

PHILOSOPHY DIGEST

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Our focus in these profiles is on the subject's philosophical thinking as it applies to scientific spiritualism and universal consciousness. Occasionally text will be set in **bold**, to indicate a direct connection with ideas in the Scientific Spiritualism laid out in Saltafide. Greater detail on the subject's work can be found in the more copious Physics Reference and Philosophy Reference documents.

NOTE highlighted words can be clicked to link to relevant information in WIKIPEDIA.

Preface	3
Pre-socratic	4
PLATO	7
Aristotle	13
Epicurus	16
Epictetus	19
Irenaeus	22
Plotinus	25
AUGUSTINE	29
Pico della Mirandola	40
Descartes	44
Leibniz	47
Spinoza	58
Locke	62
Berkeley	63
Burke	65
Hume	66
Kant	68
Schiller	74
Fichte	77

Schelling	81
Schopenhauer	84
Hegel	92
Kierkegaard	96
Fechner	101
Emerson	106
James	112
Royce	120
North Whitehead	126
Bergson	133
Scheler	140
Husserl	147
Heidegger	150
Nietzsche	160
Sartre	163
Jung	165
Russell	166
Wittgenstein	168
Merleau- Ponty	176
Dewey	180
Popper	182
JOHN HICKS	187
Apologists	188
Gurus	190
Theosophy and Theopathy	193

Preface

The sources for the digests are the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Wikipedia (with hyperlinks to reconnect to source material) and Conga Line of Consciousness, *Ciampa, 2022* (available on Apple Books, Amazon and free viewing on saltafide.com).

Pre-socratic

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

Thales of Miletus,(623-545 BC) was the founder of the Ionian school of philosophy, where Greek and Western philosophy really began. Thales is hailed as the father of philosophy by some distinguished philosophers including, Aristotle, Bertrand Russel and Edmund Husserl, to name a few. As if that wasn't enough Thales also invented Geometry which he used to measure the nearby Egyptian pyramids.

According to Bertrand Russel, Thales got us thinking about the unity of all substance, which also makes him the father of our compulsion to unify. Thales' unity referred to substances of the real world not the surreal world. I don't know exactly what he thought about the surreal world except that he did explode many myths which explained the phenomena of the real world. In that sense you could say he was the father of science. Aristotle would be quite willing to share that honor with Thales. Thales's distinguished pupils include Anaximander and Pythagoras.

Anaximander (610-546 BC) was the author of some of the earliest surviving lines of Western philosophy which spoke about the "Boundless" realm beyond geography, highlighted here because this is the first recorded metaphysical speculation, looking to a world beyond geography. Of course to get beyond geography he had also to be the world's first geographer.

Pythagoras (570 BC) (not to be confused with Protagoras) is the next great metaphysician. He was the founder of a secret society that believed numbers and music were mystical functions of a divine consciousness. His mystical numerological rituals are faded legends and little can be said about their practice and the effects on daily life three millennia ago. Despite the fact that he is one of the most famous Greek philosophers, he wrote nothing. Like Socrates and Christ we have to learn about these momentous ideas from disciples, which include the likes of Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle.

Most of us only know him because of his Pythagorean theorem which we learned in high school geometry (the square of the hypotenuse of any right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides); that never changes and is said to be discovered rather than invented by Pythagoras. Remember his teacher was Thales who discovered Geometry. Both philosophers saw this math as a metaphysical perfection that resides above the imperfect world.

Any string player who presses a vibrating string to get different notes is in Pythagoras's debt. This is an early "string theory." His harmonic ratios are the earliest example of the reverberations of the metaphysical world in the physical world.

There is Buddhist tinge to Pythagorean teachings. Cults in Greece and Italy practiced his prescribed asceticism to achieve spiritual ascendance. There does seem to be a God in their system of beliefs and a freedom to choose a 'right path' which has its rewards in a kind of immortality. So we can call it metaphysics. Already in the Pythagoreans we see the game of life as testing ground for the perfection of imperfections. We have no explanation of why the starting line for the human race is 'imperfection.' Nevertheless we went on to call it Karma and Original Sin.

Like all good metaphysics Pythagoreans had an 'immortality.' They believed that the soul went through a series of reincarnations on earth that eventually wound up on the blessed isles of the moon. I wonder what their reaction would be to the pictures our astronauts brought back of rocks and more rocks. He would probably come up with some sidereal math to the next galaxy. Pythagoreans believed that space was endless.

Heraclitus (500 BC), discovered the perception/ deception anomaly, talked about in Conga Line of Consciousness. He said: "Poor witnesses for men are their eyes and ears if they have barbarian souls." Heraclitus also inspired Epictetus and Seneca who inspired Marcus Aurelius who inspired George Washington. Heraclitus also authored the ever changing river metaphor we stepped into on several occasions. Plato saw that the Heraclitan river of flux had to be contained in a constant river bed. Plato uses the dynamic flux to establish the static perfection of the sublime. Heraclitus taught us that things change continuously, but didn't explain the idea of change. Change relative to what? There has to be the one thing that doesn't change by comparison or change cannot be perceived. That was left for Plato to figure out.

Democritus, (460-370 BC) known in antiquity as the 'laughing philosopher' because of his emphasis on the value of 'cheerfulness,' was also one of the two founders of the ancient atomist theory. He elaborated the materialist account of the natural world originated by his teacher Leucippus. The atomists held that there are these smallest indivisible components from which everything else is composed, and that these move about in an infinite void. Democritus's importance to us is that he also saw a division between subjects and objects,

where objects had properties such as size and shape, while subjects had only 'nomos,' subjective ideas about the objects such as color. This could be taken as the beginning of phenomenology.

Protagoras (490–420 BC) (not to be confused with Pythagoras) is more important now, because he predicted the quantum quandary. Protagoras' famous quote: "Man is the measure of all things" heralds the separation of "measurement," a function of consciousness, from "the measured." The chasm between subject and objects still haunts quantum physics. Quantum physicists like Heisenberg, Bohr and Schrodinger saw that the very process of observation influenced the observed in ways that remain a mystery to this day.

Parmenides of Elea, (500 BC) and his fellow Milesians turned the cynical notion of flux onto itself. Parmenides showed that to entertain the notion of change there must be an eternal background of constancy; a 'beyond' where things which haven't happened yet, are hatched. By definition this would be unknown to humans and yet it must be. It follows, then, that there must be some **one** who understands it all, and that would have to be the one God, and we would have to be connected to that God to have come up with that idea. Parmenides articulated the "unity" proposed by Thales which then inspired Plato to consecrate that unity.

PLATO

The importance of Plato to our leap of faith is that he is the most prominent, if not the first, thinker to put into his own words, the most important philosophical insight which had enough significance to make it down through the centuries: the notion that all is not what it appears, and, therefore, that there is more in heaven and earth than can be dreamed of in any human mind. Plato humbles us and at the same time inspires us to something beyond natural intelligence which we now call supernatural.

