

## Essay

## On Atheist Spirituality Part III: Without Precedent, Human Awareness, 2-Way Interactions, Research vs. Development and Faith-Belief

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### Abstract

In this series of essays, I explore and discuss spiritualization of materialistic atheism in support of Andre Comte-Sponville. These essays are further dedicated to Marie-Louise Nykamp. This essay contains: Without Precedent in Human History; Two Aspects of Human Awareness ? Two Way Interactions ...; Research versus Development ...; The Ways of the Good Old Baron von Mnchausen ...; and Sorry, but Belief and Faith Are Good Only for ....

### Without Precedent in Human History

As mentioned, in modern times, hard science and the technology based on it have opened up a large number of relevant realms to our awareness, and keep doing so in an ever ongoing flow. There are several unique features following from that historical event, an event without precedent in known human history. Let us try and consider these features here briefly, and do so from the point of view of ameliorating spiritual poverty.

At first, we could of course highlight the list of such new relevant realms brought to our awareness, and do so accompanied by the considerable amount of their useful applications in everyday life.

Second, and not less, the importance of hard science is not only in bringing to our awareness all those new relevant realms, but even more so in the very precedent itself it has created in this manner in known human history. Indeed, no earlier period in any human civilization is known to have produced such a fast and massive change by bringing to human awareness so many new relevant realms. And even if due to certain not yet known or foreseen reasons the flow of such new relevant realms would diminish significantly, or perhaps, even stop, the mentioned precedent has already been set by the hard science of the last few centuries, and especially, of the last few generations.

And that precedent quite clearly and loudly - even if not yet heard by many enough - states that human awareness need not be stuck for ages into a dichotomy between a fixed and so called profane or immanent realm, and on the other hand, what appears to be a totally removed, hardly at all, if ever accessible, and an equally fixed so called sacred or transcendental one. Indeed, our awareness can become open to earlier absolutely unimaginable realms, and can keep being open to an ongoing flux of such realms.

This, indeed, may be by far the most important precedent modern hard science has produced.

And that precedent already shows a never ever manifested quality of our human awareness. A quality which, when considered as such and all in itself, need not necessarily be confined to being elicited by the scientific way of revelation alone, the way which, as it happened, has created such a precedent. Indeed, it need not be inconceivable that it is not only and only the ways of science, and specifically, of hard

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science, which alone can bring forth such ongoing revelations, bring them forth, and then pursue them further, and build upon them ...

It may, indeed, be a peculiarity of present day humanity - say, a socio-historical or biological peculiarity - that we have not attained to any other way to produce a massive and ongoing flow into our awareness of new relevant realms, and do so in clearly credible, as well as practically useful ways, except by hard science research. Certainly, no other way known to us can compete with the credibility of the realms opened up by such research. And as far as we know, throughout human history, we have never had available any other way with the same kind of fortunate effect.

Third, we may by now note that our bodies and emotions seem to have far more limited ranges of functioning, than our awareness. This is indeed one of the messages brought to us by all those relevant realms opened up by hard science research. Consequently, far more attention and interest should be given to that essential difference, with a corresponding focus on further exploring and widening the ranges of our awareness. And here we are considering ranges which are as credible and practically relevant, as those produced by hard science research. This issue is related to what later will be mentioned as the "abstract" ability of our awareness ...

Fourth, we can of course note that we simply cannot become aware of all realms that may be relevant to our lives. More precisely, we cannot become, so to say, equally aware. And then, the basic dichotomy between those realms of which we are, let us say, positively aware, and on the other hand, those of which we are aware only as not being aware of sufficiently, or in fact at all, thus we may say, we are negatively aware of, will remain in times to come ...

What can change, however, and hard science research has proved it clearly and massively, is the delimitation between the two sides of that dichotomy.

