as this most wondrous painting could be the
only being in the world who might understand him. To his amazement, the
woman in the painting began to move.

„Hello! Hello!“ he cried to her.

„Where are you?“ she replied.

„Here, beside you!“

The woman in the painting looked around her.

„Are you up, or down? Across?“ she asked.

„No, No“, the painter implored, „I am...I am...out!“

„Out? What is _out_?“ she replied.

„Out! Out here!“

The woman did not understand him.
She only knew two dimensions--vertical and horizontal. Her world was that
of the flat
canvas.

The painter ran out to his garden and threw himself onto the ground.

„God, oh god!“ he wept. „Where are you?“

„Out.“ came the reply.

**Loneliness comes with the unity of brain function.
Hope, with brain growth to wholeness in maturity.**

It is true. One could call it a mature state into which the Cartesian, conscious being enters by
being transformed into Spinoza's system only as a modification of the eternal truth, leaving
hope as the only freedom left to finally become.

The contradiction of the Cartesian, conscious being, which is independent in its essence but is
presented in its existence as being dependent, is dissolved in the system of Benedict Spinoza.
One substance exists as eternal truth. It is where essence and existence are. ⁽⁴⁾

In his "Lectures about the History of Philosophy" Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel comments:

The soul must bathe in the aether of the one substance, in which all that one thought to be true has drowned. It is the negation of the specific to which every philosopher must have come. It is the liberation of the mind and its absolute basis. ⁽⁵⁾

Where there is maturity there is hope.

**Loneliness comes with the unity of brain function.
Hope, with brain growth to wholeness in maturity.
Love, with the most intense form of reaching to connect.**

Rainer Maria Rilke described the way in which individuals resonate together in his poem "Liebeslied" (love song). ⁽⁶⁾

Yet all that touches us, you and me,
takes us together like a violin bow,
that draws one voice from two strings.
On what instrument are we strung?
And which violinist has us in hand?
O sweet song.

In one voice of two strings we celebrate the space of coexistence.

Perhaps the aether, as Hegel calls Spinoza's substance, is the threshold we must pass to reach wisdom. It is there where we finally realize that a binding truth exists. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz calls it confused perception. What else could it be but wisdom that makes him call the truth confused?

Here we are the fluid living mirrors of the infinite universe, that which includes everything. We are substantial form, each reflecting the whole, each reflecting every other. All things are enfolded in us, and that which we cannot perceive distinctly is the representation of the infinite. The resonance of the infinite is the bond between us, we who are indivisible, different in the degrees of distinct perceptions, memories included, body AND mind, striving from perception to perception, always acting, led by desire (l'appetit). ⁽⁷⁾

We wish to be one.

Her voice swirled through a window, behind me, brimful with tenderness as a beaker with wine.
She caressed my hair and smiled at me affectionately. This felt like taking a step forward within myself.
Everything significant and full of fate for me adopted her form. She could transform herself
into any of my thoughts and each of my thoughts could be transformed into her.
And little by little, sensual and spiritual love, reality and symbol began to overlap.

My love for her seemed to fill my whole life, but everyday it manifested itself differently. Sometimes I felt certain that it was not she as a person whom I was attracted to and yearned for with all my being, but that she existed only as a metaphor of my inner self, a metaphor whose sole purpose was to lead me more deeply into my self.

And instead of merely winning a woman he embraced the entire world and every star in heaven glowed within him and sparkled with joy in his soul. He had loved and had found himself, but most people love to lose themselves.⁽⁸⁾

It looks like a ruin. Through the holes in the roof one can see the sky. Plaster fallen from the wall makes visible the bricks which stand formally behind it. The floor is crowded with dross; here and there a plant in a puddle. Yet, there are paintings on the wall and isolated pieces of furniture, a shelf with pots, and somewhere a door left without a wall. Are these forgotten things within this dross?

No, they are not forgotten; on the contrary, they have been left. They are the memories. We enter into the house of the Italian Domenico with the main character of Andrei Tarkovskij's film *Nostalghia*, a writer who came from Russia to Italy. However, his voyage in search of traces of a Russian composer becomes a voyage in search for his self. In the foreign country his memories do not connect to the space around him. He loses himself in space. The Italian Domenico as the wise fool, himself an outsider in society, (re)presents the mirror. Connected to memories we are different in our distinct perceptions. The meaning of the door, which has been left without the wall surrounding it, cannot be understood by the Russian writer. He passes beside it. Domenico walks through. Only in the infinite are we alike. It is the bond between us.

1+1=1 is written on the wall.⁽⁹⁾

I am now the circulation of meaning, of the eternal possibility, communication as a being.

Don't give me a name, i'll disappear,
A child, an idiot, a madman,
A name without a name closed in my world.
I want to be free to wish, to wish to disappear,
in a pulsation, blended with you,
my heavenly lover.
You change my self into
pure energy, into a fluid, a rush, a pulsation of love.
Without fences, without name, without meaning,
only the lively movement of a double being.

Two liquids. One substance.

Every consistent system must logically be incomplete.

“On Formally Undecidable Propositions of the Principia Mathematica and Related Systems” was the title of a paper which was published in 1931 by the mathematician Kurt Goedel. The paper had a significant impact, as it was proposing that its results would not only count for Mathematics but for every science operating with logic. Contrary to the thesis of his time Goedel was able to prove that a formal system with its defined axioms is unable to decide every question arising in itself, that every consistent system must always be incomplete. As the system is able to produce more true statements than it can prove by using the axioms of the very system it is concluded that proof is a weaker statement than truth. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Is this the proof that infinity exists?
And if so, what kind of infinity?

For the moment let's assume that Goedel's proof is valid only for a scientific system. If we assume further that technology is derived as application from such a scientific system and that such an application would be supposed to be functional, we must logically conclude that the scientific system would need to be reduced by the truths immanent to it; i.e. every statement that is not provable would need to be eliminated.

Or, what would we do if the technology that we use suddenly spoke to us in its own language? Contemplate its beauty? Wonder what kind of space it belongs to?

It is good to read.

In the novel “L’Eve future” (Tomorrow’s Eve) which is known as an early science fiction novel, published in 1886, Auguste Villiers de L’Isle-Adam presents the character Hadaly, a perfect technological replication of a human being with a strange knowledge of an infinite, the one of Spinoza’s philosophical system. As a fixed infinite it is not infinitely complex as the one in the theory put forth by Leibniz. “L’Eve future” issues perhaps first one suspect that is as well later pronounced by Henri Bergson.

There might be something immanent to the so-called "exact sciences" which leaves us without time and space.

It is the automata who speaks:

I come to you as a delegate of those borderless regions
whose pale boundary the human being can only perceive weakly
sometimes in between dream and sleep.
There the times pass into each other; there is no space anymore! ⁽¹¹⁾

Is there anything left for us to do?

Humble we are and wait for the wise monarch
who will govern the chosen nation to all's well-being.
The paradox of love and peace shall be dissolved.

*from the unpublished Manifesto for an Utopia after Communism,
East Berlin, June 2004*

Yet, until the times pass into each other
we search for home.

Home is the distinct perception of architecture
as a complex ideal, that which
shelters memories and nourishes dreams
in all their eternal possibilities
to enter into perfect harmony with the universe.

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