Unlike the work of nearly all of his contemporaries, Plato's entire body of work is believed to have survived intact for over 2,400 years.

Those who influenced Plato are said to include Socrates, (if in fact he was more than an invented character of Plato); the [pre-Socratics Pythagoras](#), [Heraclitus](#) and [Parmenides](#). Few of his predecessors' works remain extant and much of what we know about these figures today derives from Plato himself.

The Forms

"Platonism" and its theory of Forms (or theory of Ideas) denies the reality of the material world, considering it only an image or copy of the real world. The theory of Forms is first introduced in the [Phaedo](#) dialogue (also known as *On the Soul*). According to this theory of Forms there are three worlds, with the apparent world consisting of the first two natural layers: that of material objects and of mental images, and the "third realm" consisting of the supernatural Forms. Plato's Forms thus represent [types](#) of things, as well as [properties](#), patterns, and [relations](#), to which we refer as objects. Just as individual tables, chairs, and cars refer to objects in this world, 'tableness', 'chairness', and 'carness', as well as e. g. [justice](#), [truth](#), and [beauty](#) refer to objects in another world. One of Plato's most cited examples for the Forms were the truths of [geometry](#), such as the [Pythagorean theorem](#).

There is thus a world of perfect, eternal, and changeless meanings of predicates, the Forms, existing in the [realm](#) of Being outside of [space and time](#).

The Cave

The Allegory of the Cave is where dummies are divided from thinkers. The average dummy is ineluctably chained so that he can only see shadows and has no idea that there is more, i.e. that which causes the shadows. Thinkers, philosophers who have climbed out of the cave and experience the light of day are the only guardians who fit to rule. Socrates (who speaks for Plato) claims that the enlightened men of society must be forced from their divine contemplation and be compelled to run the city according to their expanded vision. Thus is born the idea of the "[philosopher-king](#)", the

wise person who accepts the power thrust upon him by the people who are wise enough to choose a good master. This is the main thesis of Socrates in the *Republic*, that the most wisdom the masses can muster is the wise choice of a ruler.^[12]

Socrates admits that very few climb out of the den, or cave of ignorance, and those who do, not only have a terrible struggle to attain the heights, but when they go back down for a visit or to help other people up, they find themselves objects of scorn and ridicule, and Christians would add- crucifixion. As we all know Socrates himself was put to death.

The soul

Plato compares the soul (Psyche) to a chariot. In this allegory he introduces a triple soul which is composed of a Charioteer and two horses. Charioteer is a symbol of intellectual and logical part of the soul (logistikon), and two horses represents moral virtues (thymoeides) and passionate instincts (epithymetikon), Respectively. Plato advocates a belief in the immortality of the soul in several other dialogues that end with long speeches imagining the [afterlife](#).

In Platonic thought existence spills over the borders of lifetime, which is not only comforting, but, makes much more sense than the alternative view that it all ends with nothing, there being no way to prove or even imagine “nothing.”

Recollection

In several of Plato's dialogues, Socrates promulgates the idea that is a matter of [recollection](#) of the state before one is born, and not of observation or study.

In the *Meno*, Socrates uses a geometrical example to expound Plato's view that knowledge is acquired by recollection. Socrates elicits a fact concerning a geometrical construction from a slave boy, who could not have otherwise known the fact (due to the slave boy's lack of education). The knowledge must be present, ‘a-priori’, i.e. before and beyond any experience.

PLATO

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

Plato (429–347 B.C.)

We have already talked about Plato a great deal even before his grand entrance, and that is because you cannot talk about philosophy without talking about Plato. Plato is the most penetrating, wide-ranging, and influential philosopher in Western thought. Some scholars believe that Neoplatonism can be found in Islamic philosophy, as well [Ilkinde]. The billions of minds that have been shaped by Platonic concepts probably never read a single page of the thousands of pages and billions of words Plato wrote in his 82 years on the planet.

Plato is not popular reading and this has to do with the archaic dramatic style he used. The dialogues which frame all Plato's metaphysics sound like badly written screenplays to modern audiences, who are accustomed to having their interest held by plot and pathos, which were neither available or necessary for Plato's audiences, who came to be stimulated by dialectic not distracted by entertainment. Nevertheless, the metaphors, the arguments and the ideas behind the words immortalize Plato, because they provide a rational runway up to the lift off point to the other realm. Plato did not invent the idea of two realms, but the connection of the mundane to the sublime could not have been made without Plato.

Plato believed that reason will get you as close as you can get to the sublime, which is not quite all the way. Plato's dialectic annealed the metaphysics of pre-socratic philosophers such as Heraclitus, Anaxagoras and Parmenides. Plato gives form to the misty mysticism suggested by the earlier metaphysicians. "**Forms**" are a gallery of perfect designs for all the imperfect objects and subjects in the lower real world. **Forms** exist in a separate realm just beyond understanding, just outside spacetime, a *soft place*, out of reach but close enough to be inspirational.

Plato makes this separate realm of **Forms** quite plausible in Phaedrus and Book X of Laws, where he distinguished between the perceived color of a red object and the **Formal** concept of redness, or the concept of odd which applies to the number three. Convincingly he demonstrates, through dialectic questioning, that these underlying formal concepts must exist within a sublime objective realm or our subjective perception of the, so called, real world would make no sense. Now suddenly we have a metaphysical objectivity born out of a plausible

subjectivity. This is the ultimate magic trick. God is pulled out of a hat; both the hat and God are beyond our comprehension and yet somehow undeniable.

Plato's writings are set out below in what some scholars believe is chronological order

Apology,
Charmides,
Crito,
Euthydemus,
Euthyphro,
Gorgias,
Hippias
Ion,
Laches,
Lysis,
Protagoras,
Republic
Cratylus,

Menexenus,
Meno
Phaedo,
Symposium
Parmenides,
Theaetetus,
Phaedrus
Sophist,
Statesman,
Philebus,
Timaeus,
Critias,
Laws

Every age has philosophers who count themselves Platonists. Plato has become Platonism and Neo Platonism and that "Neo" can refer to the first century AD or the twentieth century AD where philosophers such as Bertrand Russel and others have adapted Platonism to modern scientific thinking. Even in the current philosophical doldrums where couch potato and instagram zombies have forgotten how to spell Plato, Platonism haunts the mundane mindlessness.

Every philosopher in our conga line is connected to Plato in one way or another. This accounts for the unity that shines through the complexity of each philosophy, like silver beads on a single golden thread. [That's my very own "string theory."]

Every leaf in the forest is different but all have some things in common with 'leafdom.' Change is always a change from something to something else, but tensed (timed) truth or falsehoods needs a timeless backdrop to become sequential thoughts and beliefs.

