Essay

About Truth and Bias

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ABSTRACT

It is shown that the examination of truth implicitly requires universal values that derive from Universal Wholeness. Universal values such as truth, love, compassion and justice, by their nature transcend and subsume physical events that we perceive in space and time. Since we are required to meaningfully interpret phenomenal experience in order to coherently respond to circumstance, we tend to contrive frameworks of understanding in language. This introduces personal biases that we identify with. We implicitly assume that our social and cultural frameworks universally reflect realities of the cosmic order, whether they are religious, spiritual, scientific, ethnic, or whatever. It becomes apparent that left-brain language alone is not up to the task since the meaning implicit in words depends upon right-brain intuitive insight into aspects of the cosmic order as we perceive it to be. Although it is not possible to reduce the cosmic order to language a universal methodology is introduced that embraces all possible structural varieties of phenomenal experience. It both requires and facilitates direct intuitive insight into the structural dynamics of the creative process in any context. This can provide a universal means of weeding out biases in our frameworks of understanding without eroding their essential core.

Key Words: truth, bias, intuitive insight, language, reason, cosmic order, Universal Truth, universal and particular, self and other, one and many, three brains.

Introduction to the Nature of Truth[1]

When we speak of truth we imply that there is a transcending reality that somehow embraces all possible varieties of phenomenal experience. We imply that there is a truth that is valid for all people for all time. Even if we believe that there is no such truth, that truth is a completely arbitrary affair that the individual alone is free to decide as they wish, we implicitly believe that this is true for all people for all time. Even if we believe that when we die it is the absolute end of sentient experience of any kind, then we believe that everyone who has ever lived faces this same psychic annihilation at death. We believe this is true for any intelligent creature living anywhere in the universe. There is an inescapable contradiction in terms involved here, because the denial of a transcending truth is implicitly claimed as universally true. No reasonable person chooses to believe that they alone face utter extinction. We all believe in a cosmic reality, even if it is absurd.

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There is a fundamentally important point here. There is both a universal and a particular aspect to the very nature of truth. This has been a prevailing theme throughout the history of both Eastern and Western philosophy. Although it may be expressed in different words - One and Many, Self and Other, Unity in Diversity, Universal and Particular - the same prevalent theme applies. We share in a universally common world of sensory experience that is not uniquely closed unto ourselves, even though the qualities of experience may be focused through us and interpreted in uniquely particular ways. Each human being is both the same and different. We are One and Many.

Truth Requires Confirmation in Phenomenal Experience

We generally agree that truth must allow of confirmation in phenomenal experience of some kind, whether privately or publicly perceived. We are free to believe that the moon is made of cheese but the phenomenal experience of moon missions proves otherwise. The phenomenal experience may itself be private and transient, even unique in quality, but if it reveals some facet of truth it must have universal aspects that are enduring. It must have a capacity to enhance one's perceptions with respect to better integrating one's overall experience of living. It must find private validation in phenomenal experience.

Truth Must Have Integrative Power by Spanning Space and Time

Spiritual, religious, humanist, and scientific endeavors all seek to better integrate our experience of living. They seek to enhance the quality of life, to make it better by finding a more unified perspective in some way. They seek to integrate our history, to span space and time, in anticipation of a better socially, emotionally and spiritually integrated future. All our various efforts at understanding phenomena seek a unified perspective, despite our cultural diversity and our different personal abilities. We all seek this feeling of unity, this feeling of being integrated - this feeling of being whole. We seek it in our identification with our culture, with our religion or lack of it, with our personal beliefs, with our faith in science, with our life style. We seek it in love by bridging the separation between Self and Other. We long for union. In general we seek it in our framework of understanding

The Dark Side

There is a dark side to all this of course. We can also seek that feeling of unity in hate. We can find it in being united against a common enemy. We can seek unity in pursuing the supremacy of Self to the exclusion of Other than Self. The tragedies of our human history attest to this. We can find that glorious feeling of unity in many ways. Some of them move us toward a more universally valid framework of understanding. Some of them move us in the opposite direction, toward separation and fragmentation. We can see the negative tendencies in others more easily than in ourselves and this perception is generally in polar contrast to our own implicitly accepted framework of understanding. Our views and opinions are easily biased without our being aware of it.