Also as mentioned, what can change is that our two way interactions would no longer be so much limited only to the first side of that dichotomy, the so called positive side. Indeed, the long existing, yet so much tentative tradition of trying to get somehow actively involved with what may be called the negative side of that dichotomy could, hopefully, benefit a lot from more attention and interest done in the solid credibility spirit pioneered by hard science ...

Be it as it may, we should try to make a far more serious and systematic use of the precedent created by modern hard science research, than we have done so far, when we face the issue of spiritual poverty ...

And in doing so, we should follow the standards established by high science research regarding the solid credibility of the new relevant realms discovered, thus avoiding the plethora of earlier attempts, among them the so called ESP studies which, regrettably, contributed so much to discredit all such ventures ...

Shall we attempt some conclusions which, as so often, risk to simplify things too much ?

Well, hard science research and the technology based on it created two unprecedented and ongoing inputs within the human affairs :

First, and upon which the concern of most focuses rather exclusively is the accumulation of new knowledge, added power upon Nature, and of course, increasing general material wellbeing.

Second, and which is quite unnoticed, is to show that human awareness, even on the level of individuals, has the ability to keep opening up to new and new relevant realms.

Or to put it simple : these two inputs show that it is not only our stomachs which can get filled up with more and more food, but it is also our awareness which can become open to more and more new relevant realms.

And the fact is, that we should better not fill up our stomachs more and more, since it is not healthy ...

On the other hand, opening up our awareness to ever more of the newly discovered relevant realms has not yet produced any ill health, at least as far as the media would know about it, and report it ...

It seems, therefore, that we humans are quite a bit less physical beings, then mental ones ...

And of course, who knows of what other kind as well ...

Most remarkable in this regard is Clement of Alexandria (c 150 - c. 215 AD), a Christian theologian who, as seen towards the end of these lines, was fully aware of the extraordinary ability of human awareness to open up itself and keep expanding ...

### **Two Aspects of Human Awareness ?**

A remarkable feature of human awareness is that, albeit only on occasion, it can be so clearly aware of its own limitations. Indeed, we may sometime say "I have not got the vaguest idea about that" ...

Unfortunately, we do not practice that ability with the honesty and frequency that may be actually required, and do not do so even when alone, and thus only having to face our own selves ...

Yet that ability exists, and in certain situations it comes to the fore ...

The above four questions are, among others, an invitation to practice that ability, and consequently, try to reconsider our own individual human condition right from its very fundamentals ...

St. Augustine may have said that mind is memory, as C-S mentions it ...

Well, mind may rather be awareness of context, hopefully of much of the whole relevant context of one's existence, of one's very being ...

And memory, just as much as one's vision, imagination, expectations, or for that matter, lack of anything of the kind, related to one's future, all are but parts of one's relevant context ...

Thus we may as well try a reformulation of those four questions in the following single one :

1. How do you intend to get into a two way interaction with that immense part of the context relevant to you, context which the only way you may ever be aware of is that you shall never be aware of it ?

When thinking a bit more about that question, we may hopefully be struck by the extremes of ignorant arrogance and arrogant ignorance we tend to exhibit related to it. Indeed, by never asking that question, or even worse, by simply not being aware of it, not to mention, by automatically rejecting its relevance when we may by some chance be faced with it, we do not necessarily avoid its relevance ...

After all it is not only in matters of laws that the ignorance about a law does not absolve one from its validity, from being in fact subjected to it. No, not at all. And in fact, the ignorance about, or the rejection of fundamental questions and issues relevant to one's life do not absolve us either from being

inevitably subjected to them ...

As mentioned above, it may indeed appear that our awareness does happen to function in nothing short but a clearly dichotomous manner : there are some realms we are aware of, and on the other hand, there are immensely many realms we are not aware of, and shall never be, either as individuals, or even as a whole species.

As for the first kind of realms, we may possibly manage to devise certain methods for a two way interaction. Related to the second kind of realms, it may appear that all we can do is to pray ...

But then, of course, we may have to reconsider thoroughly what prayer can actually mean ...