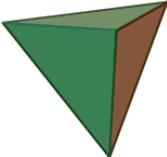
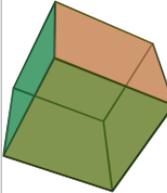
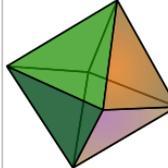
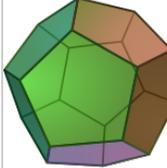
The '**Forms**' of Plato's upper realm trickle down and tickle our fallible human consciousness. Mundane objects are mutable as are the sense data they trigger in our minds, but mutability cannot exist without the backdrop of immutability to

which consciousness must be connected. The knowledge of the ever changing world of objects relies on the never changing mental concepts.

We suddenly come to understand that our ideas are tips of icebergs. There is no other rational explanation for how we can conceive beyond what we perceive.

Platonic solids

Because they illustrate this concept, Platonic solids, have enchanted geometry and all the sciences for eons, including Euclid, Kepler and others to this day. Plato may have learned about them from earlier philosophers, but he immortalized them them in the dialogue Timaeus.

Tetrahedron	Cube	Octahedron	Dodecahedron	Icosahedron
Four faces	Six faces	Eight faces	Twelve faces	Twenty faces
				
(3D model)				

The underlying math must be timeless. We instinctively understand the timelessness of the ideal realm. We know that to put a clock and calendar in the surreal world of Platonic geometry would be ridiculous. “How long ago did triangles come to hold no more or no less than 180 degrees?” That is a silly question to any one. The silliness is the curtain to the mystical back room of backdrops, Plato’s perfect **Forms**.

We all agree that our senses delude us from time to time. How could that statement be true without some super sense beyond the senses. In Theaetetus we are shown that sensing and knowing are not the same. Cynics would try to avoid the ideal realm by insisting that corrected thinking is simply the result of additional sense data from subsequent observations. Correct thinking must be more than validation by subsequent observations, because there has to be a conceptual crucible for the perceptions and corrections to be amalgamated. Where does that come from?

None of us know it all, but all of us know enough of it to know there's more. Even if we only see the shadows in the cave, like the cave dwellers in Plato's Republic, we are able to understand that there may be something causing the shadows. This instinctive, 'a priori' back drop on which all knowledge hangs is our divine connection.

Plato believes that philosophers see more because they have ventured out of the shadows of the cave of the mundane. When they are first in the sunlight they are dazzled, but they soon adapt and realize that they are seeing more than ever before. What I call floating to the coign of vantage.

On their return to the cave, what I call keeping in touch with the grounders, they are worse at processing the shadows than are cave prisoners who have never seen anything but shadows, but the enlightened philosophers have more conceptual powers which overcomes the sensory failings.

Neoplatonism is the foundation of Western idealism and spiritualism. Judeo-Christian civilization could not exist without Plato. This is true for both Hebrew man and Greek man, a division set in stone by Matthew Arnold, a nineteenth century English poet.

Hebrew man was imperfect and the relationship with the supernatural was more about sticks than carrots. Greek man was perfectible and more connected to the divine, drawn more by carrot, more than stick. Plato hellenized Judaism somewhat, through Philo of Alexandria in the early first century. Plato's influence on Christian thought also came through Alexandria, particularly through Clement of Alexandria and eventually Saint Augustine.

Matthew Arnold sees the punishing wrathful Hebrew God continuing on through Christianity and exerting a much more powerful influence than Neoplatonism. The early Christians, of course were Jews and could not help but be influenced by the Hebrew concept of human defects, which disappointed their angry wrathful God whom they were constantly trying to appease by sacrifice.

This must have influenced Augustine (who we shall meet presently), who branded us with original sin made out of Plato's natural human fallibility. For both Plato and Augustine the only way out is up.

Aristotle

Aristotle talked about many things. Here we are concerned with his views on human consciousness and metaphysics.

Aristotle was Plato's student, the father of metaphysics, but Aristotle's ideas aspire to erase the gap between physics and metaphysics. Aristotle disagreed with Plato about the dis- location of universals.

Plato's material universe was connected but definitely and infinitely separated from the realm of immaterial [universal forms](#). When we look at an apple, for example, there is a particular apple, which we see, and a universal form of an apple, which we can only imagine. Universal forms are not identical with the material things they idealize. For example, it is possible that there is no particular good in existence, but "good" is still a proper universal form. Aristotle insisted that all universals are instantiated, or could be, at some point in time, and that there are no universals that are unattached, hence the beginning of materialistic monism. Where Plato spoke of the world of forms, a place where all universal forms subsist, Aristotle maintained that universals exist within the material world, within each thing on which each universal is predicated. So, according to Aristotle, the form of apple exists within each apple, rather than in the world of the forms.

Memory

According to Aristotle in *On the Soul*, memory is the ability to hold a perceived experience in the mind and to distinguish between the internal "appearance" and an occurrence in the past.^[90] In other words, a memory is a mental picture ([phantasm](#)) that can be recovered. The process is entirely in the physical world. This photo materialism would place consciousness which houses memory entirely within the physical world. Aristotle believed an impression is left on a semi-fluid bodily organ that undergoes several changes in order to make a memory, like a photographic emulsion. Aristotle uses the term 'memory' for the actual remains of an experience in the form of an impression left behind by a physical sensation. Memory is of the past, prediction is of the future, and sensation is of the present. Retrieval of impressions cannot be performed suddenly. A transitional channel is needed and located in our past experiences, both for our previous experience and present experience.^[93]

People are continually weaving together new impressions of experiences. To search for these impressions, people search the memory itself.^[94] Recollection

occurs when one retrieved experience naturally follows another. If the chain of "images" is needed, one memory will stimulate the next. When people recall experiences, they stimulate the chain of previous experiences until they reach the one that is needed.^[95] Recollection is thus the self-directed activity of retrieving the information stored in a memory impression.^[96] Only humans can remember impressions of intellectual activity, such as numbers and words. Animals that have perception of time can retrieve memories of their past observations. Remembering involves only perception of the things remembered and of the time passed.^[97]

Senses, perception, memory, dreams, are all physical action in Aristotle's psychology. Impressions are stored in the [sensorium](#) (the heart), linked by his [laws of association](#) (similarity, contrast, and [contiguity](#)).