Biases and Value Judgments

Whatever the circumstances, we are continually required to choose between alternatives and accept, modify, or reject a variety of Other influences on us. We have to make value judgments all the time to live. This puts us in quite a fix. Can we be sure that the Other is the One who is biased? The influences may seem foreign and may threaten our sense of unity that we see as proper. Can we be sure that we are not the one who is biased? Is our framework of understanding and our associated feeling of Unity better than that of another? Or can we be sure that both are biased, that one is not more right than the other? Or can we be sure that there is not a more fundamental framework in which neither is completely biased? And if the other is biased in a way that oppresses or threatens us how are we to respond? How are we to expose bias without implicating an alternate bias? Is anyone omniscient? Can anyone claim to be all-knowing about anything? Or can anyone really claim they are not omniscient when whatever we believe we believe it to be universally true? Even if we say that no one is omniscient we believe this to be a universal truth. And we can not get along with believing nothing. Universal qualities keep intruding into particular beliefs.

Language, Reason & Intuitive Insight

We all depend upon personal intuitive insights, whether they are socially conditioned or not, to integrate and guide our behavior in some coherent way. We are also social creatures who are largely dependent upon language to mutually communicate and understand. With language comes a related capacity for left brain reason. We can deal with experience in abstraction to integrate past and future into a coherent plan of behavior or thought. And there are several thousand languages in the world offering a variety of ways to do this.

Our mute right brain intuitive capacities tend to be influenced accordingly, either enhanced or restricted, by our personal history. Our right intuitive hemisphere is characterized by holistic perceptions, aesthetics, propriety, integrating themes, that sort of thing. It tends to seek Unity but is limited by a left hemisphere need to find a degree of social consistency.[2] We tend to become subject to biases, both behaviorally and intuitively, according to our cultural conditioning.

In a larger sense language has brought with it the bipolar organization of the right and left hemispheres of our brain. It allows us to span space and time seemingly without limit, but it has also opened us to intuitively wonder about the nature of beginnings and ends. We are faced with an intuitive quest into the nature of the creation itself. Every culture has reflected on this and has derived its own story of creation. The Garden of Eden and the Big Bang are just two of many creation stories.

Assessing Biases and a Universal Framework of Understanding

So what is the measure of assessing biases in a global arena? How can we identify them? Is one person's social conditioning better than that of another? Can biases even be determined relative to our terrestrial circumstance without taking account of the cosmic context within which our

planet, solar system and galaxy exists? Is there a way to open perceptions to a truly universal perspective that allows of unlimited diversity of unbiased expression? Is a universal framework of understanding possible that can redeem the biases of cultural conditioning without eroding the historic foundations and wealth of our cultural diversity?

If we all behaved in a kind of socially conditioned lockstep we would be robots. So there can be no acceptable behavioral model that will work for all. If there is an answer, it is not to be found in idealized behavioral models or blind belief systems incorporating assumptions implicit in the use of language. There may be any number of generally acceptable behavioral responses to any given situation.

This leaves us presented with only one other possible avenue to explore if we hope to find universally acceptable solutions. This avenue requires direct intuitive insight into the structural dynamics of the creative process as it universally applies in any situation. The creative process is the cosmic order at work. The cosmic order is a dynamic evolving process. So we need to gain insight into how it is at work within us as we relate to the world around us and learn. To be an acceptable insight it must be universally valid. It must be able to find confirmation in every facet of phenomenal experience, both in the private and public domains. It must relate to the structure and related dynamics of the cosmic order and to all creation. This means that there must be a common structure to the creative process that recurs in every area of phenomenal experience. It is a tall order. We are talking about direct insight into the cosmic order in a way that transcends our own birth and death. It must also transcend and subsume the use of language. It must prescribe the roots of meaning implicit in any language.[3]

The Cosmic Order, Integrating History, Religious and Scientific Bias

The cosmic order must transcend and subsume the whole of space and time, the whole of history. Traditional religions have found answers in creation myths handed down from antiquity. We have always been bound by this need to integrate history in order to formulate an acceptable framework of understanding. Generally speaking creation myths draw upon a creator God who created the universe. They start with an omnipotent and omniscient Unity that created the diversity of experience through miracle. These beliefs do not worry too much about the mechanics of the creative process. Is this a bias? Was the world really created in six days? Can this be confirmed in phenomenal experience of any kind? How could there be days before there was a sun that our planet could rotate its face toward? It may have helped to get us over some rough spots but blind belief is clearly a kind of bias.

Modern science has reached in the opposite direction. It reaches back into the past by drawing upon the accumulated complexity of empirical evidence. It confirms its assumed truths by relying upon this evidence in an effort to integrate all the pieces of the puzzle to establish a singular Unified beginning. As with religious creation myths, there is a contradiction about the nature of time here. How can time have a beginning in time? Science shares with religion the need for Unity but it denies that the Unity of creation is intelligent in any way. The clock of time was only wound up in the initial Big Bang and it has been running down ever since. There was nothing

before that. This entire vast universe sprang into existence from absolutely nothing. That singular event has predetermined the spatial evolution of galaxies, stars and planets ever since. And it follows that biological evolution on the planet is a random process without intelligent planning and utterly without purpose. There is no transcending basis to reality or truth apart from blind fortuitous chance.