What has, however, happened in modern times, and happened due to hard science, is that such a dichotomy has been seriously challenged ...

Indeed, the boundaries between the two sides of that dichotomy started to move quite fast even during the life time of a given generation. And those boundaries have kept by now moving during the last several generations ...

There are, needless to say, ways of being in which those boundaries may fade away to a good extent, or simply cease to have such an importance. Indeed, human awareness - while fully sane and awoken - can be in states in which the usual structures of time and space, or even the structures revealed by Special or General Relativity, Quantum Theory, and so on, are but vaguely, if at all present, let alone relevant ...

And such states of awareness, or ways of being, have been known for ages ...

Needless to say, for such states of awareness, or ways of being, distinctions such a theist versus atheist, or qualifications like agnostic, cheerfully desperate, and so on, become simply inexistent, or at best childishly irrelevant ...

Here however, we are rather interested in ways of being in which those boundaries which mark the mentioned dichotomy have a significant importance, even if they keep so manifestly moving during the lifetime of any given human generation ...

### **Two Way Interactions ...**

As it happens, it appears that ever since ancient times there has been some awareness about the second side of the above dichotomy, namely, the side with that immensity of realms we are not - and never in our lifetime become - aware of, except by some awareness of not being aware, let alone, fully enough aware of them. And such various approaches to that second side of the dichotomy proved, indeed, to be rather pragmatic throughout the ages, even if rather as a rule, they have been massively distorted, manipulated and abused as sources of power over the vulnerable and helpless masses of humans.

A large and diverse category of such approaches are constituted by what goes under the name of prayer. And prayers do indeed come in endless forms ...

Some of the more, shall we say, refined ones are such as meditation, silent prayer, contemplation, reverie, and other ones of the kind. And they may be seen as more refined since they are not reduced to one or another specific request. Instead, they may be trying a deeper two way connection or interaction between us, and on the other hand, the relevant realms of which we are not aware, except by being aware

that we are not aware of them. Indeed, such forms of prayer may be trying to act according to the saying :

“If you want to enjoy the fruits of a tree, you better water its roots.”

Nowadays, prayers have ended up being mostly confined to religions and their adepts. And the only two way interactions with those immense realms which are relevant to us, yet we shall never become aware of in our lives, tend to happen by chance if at all, and not so much by our own conscious and more or less competently active initiative ...

The great, and so far unique feature of hard science is precisely its doubly solid credibility. Namely, its methods are objective and rigorous, and then in addition, its results offers so many useful everyday applications through technology.

Clearly, therefore, there is an immense gap or divide between whatever prayer may be, and on the other hand, hard science research.

And then, related to the mentioned two way interaction, one may wonder whether we humans could sometime develop a third approach, an approach not less impressive in its solid credibility than that of hard science, but one with a significantly larger and deeper reach in bringing new relevant realms to our awareness ...

### **Research versus Development ...**

Traditional societies were marked above all by the fact that awareness of new relevant realms came about very slowly, if at all, and hardly without exception, only after a number of generations. What characterized life was the “development”, or rather, routine endless repetition of what had been known for quite a long time. Tradition, authority and the ways of majority were carrying the day ...

And as the story of Giordano Bruno, and of other thinkers who tried to open up new relevant realms shows it, it was hardly at all the case that “research” would be actively supported and promoted in order to find such realms ...

The first time in known human history that such actively and significantly supported “research” is happening is with the emergence of hard science research. And the fortunate feature accompanying it is the remarkable credibility which follows it, not least due to the manifest utility of the resulting technologies and products that can be enjoyed by large numbers of humans ...

And the essential novel aspect of this “research” - that is, of research in hard science - namely, that it is not limited to the traditional “development” only, is precisely its focus on finding new relevant realms for our awareness.