Aristotle believed the chain of thought, which ends in recollection of certain impressions, was connected systematically in relationships such as similarity, contrast, and [contiguity](#), described in his [laws of association](#). Aristotle believed that past experiences are hidden within the mind. A force operates to awaken the hidden material to bring up the actual experience. According to Aristotle, association is the power innate in a mental state, which operates upon the unexpressed remains of former experiences, allowing them to rise and be recalled.^{[98][99]}

Dreams

Aristotle describes sleep in *On Sleep and Wakefulness*.[[] Sleep takes place as a result of overuse of the senses[]] or of digestion, so it is vital to the body.^[101] While a person is asleep, the critical activities, which include thinking, sensing, recalling and remembering, do not function as they do during wakefulness. Since a person cannot sense during sleep they can not have desire, which is the result of sensation. However, the senses are able to work during sleep,^[101] albeit differently,^[100] unless they are weary.^[101]

During sleep the impressions made throughout the day are noticed as there are no new distracting sensory experiences.^[100] So, dreams result from these lasting impressions. Since impressions are all that are left and not the exact stimuli, dreams do not resemble the actual waking experience.[[]

Chance and spontaneity

[Accident \(philosophy\)](#)

According to Aristotle, spontaneity and chance are causes of some things, distinguishable from other types of cause such as simple necessity. Chance as an incidental cause lies in the realm of [accidental things](#), "from what is

spontaneous". There is also a more specific kind of chance, which Aristotle names "luck", that only applies to people's moral choices.

Since Aristotle never wrote any of his beliefs, we have only the notes of his pupils to go by and the numerous transcriptions and interpretations over the centuries, but for all that survives of his philosophy it does not appear that he believed in a master plan as such. By implication the idea that some things are chance and luck and some are not necessitates a plan with hole in it. But he never said that directly to my knowledge. Like his progeny of scientific materialists the first causes and mysteries are connected by a safety line tied in the slip knot of semantics. As for his metaphysics one could see his special instances of "Chance" as divine intervention.

Epicurus

Born: February 341 BC, [Samos, Greece](#)

Died: 270 BC, [Athens, Greece](#)

Epicurus did not deny the gods but rather divine providence, which is a bit of a conundrum. The problem of evil paradox lies in the fact that evil and god cannot coexist, because god by definition is all good and all powerful which would have prevented or never created evil. And yet, evil most assuredly exists, witness the human suffering so god must not exist. Nevertheless, Epicurus insists that gods do exist, they are just too divine to bother about worldly circumstances. Evil and suffering is man made, so we can't blame the gods. But what about natural disasters and animal suffering. Divine disinterest does provide a dubious answer, there.

Epicurus rejected the conventional Greek view of the gods as anthropomorphic beings who walked the earth like ordinary people, fathered illegitimate offspring with mortals, and pursued personal feuds. Instead, he taught that the gods are morally perfect, but detached and immobile beings who live in the remote regions of interstellar space. In line with these teachings, Epicurus adamantly rejected the idea that deities were involved in human affairs in any way. Epicurus maintained that the gods are so utterly perfect and removed from the world that they are incapable of listening to prayers or supplications or doing virtually anything aside from contemplating their own perfections. In his *Letter to Herodotus*, he specifically denies that the gods have any control over natural phenomena, arguing that this would contradict their fundamental nature, which is perfect, because any kind of worldly involvement would tarnish their perfection. He further warned that believing that the gods control natural phenomena would only mislead people into believing the superstitious view that the gods punish humans for wrongdoing, which only instills fear and prevents people from attaining *ataraxia*.

The earliest sighting of the paradox of evil in the world of a good God- (termed "Theodicy, by Leibniz much later on) is attributed to Epicurus by [David Hume](#), and the Christian apologist [Lactantius](#). Since the vast majority of Epicurus's writings have been lost there is some uncertainty around this provenance. However it is possible that some form of this 'theodicy paradox' may have been found in his lost treatise *On the Gods*, which Diogenes Laërtius describes as one of his greatest works. Influenced by [Democritus](#), [Aristippus](#), [Pyrrho](#),^[3] and possibly the [Cynics](#), he turned against the [Platonism](#) of his day and established his own school, known as "the Garden", in Athens. Only three letters written by him—the letters to [Menoceus](#), [Pythocles](#), and [Herodotus](#)—and two collections of quotes—the *Principal Doctrines* and the *Vatican Sayings*—have survived intact, along with a few fragments of his other writings. Most knowledge of his teachings comes from later authors, particularly the biographer [Diogenes Laërtius](#), the Epicurean Roman poet [Lucretius](#) and the Epicurean philosopher

[Philodemus](#), and with hostile but largely accurate accounts by the [Pyrrhonist](#) philosopher [Sextus Empiricus](#), and the [Academic Skeptic](#) and statesman [Cicero](#). Epicurus's extant writings demonstrate that he did believe in the existence of deities. Furthermore, religion was such an integral part of daily life in Greece during the early Hellenistic Period that it is doubtful that anyone during that period could have been an atheist in the modern sense of the word. Instead, the Greek word [ἄθεος](#) (*átheos*), meaning "without a god", was used as a term of abuse, not as an attempt to describe a person's beliefs.

Epicurus was a [hedonist](#), meaning he taught that what is pleasurable is morally good and what is painful is morally evil. He defined "pleasure" as the absence of suffering and taught that all humans should seek to attain the state of [ataraxia](#), meaning "untroubledness", a state in which the person is completely free from all pain or suffering. He argued that most of the suffering which human beings experience is caused by the irrational fears of death, [divine retribution](#), and punishment in the afterlife. In his *Letter to Menoeceus*, Epicurus explains that people seek wealth and power on account of these fears, believing that having more money, prestige, or political clout will save them from death.

Epicurus tells us not to worry about death because you won't feel a thing. He writes in his *Letter to Menoeceus*: "Accustom thyself to believe that death is nothing... for ... death is the privation of all sentience;... Death is the end of existence, and so the terrifying stories of punishment in the afterlife are ridiculous superstitions. "Death, therefore, ... is nothing to us, ... when we **are**, death is not come, and, when death is come, we **are not**." From this doctrine arose the Epicurean epitaph: *Non fui, fui, non sum, non-curo* ("I was not; I was; I am not; I do not care"), which is inscribed on the gravestones of his followers and seen on many ancient gravestones of the [Roman Empire](#).

The [Tetrapharmakos](#) presents a summary of the key points of Epicurean ethics:

Epicureans believed that the soul was mortal,

Don't fear god

Don't worry about death

What is good is easy to get

What is terrible is easy to endure

Although Epicurus has been commonly misunderstood as an advocate of the rampant pursuit of pleasure, he, in fact, maintained that a person can only be happy and free from suffering by living wisely, soberly, and morally. He strongly disapproved of raw, excessive sensuality and warned that a person must take into account whether the consequences of his actions will result in suffering, writing, "the pleasant life is produced not by a string of drinking bouts and revelries, nor by the enjoyment of boys and women, nor by fish and the other items on an expensive menu, but by sober reasoning." He also wrote that a single good piece of cheese could be equally pleasing as an entire feast.

A person who engages in acts of dishonesty or injustice will be "loaded with troubles" on account of his own guilty conscience and will live in constant fear that his wrongdoings will be discovered by others. A person who is kind and just to others, however, will have no fear and will be more likely to attain ataraxia.