That being the case no creature in this vast universe has any reason to hope for any kind of psychic continuity beyond the grave. This universal truth is claimed for all brings for all time. Anyone who may believe to the contrary is afflicted with a religious bias. But if that is so then this truth constitutes a transcending reality that a scientist can know. It is a claim of omniscient insight into the cosmic order based on the mathematical extrapolation of empirical evidence back to a beginning of time and space. This belief clearly transcends one's own birth and death. The whole argument constitutes a contradiction in terms. Empirical evidence drawn from phenomenal experience is extrapolated to explain the origins of phenomenal experience from nothing. The origin negates the evidence it is based upon. It is a kind of bootstrapping ad absurdium. It can never find direct confirmation in phenomenal experience. It too can only be a blind belief. It too is a bias.

Objective Science and Subjective Religion

Are we to be forever impaled on the cross of one perspective opposed to the other? Are we to be forever faced with irreconcilable biases about the nature of Unity? Science musters powerful arguments based on solid empirical facts. It may be shaky about the interpretation of those facts when it comes to Grand Unified Theories of Everything, but it is certainly successful in providing us with cars, airplanes, TV sets, and other technological advances. It has shrunk the world into a common arena of discourse through advances in transport and communications. It has made us all aware that we live in a common global community and in doing so has brought our diverse biases to the fore.

Religions on the other hand have traditionally provided us with a moral basis of social behavior, albeit culturally biased to various degrees. This is absent in the physical and biological sciences. Science has traditionally rejected subjectivity in its realm. Science claims to be morally neutral in its material pursuits. This tends to make it an amoral belief system subject to being hijacked into any perverse cause.

Some curious observations can be made here. Religions generally deal with the subjective or private domain that we experience inside. Science generally deals with the objective public domain of our common experience outside. Since we are implicitly required to make value judgments, we can not avoid moral considerations implicit in the way experience is presented to us. If we are to avoid blind religious bias that may get off track, and if science provides no moral guidance, where are we to turn? We may have innate subjective intuitive feelings about the nature of right and wrong but history confirms that these can be subverted by identification with this or that biased cause. Identification with explicit material objectives can suppress or color subjective human conscience. Capitalism, communism, nationalism, fundamentalism are just a

few examples. Is a universal bridge possible that can Unify these two arenas of phenomenal experience, one subjective and the other objective? Is there a way that we can be loosed from the bonds of bias?

Unity and Universal Wholeness

Let us take a closer look at the concept of Unity. Can there be such thing as undifferentiated Unity? There would be no phenomena in experience to differentiate so obviously there is more to it. Oneness must allow of Many-ness.

Science seeks to unify the observed complexity of many-ness by causal processes of various kinds. There are structures and there are processes that together can be consistent with a unified perspective, at least to some practical degree. We can understand how a ball moves in reaction to being hit by a bat. The structures require a presumption of a spatial context. The processes require a presumption of a temporal context. So space and time are prerequisites for science.

Can there be a Unity to the Universe in space and time? This implies a boundary in either space or time or both. If there is a boundary in space then the question arises what is beyond that. We are faced with a contradiction, a two-ness, not oneness. And if space is infinite we can not find knowable Unity either. If there is a beginning or end in time then the question arises what is before or after that? The same contradictions arise. And if space and time together form a continuum as general relativity theory assumes, then we are back to the contradictions implicit in Big Bang Theory, that spacetime itself began from nothing.[4] It is noteworthy that Einstein questioned the spacetime continuum foundations of his own work late in life.[5]

So looking objectively outside at the universe does not resolve the question of Unity. Can looking subjectively inside do any better? Religious disciplines, or rather spiritual pursuits in general, offer the advantage that it is possible for an individual to find a transcending sense of Unity in their private experience that need not be in conflict with the objective world of our common experience. The knowing of Unity must be universal to be complete. And it need not require the conversion of others if it is a mute realization that is not dependent upon the objective assumptions of language.