Needless to say, the motivation for such a support for “research” is not exactly the most insightful ... Francis Bacon, back in the early 1600s, managed to convince important persons that “knowledge is power” ... And so often, it is precisely in the interest of acquiring such power, and power not necessarily in its more subtle or commendable variants, which makes modern societies support actively “research” ...

Consequently, it should not come as a surprise that the obstacles facing “research” pursued for the sake of the above mentioned essential novelty, namely, for finding new relevant realms for our awareness, are numerous, and seem not to diminish at all, if not in fact, seem to be growing ...

Two aspects may be critically important in this regard.

First, very few individuals, relative to the six billion plus humans, are sufficiently aware of more essential aspects of that rather unprecedented novelty, let alone, are qualified enough to be active participants in supporting, furthering and expanding it. Therefore, the sustainability of the mentioned kind of "research" is extremely vulnerable. Indeed, attaining a qualification for such a "research" requires considerable individual and social investment. And both individual and social interest may decay enough, or simply, they may sufficiently weaken due to any number of reasons, in order to make it unlikely that such individuals keep being there in sufficient numbers. The number of present day societies which are manifestly unable to produce such individuals in numbers anywhere near proportionate to their populations is considerable and well known. And that failure most certainly cannot be attributed to the racial or ethnic inferiority of the respective populations, but rather to a general lack of awareness about the sorry situation in which they keep themselves ...

The situation is, therefore, much unlike in traditional and millennia long existing agricultural societies where the vast majority of population managed to learn the required qualifications without any significant social investment, let alone, sophisticated institutional setups. And it is worth recalling in this regard that, even the presently most advanced societies have had more than half of their population working in agriculture merely a few generations ago. No wonder, therefore, that we seem not to have had time enough - time seen on an historical scale - to digest and also assimilate the extraordinary novelty of our "research" based present societies, let alone the reality of their unprecedented vulnerability ...

Second, and following from the above, the fact is that a very large majority of the population even in the presently most advanced societies has no any realistic idea about the nature and vulnerabilities of our "research" societies. And this is a potentially devastating state of affairs especially in democratic societies, where the explicit and enthusiastic support of majority may not always be necessary for pursuing a certain cause, but certainly, the determined opposition can so easily damage any cause, no matter how worthy ...

### **The Ways of the Good Old Baron von Mnchausen ...**

We can of course set aside God and religion, and just like the baron in that story, try to pull ourselves out of the marsh, by pulling our own wig upwards, and meanwhile squeezing the horse we ride on tightly between our knees ...

And needless to say, so many among us are so taken up by our own ego as to find such an approach most commendable ...

Such are the amusing, or often less so, ways of not considering the above single question ...

As for the existence, or otherwise, of God, it is - when considered without the temptations of fast reactions - a matter of giving, or on the contrary, not giving some name to why it is that the good baron's approach does not really work in so many situations ...

Aristotle, for instance, speaks about the Unmoved Prime Mover, and it does not name it in some other way.

The ancient Hebrews, and still the present day religious Jews, find it necessary to abstain from using the name of God, lest one may end up with the feeling and idea that one can in fact get hold of Him in such a rather simple everyday way, that is, merely by naming it. Indeed, instead, a variety of substitutes are used when referring to God, among them Adonai, Elochim, YAHVE, and so on, each of them being

explicitly stated, and widely known among them, not to be God's name. And when it would come to God's real name, the nearest one can come in the Old Testament is in Exodus 3:14, where God tells Moses that His name is "I Am that I Am". Amusingly, the very next thing what God tells Moses is that he should tell the Children of Israel that "I Am" has sent him, and thus not "I Am that I Am" ... Was it that God found "I Am that I AM" to be a bit much for the level of understanding of those Children of Israel ... ?

Well, be it as it may, the fact is that, even nowadays, "I Am that I Am" seems not to be so easily understandable to all sorts of other ... Children ... as well ...

In Islam, Allah is a similarly esoteric entity, if any entity at all ...