Epicurus distinguished between two different types of pleasure: "moving" pleasures (κατὰ κίνησιν ἡδοναί) and "static" pleasures (καταστηματικαὶ ἡδοναί). "Moving" pleasures occur when one is in the process of satisfying a desire and involve an active titillation of the senses. After one's desires have been satisfied (e.g. when one is full after eating, or sexually satiated), the pleasure quickly goes away and the suffering of wanting to fulfill the desire again returns. For Epicurus, static pleasures are the best pleasures because moving pleasures are always bound up with pain. Epicurus had a low opinion of sex and marriage, regarding both as having dubious value. Instead, he maintained that platonic friendships are essential to living a happy life. One of the Principle Doctrines states, "Of the things wisdom acquires for the blessedness of life as a whole, far the greatest is the possession of friendship." He also taught that philosophy is itself a pleasure to engage in.[One of the quotes from Epicurus recorded in the Vatican Sayings declares, "**In other pursuits, the hard-won fruit comes at the end. But in philosophy, delight keeps pace with knowledge.** It is not after the lesson that enjoyment comes: **learning and enjoyment happen at the same time.**" Epicurus distinguishes between three types of desires: natural and necessary, natural but unnecessary, and vain and empty. Natural and necessary desires include the desires for food and shelter. These are easy to satisfy, difficult to eliminate, bring pleasure when satisfied, and are naturally limited. Going beyond these limits produces unnecessary desires, such as the desire for luxury foods. Although food is necessary, luxury food is not necessary. Correspondingly, Epicurus advocates a life of hedonistic moderation by reducing desire, thus eliminating the unhappiness caused by unfulfilled desires. Vain desires include desires for power, wealth, and fame. These are difficult to satisfy because no matter how much one gets, one can always want more. These desires are inculcated by society and by false beliefs about what we need. They are not natural and are to be shunned. One must wonder whether Epicurus knew anything about Buddha more than two centuries earlier. It is possible that Buddhism made its way to Greece, but it is not necessary to find the foot prints in the sands of time, because ideas have their own subterranean paths.

Like Democritus before him, Epicurus taught that all **matter** is entirely made of extremely tiny particles called "**atoms**" (**Greek: ἄτομος; atomos**, meaning "indivisible").

In a rare departure from Democritus's physics, Epicurus posited the idea of atomic "swerve", one of his best-known original ideas. According to this idea, atoms, as they are traveling through space, may deviate slightly from the course they would ordinarily be expected to follow. Epicurus's reason for introducing this doctrine was because he wanted to preserve the concepts of free will and ethical responsibility while still maintaining the deterministic physical model of atomism. It is worth pointing out here that faced with the same paradox of a planned universe which must include free will, modern thinkers have come up with the same hole-y plan. I am particularly referring to Roger Penrose (see discussion in [Saltafide](#) and saltafide.com/physics page.

Epictetus

I believe we're here to learn to love, to evolve and I believe that Philosophy is God's gift to aid us in the gauntlet of self evolution. I think Epictetus would agree. Before Epictetus was born, Socrates said "The unexamined life is not worth living;" Christ said "love thy neighbor as thy self." That's the job of humanity; philosophy is the indispensable tool. Epictetus said the **foundation of all philosophy is self-knowledge**; our ignorance and gullibility ought to be the first subject of our study. **Epictetus taught us that philosophy is a way of life and not just a theoretical discipline.** He was a respected [Greek Stoic philosopher](#). His teachings were written down and published by [Arrian](#), his most famous pupil, in his [Discourses](#) and [Enchiridion](#). Arrian describes Epictetus as being a powerful speaker who could "induce his listener to feel just what Epictetus wanted him to feel." Many eminent figures sought conversations with him, including emperor [Hadrian](#).

Epictetus was born in 50, AD at [Hierapolis, Phrygia](#). (present day [Turkey](#)) He spent his youth as a [slave](#) in Rome to [Epaphroditos](#), a wealthy [freedman](#) and secretary to [Nero](#). Epictetus obtained his freedom sometime after the death of Nero in 68 A.D and lived in Rome until emperor [Domitian](#) banished all philosophers from the city in 93 A.D., whereupon he went to [Nicopolis](#) in northwestern [Greece](#) for the rest of his life.

He lived alone, in a life of great simplicity, with few possessions. In his old age he adopted a friend's child who otherwise would have been left to die, and raised him with the aid of a woman. It is unclear whether Epictetus and she were married. He died sometime around 135 A.D After his death, according to Lucian, his oil lamp was purchased by an admirer for 3,000 drachmae. And the lamp continues to light the way for many stoics.

The word "stoic" in common parlance conjures up a non responsive life style which has nothing to do with the beliefs encompassed in the philosophy of stoicism founded by Epictetus. Epictetus's stoicism rests on the distinction between those things we can do something about and those over which we have no control, which we should accept calmly and dispassionately. [Both the *Discourses* and the *Enchiridion* begin by distinguishing between those things in our power (*prohairetic* things) and those things not in our power (*aprohairetic* things).]

We always have control over our reactions no matter what happens. What goes on inside has very little to do with what is actually going on outside the senses. "Practice then from the start to say to every harsh impression, 'You are an impression, and not at all the thing you appear to be'." This must have inspired Shakespeare: "There is

nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." (Hamlet: Act 2, Scene 2), and [John Milton's](#) "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

To repel evil opinions is the noble contest in which humans should engage; it is not an easy task, but it promises true freedom, peace of mind (*ataraxia*), and a divine command over the emotions (*apatheia*). We should, therefore, cultivate the mind with special care. If we wish for nothing, but what God wills, (that which we can do nothing about), we shall be truly free.

Connection theory

Every individual is connected with the rest of the world, and the universe is fashioned for universal harmony. Wise people, therefore, will pursue, not merely their own will, but also will be subject to the rightful order of the world. We have all a certain part to play in the world, and we have done enough when we have performed what our nature allows. In the exercise of our powers, we may become aware of the [destiny](#) we are intended to fulfill. The Stoic sage will never find life intolerable and will complain of no one, neither deity nor human. Those who go wrong we should pardon and treat with [compassion](#), since it is from ignorance that they err, being as it were, blind.

Every [desire](#) degrades us, and renders us slaves to that which we desire.

The philosophy of Epictetus was an influence on the [Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius](#) (AD 121 to AD 180) whose reign was marked by wars with the resurgent [Parthia](#) in western [Asia](#) and against the [Germanic tribes](#) in [Europe](#). Aurelius quotes from Epictetus repeatedly in his own work, *Meditations*, written during his campaigns in central Europe.^[64]

Even though philosophy, as a discipline, has all but vanished in modern times, the philosophy of Epictetus is still with us. When [Bernard Stiegler](#) was imprisoned for five years for armed robbery in [France](#), he assembled an "ensemble of disciplines," which he called (in reference to Epictetus) his *melete*. This ensemble amounted to a practice of reading and writing that Stiegler derived from the writings of Epictetus. This led to his transformation, and his book, *Acting Out*.