This however is not consistent with the scientific basis of the technologies we have come to depend upon. The most fundamental assumptions of science must be privately renounced, ignored, or else regarded as deficient in some way that may be correctable in future. One can become a forest monk and withdraw from social participation in our technological age. And there may be some merit in this for rare individuals who may be able to provide a light in the forest. Otherwise, the individual concerned remains embroiled in worldly affairs and is faced with a schism in their subjective experience of Unity. Consequently for most of us there are certain boundary conditions implicit in the nature of Unity that need to be resolved from both an objective perspective and a subjective perspective. That word BOTH indicates an avenue of investigation that has never been properly explored before

Boundary Conditions Between Inside and Outside

There is a boundary that we experience between our private subjective experience and objective sensory experience accessible to all. We are implicitly aware of having an inside distinct from an outside. Moreover we are aware that all things have an inside distinct from an outside, all the way down to atoms. This boundary cannot be rigidly closed without communication of some kind across it, or Unity would not be possible. Everything would forever be isolated from everything else and thus unknowable. We would be doomed to an infinitely fragmented world without possibility of coherent meaning. This is the opposite end of the spectrum from undifferentiated Oneness that also does not allow of recognizing different phenomena. Between these two extremes we can find a new approach to understanding the structural dynamics of the cosmic order and the Unifying perspective that we seek. We seek to know universal wholeness in phenomenal experience.[6]

The Characteristics of Universal Wholeness and the System of Representation

The basic characteristics of Universal Wholeness can be summarized in brief. Everything must share a universal inside as well as a universal outside. It is generally acknowledged that we share a universal outside in what we call objective reality. We sense the universal outside as things outside of us in space.

The universal inside is intuitively sensed. It is a universal source of knowing inside distinct from what is known outside. It is a prerequisite for the self-similar perception of wholeness. Whatever anyone believes about the nature of universal truth they believe it is true for everyone. If I become totally extinct at death it MUST be true for everyone. No one is foolish enough to believe that they alone face extinction. If there is an option why would anyone choose this option?

The universal inside constitutes a universal Center. The universal outside constitutes a universal Periphery. Neither the inside nor the outside can be known to the exclusion of the other. They are mutually defined by active processes occurring across the boundary or interface between them. The universal inside thus has an active relationship to the universal outside across one or more active interfaces between them. The active interface that we normally experience is the surface of our body that defines inside from outside. Sensory input actively crosses this active interface from outside and we make motor responses from inside to outside.

There is a way to develop a comprehensive System of exploring all possible relationships of inside to outside between a specific number of active interfaces between them. This One System results in an open ended set of nested sub-Systems within it that progressively elaborate on the nature of universal wholeness. It is called simply the System. This works in such a way that the lower Systems, with a lower number of active interfaces, transcend and subsume the discrete higher sub-Systems that elaborate on them. In this way it remains One System of representing universal wholeness.

Even each higher sub-System, identified as System 2, 3, or 4, etc., is holistic and complete unto itself. As an elaboration of System 1 it must be. The System is a structural approach that embraces all possible structural varieties of phenomena. It prescribes the structures and processes of how the cosmic order works as a dynamic whole. More details of the System are introduced in articles on the website.[7]

This System of representing the cosmic order is not dependent upon language, but rather vice versa. There is meaning implicit in the way that it works. This allows meanings in language to be fine tuned to more accurately relate to phenomena when the System is applied as a method of investigation. The System enhances intuitive insight into how the creative process works in any circumstance

The System as an Expression of the Cosmic Order Free from Bias

This universal method of delineating the creative process can find confirmation in phenomenal experience. It is a new methodology that complements traditional scientific methods. It has greater integrative power since it begins by acknowledging the requirements of universal wholeness. Traditional science tries to integrate a holistic worldview from the complex array of fragmented evidence by employing methods that invariably make unfounded assumptions that require a swamp of ad hoc modifications.

It is only in recent years that enough empirical evidence has been accumulated to allow comprehensive efforts in this direction. The System can find confirmation in the physical, biological and social sciences, consistent with the empirical evidence of traditional science. It can do this more meaningfully than traditional methods can ever hope to do unaided. It places those methods in a more fundamentally coherent context that expands the horizons and methods of science. This is demonstrated in a number of articles on the website.

This new methodology is not religion. It is also not inconsistent with the central essence of the world's spiritual traditions, apart from their cultural biases. Science and religion can be complementary. Each can provide perspective and balance to the other. The System can facilitate a bridge between these complementary subjective and objective perspectives without imposing a blind belief system. The System is not a belief system. It can only be understood through exhaustive question. It requires and facilitates direct intuitive insight into the structural dynamics of the cosmic order.

The realization of Truth comes through an open quest, not through closed belief, although an open quest requires faith that there must be answers. It is significant that the primary focus of this new methodology must be on the sciences. Science requires a new mandate that can save it from the biases that threaten to undermine its overall value to us as human beings. This requires reexamination of the empirical evidence as it relates to the structural requirements implicit in the nature of universal wholeness. Deficiencies in current theories of science can be weeded out to make way for more a comprehensive and meaningful world view.