Hinduism, on the other hand, keeps emphasizing the name of, shall we say, that all underlying Unmoved Prime Mover ...

Buddhism, on the other hand, makes it a crucial starting point not only not to give any name, but even not to become concerned in any way with that Unmoved Prime Mover ...

And then, who should really care whether there is a God, or on the contrary, there is no God ?

Indeed, it rather seems that ... man created, and keeps creating God ... And altogether, it is a mere side issue ...

It may be of interest in this regard that, in Christian tradition itself, there is a differentiation between God and God-Head, the latter being an underlying entity, or rather principle, of the former, which is mostly the active, creative aspect. One may, perhaps, say that God is the Prime Mover in the Aristotelian formulation, while God-Head is the Unmoved aspect of it ...

By the way, in Hebrew, the expression "I Am" in Exodus 3:14 is one single word, and not two words in which one has a subject and a predicate. The same lack of syntactic structure and single word is used under various forms in Hinduism, when referring to the ultimate, all underlying reality ...

Here we can, perhaps, recall another well known Zen-Buddhist saying :

"You show the fool the Moon, and he is looking at your finger."

Indeed, God, let alone a name, any name of God, is at most a "finger" trying to point somewhere, while the "Moon", much unlike in the above saying where it is a well known object, is at best perhaps that immensity of relevant realms of which the only awareness we may ever acquire is that we shall never be aware of ...

So much, therefore, for being theist, agnostic or atheist ...

They are, indeed, rather secondary choices ...

As for religion, but of course, it is a human, an all too human institution ...

And as such, it is not much different from, say, restaurants : some of us like Chinese ones, others among us prefer the Italian or French kind ...

And once we may become more accustomed with the above, we may then try and honestly start wondering about that one question, namely :

1. How do you intend to get into a two way interaction with that immense part of the context relevant to you, context which the only way you may ever be aware of is that you shall never be aware of ?

Now, to the extent that we may grasp some of the points in the above question, we may realize that the following dichotomy is quite likely facing us :

- either we humans - as a society, or even as individuals - are indeed quite sufficient upon ourselves, and thus, we can help ourselves through the Mnchausen method,
- or on the contrary, we are rooted to a relevant extent in realms which for evermore remain outside of our awareness either as individuals, or even as a whole species.

The first alternative - usually associated with various possible qualifications of the label humanistic - is obviously the one which C-S is completely committed to. However, its self-description as atheism, or cheerful despair, seems to miss the point. Indeed, what it happens to reject is not any kind of God, but simply the quite likely possibility that the human individual, and even human society as a whole, is far from being self-sufficient to a satisfactory extent. On the other hand, what so tenaciously - although quite insecurely - tries to hold to is in fact not much more than the Mnchausen method ...

The second alternative in the dichotomy above has seemingly been just about altogether expropriated by religions. And due to a variety of reasons, many of them not quite clear or not so easy to discover, that second alternative got presented to the public in a variety of heavily distorted forms to which all sort of additional irrelevant constructs were associated with any number of dubious ulterior motives. After all, religions are mere human institutions. And we humans are so much prone to mess, and of course, monkey business ...

As for the amusing part, we may note the following.

In Psalm 82:6 it is written :

“I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are the children of most High.”

And in John10:34, Jesus Christ makes a direct reference to that saying by asking ”Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods' ?”

As for Hinduism, in its Advaita Vedanta variant, for instance, each human individual is supposed to be centered upon the very same and unique Supreme Self. In this regard, ancient Hindu wisdom sees the human individual as a carriage, which is the human body, driven by horses which represent the emotions, controlled by a coachman who stands for the mind, and with the Lord sitting inside the carriage, the Lord for the sake of whom all the setup exists, the Lord which so often is not even known to exist by the coachman, let alone, by the horses. Another ancient Hindu statement is that the actor in the human individual is divine, while one cannot say quite the same about his or her actions, or acting. Also it is stated that we are born nothing short of being pure, perfect and complete ...