The philosophy of Epictetus also plays a key role in the 1998 novel by [Tom Wolfe](#), *A Man in Full*, and in Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* and in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by [James Joyce](#): in the fifth chapter of the novel the protagonist Stephen Daedalus discusses Epictetus's famous lamp with a dean of his college. Epictetus also is mentioned briefly in *Franny and Zooey* by [J. D. Salinger](#), and is referred to by [Theodore Dreiser](#) in his novel *Sister Carrie*. Both the longevity of Epictetus's life and his philosophy are alluded to in [John Berryman's](#) poem, "Of Suicide." Psychologist [Albert Ellis](#), the founder of [Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy](#), credited Epictetus with providing a foundation for his system of [psychotherapy](#). [Kiyozawa Manshi](#), a controversial reformer within the [Higashi Honganji](#) branch of [Jodo Shinshu Buddhism](#)

cited Epictetus as one of the three major influences on his spiritual development and thought. Epictetus' philosophy is an influence on the acting method introduced by [David Mamet](#) and [William H. Macy](#), known as [Practical Aesthetics](#). The main book that describes the method, *The Practical Handbook for the Actor*, lists the *Enchiridion* in the bibliography.

My own (Ciampa) Favorite EPICTETUS quotes are:

God has entrusted me with myself.
You are a little soul carrying around a corpse.

The essence of philosophy is that a man should so live that his happiness shall depend as little as possible on external things. Freedom is not procured by a full enjoyment of what is desired, but by controlling the desire. He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.

Be careful to leave your sons well instructed rather than rich, for the hopes of the instructed are better than the wealth of the ignorant. Do not seek to bring things to pass in accordance with your wishes, but wish for them as they are, and you will find them.

It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters. Make the best use of what is in your power, and take the rest as it happens. There is only one way to happiness and that is to cease worrying about things which are beyond the power of our will. People are not disturbed by things, but by the view they take of them.

No greater thing is created suddenly, any more than a bunch of grapes or a fig. If you tell me that you desire a fig, I answer you that there must be time. Let it first blossom, then bear fruit, then ripen.

We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak. Silence is safer than speech. Keep silent for the most part, and speak only when you must, and then briefly.

It is impossible to begin to learn that which one thinks one already knows. We should not moor a ship with one anchor, or our life with one hope.

The greater the difficulty the more glory in surmounting it. Skillful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests. The world turns aside to let any man pass who knows where he is going.

Never in any case say I have lost such a thing, but I have returned it. Is your child dead? It is a return. Is your wife dead? It is a return. Are you deprived of your estate? Is not this also a return? It is not death or pain that is to be dreaded, but the fear of pain or death.

Irenaeus

(130 – c. 202 AD)

Unlike many of his contemporaries, he was brought up in a Christian family rather than converting as an adult. Irenaeus was a [Greek](#) bishop from [Smyrna](#) in [Asia Minor](#), now [İzmir](#), Turkey, born during the first half of the 2nd century. He is noted for his role in guiding and expanding [Christian](#) communities in what is now the south of [France](#) and, more widely, for combating [heresy](#) and defining [orthodoxy](#). He is recognized as a [saint](#) in the [Catholic Church](#).

The central point of Irenaeus' [theology](#) is the unity and the goodness of [God](#), in opposition to the Gnostics' theory of a multi-God. Irenaeus was a student of [Polycarp](#), who was said to have been tutored by [John the Apostle](#).

Irenaeus' emphasis on the unity of God is reflected in his corresponding emphasis on the unity of [salvation](#) history. Irenaeus repeatedly insists that God began the world and has been overseeing it ever since this creative act; everything that has happened is part of his plan for humanity. The essence of this plan is a process of maturation: **Irenaeus believes that humanity was created immature, and God intended his creatures to take a long time to grow into or assume the divine likeness.** It is hard to find any other plausible explanation for historical development. It's either this or denying that there has ever been any development in the individual and the species.

This leads to the ineluctable conclusion that the world has been intentionally designed by God as a difficult place, where human beings are forced to make choices. Death and suffering appear as [evils](#), but without that challenge to overcome we could never be virtuous.

As obvious as it seems this spiritual logic was not embraced by many early Christians. Instead many believed that there were two equal and opposing supernatural forces. These early Christians were called Gnostics.

Valentinian Gnosticism was one of the major forms of Gnosticism that Irenaeus opposed. According to the Valentinian Gnostics, Christ came down to choose those who would survive the reaches of the evil God and enjoy salvation with the good God. In his lifetime Irenaeus all but defeated the notion of equal opposing supernatural forces.

Irenaeus agrees that the high point in salvation's history was the advent of Jesus. Irenaeus sees Christ as the new Adam, who systematically undoes what Adam did: thus, where Adam was disobedient concerning God's edict concerning the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Christ was obedient even to death on the wood of

a tree. In addition to reversing the wrongs done by Adam, Irenaeus thinks of Christ as "recapitulating" or "summing up" human life. Part of the process of recapitulation is for Christ to go through every stage of human life, from infancy to old age, and simply by living it, sanctify it with his divinity. [Phil. 2:8](#) undoes the disobedience that occurred at Adam's forbidden tree [Gen. 3:17](#). Irenaeus emphasizes that it is through Christ's reversal of Adam's action that humanity is saved.

Irenaeus' major extant writing is the *Adversus Haereses* (the full title of which is the *Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge falsely so-called*). Its composition is dated ca. 180

Irenaeus

EXCERPTED FROM [CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES](#)

(130 – c. 202 AD)

Irenaeus was a Greek bishop in the south of France, now Lyon, his best-known work, *Against Heresy*, is a refutation of the Gnostic sect's answer to the "good God/ evil world" theodicy paradox.

The Gnostics believed that there must have been another supernatural power that was not good, and that Christ came from the good God to offset the evil God and offer a new choice to circumvent evil. This was the belief of many early Christians including Augustine before his conversion to the amalgamated Christian dogma forged by Irenaeus.

Irenaeus taught that Adam's fall tarnished man so that he was no longer the 'image' of God, but now only the 'likeness' of God'. I'm guessing that means no longer as perfect as God. I'm still not sure what Adam did in the garden of eden, or how I became liable for the damages. I have to keep reminding myself that I am in his the debt for the pit he dug, otherwise I would never have learned to climb.

Irenaeus established which versions of the gospels were to be read, and which must be discarded; for this, he is recognized as a saint in both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. He did this to prevent the splintering of Christianity into many cults without which there could be no 'Catholic' (which

literally means universal) church. While Irenaeus's teachings smack of dogma, he did reach philosophical positions that went beyond the organizational prerogatives demanded by his position. That is what put him in our conga line, not the dogma. Irenaeus included worthy pre-christians in the salvation afforded by Christianity. The implication is clear, that for Irenaeus, the church he was building was not the only way to heaven. In the end I think it is safe to say that Irenaeus had a non organizational, philosophical message. He said that all who feared and loved God, practiced justice and piety towards their neighbors, and desired to see Christ, insofar as they were able to do so, will be saved. The many pre-christians who were not able to have an explicit desire to see Christ, but only implicit (since he hadn't arrived in their lifetime), could nevertheless be saved. There is a timelessness in that proposition, which is appropriate for our conga line of consciousness.