Left brain language and right brain intuition are both fueled by our ancient emotional brain.[8] Our emotional brain is intimately linked to our autonomic nervous system that reaches back throughout the quadruped vertebrate lineage. Our emotional roots go back 400 million years, while the left and right hemispheres of our neo-cortex are relatively recent, expanding with the higher mammals and hominid species that preceded the appearance of modern humans only 100,000 years ago or so.[9] We are faced with a need to find a sustainable balance between these three integrating focal points of our everyday experience that span and integrate a vast reach of natural history.[10] We are faced with a need to do this in a way that is in accord with the cosmic order through which we have evolved. This requires accord with our natural environment.

Two Conflicting Variants of the Cosmic Order

The material advances of objective science must be tempered by unbiased insight into moral propriety in our collective social endeavors. In searching for some guidance in this regard two variants of the creative process present themselves. The variant of the cosmic order that integrates phenomenal experience is called the evolutionary variant. The involutionary variant is contrary to the evolutionary variant.

Involutionary variants to the creative process appear in Systems 3 and higher. These variants lose contextual propriety. They are degenerate. In Systems 4 and higher they become very relevant to biological evolution. The evolutionary and involutionary variants share common referents in the way that the cosmic order works.[11] We emotionally and intuitively sense these two conflicting options in most things that we consciously do. We have to decide between them, so that value judgments implicitly come into play. They may be of little consequence such as which movie to watch or they may be important such as choosing to rob a bank or do drugs. In the involutionary variant, conditioned routines tend to become ends in themselves. They tend to lose living contextual relevance. They lead to fragmentation and decay.

There is a bi-polar moral disparity at the roots of perception where one variant feeds on the other. The involutionary variant feeds on the fruits of the evolutionary variant. And the evolutionary variant can redeem the energies of the involutionary variant since they share common objective referents in behavior or thought. Both variants have expressive and regenerative modes and the expressive mode of one is the regenerative mode of the other. It takes careful study of the System dynamics to understand this well. The website article entitled Human Values and Involution shows how it works structurally.

This moral tug of war is always there waiting to be resolved in the overall integration of phenomenal experience. It works in many ways at different biological levels of sentience. It is also there in the integration of our personal experience and in our socio-economic endeavors. Routines of behavior tend to become ends in themselves. We eat to live. If we eat for the sake of eating there will be a price to pay. And we don't manufacture products for their own sake. They must find contextual relevance in the market place of social and environmental needs. Identification with vested interests of many kinds can implicate ulterior motives that subvert a balanced perspective in various ways.

Weeding Out Biases

An insight into how the two variants work can bring us to terms with weeding out biases. This is especially important in our sciences because traditional approaches to science do not distinguish between evolutionary and involutionary tendencies in how scientific interpretations are developed and used. There are frequently involutionary seeds implicit in the premises upon which theories are based.

For example space and time are generally assumed as a priori realities in our physical sciences. This may be fine in understanding how to generate electricity or build a car, but it leads to contradictions when it comes to cosmology. Space-time concepts derived from creation can hardly be used to postulate their own origin in space-time terms. This places us outside creation, divorced from our own understanding. And all cultural traditions have established that we need an integrating framework of understanding. We need a worldview that integrates history. We can not function without one. We need a context to relate to, both personally and culturally. Science can not dispense with this need either. That is why it seeks Grand Unified Theories.

Traditional scientific methods are very limited in understanding how living biological systems grow and evolve. They can decipher a maze of isolated pieces of the puzzle and certain causal connections, but they have proved sterile at understanding how living systems are integrated as a whole. This is essential information if we are ever to achieve a sustainable balance with one another and with our natural environment. The methodology of the System provides the intuitive picture on the cover of the jigsaw puzzle box that can guide the meaningful assembly of the myriad empirical pieces assembled by traditional scientific efforts.

Given the pragmatic scientific advantages of a universal methodology offered by the System, a much more coherent world view can emerge. It can be a world view substantiated by direct confirmation with phenomenal experience. Since it is not dependent upon the linguistic assumptions of language it does not impose specific ideologies. However it does reveal underlying creative dynamics associated with the requirements of universal wholeness.

In a global social context this can provide more responsible guidance for the world's religious traditions to weed out conflicting cultural biases, as well as in traditional science. It can do this without negating the essential core of these traditions as they have historically evolved. We can not change our history. We can not discard our cultures, but we can learn to see them in more constructive ways as vehicles to make a meaningful contribution to the world we share. We can redeem the errors of bias, whatever their nature.

References

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