And then, as gods that we are, it may appear that, in certain ways, and upon suitable conditions, each human individual may in fact be able to live by the Mnchausen method ...

On the other hand, the way various alternatives of humanism, among them that of the cheerful despair of C-S, see the situation of the Mnchausen method, based upon which they are supposed to function, as



being severely reduced and confined to the possibilities of a mere human individual, one who is in fact just about floating somewhere in a chaotic and at best indifferent world ...

Well, is it not quite amusing to see that the two so sharply distinct alternatives of the above dichotomy lead to the very same pragmatic approach ? Namely, to Mnchausen's method ?

Except that in the so called humanistic alternative there is no all powerful God, but only a plethora of rather emasculated, vulnerable, insecure, and at best, cheerfully desperate ...mini gods ...

And if the those two alternatives do indeed lead to the same end, then, is it not worth exploring more thoroughly, and in fact, as thoroughly as possible, whether we are indeed in the situation of, shall we say, merely the "weak" variant of the Mnchausen method, the variant corresponding to that chosen by cheerfully desperate humanists, or on the contrary, we may perhaps be the potential beneficiaries of nothing short of the "strongest possible" variant of that celebrated method, the variant befitting the gods we are claimed to be, we the children of most high, in the words of the psalmist ?

And, please, and by all means, do not allow yourselves to be overtaken here by an excessive bout of modesty. Yes, the meek may indeed inherit the Earth, as Jesus Christ says in the Sermon on the Mount. But if you are by any chance not meek enough, and want to inherit more, much much more, and in fact, just about everything, then you should not plunge yourself with cheerful desperation into accepting so easily, totally and for evermore the assumption that can only lead to a weak variant of the Mnchausen method. No, not at all. Rather, you should invest a considerable concern in the possibility of the second above alternative being valid. And you should try to benefit in this respect of the long record of sages supporting the veracity of that alternative, a record going back millennia, and known on several continents ...

C-S recalls Montaigne's advice that "There is nothing so beautiful and legitimate as to play the man well and properly." And then C-S adds that "We must try to be worthy of what humanity made of itself - and thus of what civilization has made of us ... Religion can neither guarantee that we do so, nor exempt us from needing to do so ..."

Well, we certainly can try to learn a lot and benefit from millennia of civilization, and not only by reading, say, Kama Sutra, the history of art and architecture, a variety of cooking books, or political philosophy ...

And then, if we do indeed manage to benefit so, we may be able to avoid ending up with a simple youthful overreaction by being so prejudiced that we filter out a vast treasure of wisdom literature - be it of the kind that later got appropriated by one or another religion, or on the contrary, of the kind that managed to avoid such a fate. Certainly, such a filtering out does not necessarily help even in pursuing the limited aim suggested among many other thinkers by a Montaigne, for instance ...

Can we thus conclude that, well, the method of our good old baron von Mnchausen does indeed work ?

But most likely, only and only in its strongest ever possible variants ?

And therefore, that method is far from being for sissies ?

The gap or divide, then, is not so much between persons who are theists, religious, or anything of the kind, and on the other hand, atheists, agnostics, and the like. And the issue is not about faith, fidelity, or on the contrary, the lack of either of them. No, not at all, since such divisions are but the product of a traditional view, a view marked by its long and strongly entrenched rigidity, a rigidity for which an ongoing flow of new relevant realms entering the public awareness within every generation is simply

unimaginable, let alone an actual reality, there in the open, and for everybody to see ...

And nowadays, with the ongoing dynamics of ever new relevant realms brought about by science and technology, and entering a wider public awareness within the lifetime of the same generation, it is hardly credible to further hold to old divisions, let alone, to their traditionally well known regrettable consequences ...

And important such regrettable consequences are there quite a few. After all, all those atheists, agnostics, cheerful desperates and many others of the kind cannot simply be completely wrong ...