More importantly Irenaeus sets in place the pillars that support our metaphysical triad. Irenaeus said that man can only become conscious of God by an *uncompelled response*. The connection of the God node to the freedom node of the metaphysical triad is crucially important to our conga line. In other words faith, like virtue must be freely chosen. Reason gets you to the lift off point and then you must lift off of your own free will. Once faith is freely chosen Irenaeus adds the third node to the metaphysical triad: "salvation", i.e. immortality.

Plotinus

Plotinus c.204/5 – 270) was a major [Hellenistic philosopher](#) who lived in [Roman Egypt](#). His teacher was [Ammonius Saccas](#), who was of the Platonic tradition. Historians of the 19th century invented the term [Neoplatonism](#) and applied it to Plotinus and his philosophy, which was influential during [Late Antiquity](#) and the [Middle Ages](#). Much of the biographical information about Plotinus comes from [Porphyry](#)'s preface to his edition of Plotinus' *Enneads*. His [metaphysical](#) writings have inspired centuries of [Pagan](#), [Jewish](#), [Christian](#), [Gnostic](#), and [Islamic metaphysicians](#) and [mystics](#), including developing precepts that influence mainstream theological concepts within religions.

Plotinus had an inherent distrust of materiality (an attitude common to [Platonism](#)), holding to the view that phenomena were a poor image or mimicry ([mimesis](#)) of something "higher and intelligible" (VI.I) which was the "truer part of genuine Being". Plotinus' works have an [ascetic](#) character in that they reject matter as an illusion (non-existent). This approach is called philosophical [Idealism](#).

This distrust extended to the body, including his own; it is reported by Porphyry that at one point he refused to have his portrait painted, presumably for much the same reasons of dislike. Likewise Plotinus never discussed his ancestry, childhood, or his place or date of birth^[7]. From all accounts his personal and social life exhibited the highest moral and spiritual standards.

In his philosophy, described in the *Enneads*, there are levels: [the One](#), [the Intellect](#), and the [Soul](#), and then sub levels. The three layers of consciousness described in Saltafide: intra-consciousness; extra-consciousness, and ultra-consciousness would fall somewhere between the first and the last layer.

Despite this layering, Plotinus taught that there is a supreme, totally transcendent "One", containing no division, multiplicity, or distinction; beyond all categories of [being](#) and non-being. This is would include the "ultra-consciousness" described in Saltafide, and more. Plotinus compared the One to "light", the Divine Intellect/[Nous](#) (Noûς, *Nous*; first will towards Good) His "One" "cannot be any existing thing", nor is it merely the sum of all things, but "is prior to all existents". His "One" concept encompassed thinker and object.

The One, being beyond all attributes including being and non-being, is the source of the world—but not through any act of creation, willful or otherwise, since activity cannot be ascribed to the unchangeable, immutable One. The "less perfect" must, of necessity, "emanate", or issue forth, from the "perfect" or "more perfect". Thus, all of "creation" emanates from the One in succeeding stages of lesser and lesser perfection. These stages are not temporally isolated, but occur throughout time as a constant process.

The One is something that can be experienced, an experience where one goes beyond all multiplicity. In this experience the seer and seen, the two, are one.”[12]. Think of

the duality created by quantum uncertainty, coming together where finally the observed and the observer merge.

Emanation by the One

Plotinus seems to offer an alternative to the orthodox [Christian](#) notion of creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), although Plotinus never mentions Christianity in any of his works. The metaphysics of emanation (*ἀπορροή* *aporrhoe* (II.3.2) or *ἀπόρροια* *aporrhōia* (II.3.11)), however, just like the metaphysics of Creation, confirms the absolute transcendence of the One or of the Divine, as the source of the Being of all things that yet remains transcendent of them in its own nature; the One is in no way affected or diminished by these emanations, just as the Christian God in no way is affected by some sort of exterior "nothingness". Plotinus, likens the One to the [Sun](#) which emanates light indiscriminately without thereby diminishing itself, or reflection in a mirror which in no way diminishes or otherwise alters the object being reflected. The emanations of the One are a trickle down theory of idealism.

The first emanation is [Nous](#) is identified metaphorically with the [Demiurge](#) in Plato's *Timaeus*. It is the first [Will](#) toward Good. From *Nous* proceeds the [World Soul](#), which Plotinus subdivides into upper and lower, identifying the lower aspect of Soul with [nature](#). From the world soul proceeds individual [human](#) souls, and finally, matter, at the lowest level of [being](#) and thus the least [perfected](#) level of the cosmos. Plotinus asserted the ultimately divine nature of material creation since it ultimately derives from the One, through the mediums of *Nous* and the world soul. It is by the Good or through beauty that we recognize the One, in material things and then in the [Forms](#). (I.6.6 and I.6.9)

The essentially devotional nature of Plotinus' philosophy may be further illustrated by his concept of attaining ecstatic union with the One (*henosis*). Porphyry relates that Plotinus attained such a union four times during the years he knew him. This may be related to [enlightenment](#), liberation, and other concepts of [mystical union](#) common to many Eastern and Western traditions.^[14]

Henosis is the word for mystical "oneness", "union", or "unity" in classical Greek. In [Platonism](#), and especially [Neoplatonism](#), the goal of henosis is union with what is fundamental in reality: the One (*τὸ ἓν*), the Source, or [Monad](#).^[16]

As is specified in the writings of Plotinus on [henology](#), one can reach a state of [tabula rasa](#), a blank state where the individual may grasp or merge with The One. It is the demiurge or second emanation that is the nous that causes the force (potential of One) to manifest as energy, or the [dyad](#) called the material world. Nous as being; being and perception (intellect) manifest what is called soul ([World Soul](#)).

Henosis for Plotinus was defined in his works as a reversing of the ontological process of consciousness via [meditation](#).

Plotinus reconciles [Aristotle](#) with Plato, but also reconciles various World religions that he had personal contact with during his various travels. He was critical of the gnostics use of Plato's philosophy. Plotinus was not claiming to innovate, but to clarify aspects of the works of Plato that he considered misrepresented or misunderstood. Plotinus

does not claim to be an innovator, but rather a communicator of a tradition. Plotinus referred to tradition as a way to interpret Plato's intentions for the broader audience, since the teachings of Plato were originally intended for members of the academy rather than the general public. Nevertheless Plato and philosophy have been all but lost to the general public. There is a great need once again for another Plotinus.