And amusingly, they are not, precisely due to the fact that it was the very dynamics in our times of the ongoing flow of new realms entering general awareness which made them question the long established old ways. But then, on the other hand, they seem to have failed to embrace to a sufficient extent that very dynamics which did actually liberate them, and instead, they only allowed it to liberate them in part ...

### **Sorry, but Belief and Faith Are Good Only for ... Sissies ...**

A story from my own childhood may perhaps be useful here. When I was about ten year old, during a lunch at home on a Sunday, sometime in the summer, one of my parents made the remark that, of course, I knew about the mistaken belief according to which our Planet Earth was flat and immobile at the very centre of the universe, a belief which everybody, including the most learned and wise, had had until a mere couple of centuries earlier. And then, my other parent asked me whether I thought that, ever since we got over that belief, we humans have by now been free from any other such mistaken belief regarding some important issue.

Well, that second question managed to shock me most powerfully, since it instantly occurred to me that we could indeed still be having certain similarly mistaken beliefs, and not merely about some marginal issues ...

But then, before I managed to say one single word, one of my parents further asked when, in my view, was that fortunate moment during the last few centuries, if it ever was one like that, when we humans ceased to believe in nonsense with respect to more important issues ?

Well, needless to say, not yet being recovered from the massive shock of the previous question, that third question was just about to have my mind blocked for longer ...

And then, as if in order to really block my mind for a good few moments, one of my parents continued by suggesting that, perhaps, I should make a list of, say, half a dozen such mistaken beliefs which we humans were still holding to even in the present ...

Fortunately, after a few moments, I managed to recover. And what I felt so suddenly and most disturbingly, I formulated as a question to my parents : but then, how can we humans possibly ever trust ourselves, when we can hold for so long to such totally wrong beliefs in such most important issues ?

Needless to say, it took quite a few discussions till my parents could reassure me that we do have certain methods which can help us avoid holding to wrong beliefs, and do so for a longer time ...

Well, the issues whether the Earth was flat or not, or whether it moved or was immobile, were not merely of intellectual concern. And to add to the debacle, there had for millennia been most elementary facts experienced by countless humans which could suggest strong doubts about the Earth being flat.

Indeed, whenever ships left a harbour, quite everybody knew that the lower part of the ship would vanish first from the sight of those on the shore, and the last part of the ship to be still seen was the top of the mast, if there was any such mast. Furthermore, and precisely in the opposite order, when a ship was coming into a harbour, those on the shore would first see its highest parts above water, and only after that would they see the part which was just above the floating line. And such a phenomenon could clearly not happen if the Earth was flat. Certainly, in such a case all of the ship above the water would be seen all of the time, and the only thing to happen would be that all of the ship would look smaller and smaller to those on shore who watched it depart, till it would become a mere point, and then vanish altogether. And when coming into the harbour, those on the shore would first see a point on the water, and the point would grow, but in doing so, it would all the time be the whole ship, and not merely one or another part of it ...

Yet, for millennia, no one seemed to bother to put, so to say, one and one together ...

Needless to say, after that summertime lunch, I have for evermore been quite reluctant to base myself on mere beliefs, no matter how strongly they may have suggested themselves to me ...

And in this regard, my parents had fortunately quite fully attained their intention ...

So then, why do we still fall for beliefs ? And so often, fall so easily ?

And to add to that, why do we fall so easily for so many beliefs which are in fact mere superstitions ?

Of course, beliefs concern what in philosophy is called ontology, namely, what is supposed to be real, what is supposed to exist in fact. And therefore, beliefs may indeed - and do actually - reach to the very deepest and most important constituents upon which our cognitive and affective selves or beings live and function. Such beliefs may, therefore, be seen as the most important among our vital assumptions, so deep in us and so important to us that often we may not even be aware when they command us, or how they command us along the various moments of our everyday lives. And in fact, we simply may not be aware of what they actually are ...

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