Plotinus-

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(204 – 270 AD)

Plotinus is generally regarded as the founder of Neoplatonism. He was raised in Alexandria, Egypt, which was then part of the the Roman Empire. As a Roman, like all his contemporaries, he was fascinated with the Greeks, and especially Plato.

He was born shortly after the death of Irenaeus and before Christianity conquered Rome. As far as I can see, he had no direct connection with Christianity. Nevertheless, his ideas are fundamental to Christianity. One in particular is the Platonic idea that the only evil is ignorance which led Plotinus to conclude that the absence of goodness was not a terminal illness, since it could be filled.

The metaphysics of Plotinus is made out of Plato's idealism, represented in the complete collection of Plotinus's treatises, collected and edited by his student Porphyry into six books of **nine** treatises each. For this reason they have come down to us under the title of the *Enneads* (Greek word for nine). Plotinus established a palace guard, as it were, defending Plato against misconceived criticism. Plotinus did not call himself a Neoplatonist; he thought of himself as a Platonist, but he did adapt Platonic ideals in some original ways. Six hundred years of Platonic philosophical writings had to be amalgamated and reshaped. Plotinus felt he needed to tell his readers what Plato meant on the basis of what Plato wrote or said especially where it conflicted with what others reported him to have said.

His importance to our conga line has to do with his conception of a layered consciousness. The upper layer which he calls 'soul,' is unchangeable and divine and aloof from the lower part, mind, yet providing the lower part with a basic energy.

The lower 'mind' is the seat of the personality, the passions, perception and knowledge of the material world. The interaction of the two layers of consciousness validates our 'inner teacher.' This bridge to Platonic sublimity is key to our own hypersubjectivity, Maslow's self actualization, Bergson's creative intuition, Kant's pure reason, Fichte's absolute "I," Husserl's "transcendental subjectivity," Royce's "absolute mind" and if we keep looking, I'm sure we'll find some derivative of this concept in every philosopher in and out of the conga line.

One important interaction of the Plotinus layers is the backwash from the lower layer which can corrupt of the upper layer, depending on how it is managed. That is how Plotinus explains evil. Plotinus says the 'higher part' of the soul descends into the lower layer, changeable (or sensible) realm in order to understand, to govern and craft the Cosmos. However, there is a price to pay for this interaction. Plotinus believes that the soul's upper layer perfection is more or less corrupted by the abrasion with the lower layer, depending on how we balance the two. According to Plotinus If we choose virtuous acts and contemplation, consciousness is extended to a universality, a united, single, all-pervasive reality. We are free to choose, the high road or not. Plotinus believes, as I do, that ascetics and esthetics are two sides of the same coin, or we could say there is no virtuosity without virtue.

Plotinus may be said to have anticipated the phenomenological theories of Husserl and others in his notion of the perpetual aberration of the lower layer of consciousness. Whether he meant to or not, Plotinus made 'Platonism' out of Plato. From then on, like play dough, Plato, continues to be reshaped and molded, by every new grasp. The most important reshaping occurs in the grasp of Augustine.

AUGUSTINE

Augustine of Hippo (13 November 354 – 28 August 430 AD), also known as **Saint Augustine**, was a theologian, philosopher, and the [bishop](#) of [Hippo Regius](#) in [Numidia](#), [Roman North Africa](#). His writings influenced the development of [Western philosophy](#) and [Western Christianity](#), and he is viewed as one of the most important [Church Fathers](#). His many important works include *The City of God*, *On Christian Doctrine*, and *Confessions*. Historian [Diarmaid MacCulloch](#) has written: "Augustine's impact on Western Christian thought can hardly be overstated."

After his baptism and conversion to Christianity in 386, In his youth he was drawn to the major Persian religion, [Manichaeism](#), and later to [Neoplatonism](#). Augustine had served as a "Hearer" for the Manichaeans for about nine years, who taught that the original sin was [carnal knowledge](#). By *malum* (evil) he understood most of all [concupiscence](#), which he interpreted as a vice dominating people and causing in men and women moral disorder.

The view that not only human [soul](#) but also senses were influenced by the fall of Adam and Eve was prevalent in Augustine's time among the [Fathers of the Church](#).

Augustine was always a Platonist, separating the ideal from the real. Augustine imagined the Church as a ideal, spiritual [City of God](#), distinct from the real material Earthly City, which was a decaying Roman Empire when he wrote.

Augustine is recognized as a saint in the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the [Anglican Communion](#). The concept of [Trinity](#) as defined by the [Council of Nicaea](#) and the [Council of Constantinople](#) comes from Augustine's *On the Trinity*. Many [Protestants](#), especially [Calvinists](#) and [Lutherans](#), consider him one of the theological fathers of the [Protestant Reformation](#) due to his teachings on [salvation](#) and [divine grace](#). [Protestant Reformers](#) generally, and [Martin Luther](#) in particular, held Augustine in preeminence among early Church Fathers. Luther was, from 1505 to 1521, a member of the [Order of the Augustinian Eremites](#).

Platonism, notwithstanding, Augustine developed his own approach to philosophy and theology, accommodating a variety of methods and perspectives. Some good some not so good. The good, in my humble opinion,

have to do with the [grace of Christ](#) as an indispensable component to human freedom; the not so good, or we should say 'harder to swallow' is the [just war theory](#), and the doctrine of [original sin](#). Whether I understand it or not these beliefs have become pillars of civilization.

Original Sin

The sin of Adam is inherited by all human beings. Already in his pre-Pelagian writings, Augustine taught that Original Sin is transmitted to all of Adam's descendants by concupiscence, which Augustine regarded as the passion of both, soul and body, making humanity a 'massa damnata' (mass of perdition, condemned crowd) which could only be saved by will power- the positive energy derived from 'free will'. Augustine taught traditional free choice until 412, when he reverted to his earlier Manichaeian and Stoic deterministic training when battling the Pelagians. **Augustine taught that God orders all things while preserving human freedom.** This was a shaky bridge over a deep chasm. Scholars are divided over the safety of Augustine's bridge. It may not be a bridge between the [double predestination](#). This 'theodicy' paradox leaves us with a good God who chooses some people for damnation as well as some for salvation, which makes free will and virtue pointless. His prior Manichaeian sect was steeped in this paradox. After 412, Augustine's explanation of predestination was based on a more Stoic and Gnostic/Manichaeian view of deterministic predestination wherein the will was not free except to sin. Of course that also means you were free not to sin, if you so chose. Free will was not predisposed toward good or evil. However: **"a will defiled by sin is not considered as "free" as it once was because it is bound by material things, ...resulting in unhappiness. Sin impairs free will, while grace restores it.** Only a will that was once free can be subjected to sin's corruption. That rationalization worked for the next thousand years to build thousands of confessionals in thousands of churches and absolve billions of sins.

Augustine was the most eminent proponent of what today we might call 'extreme appetite control.' We're all born with this evil black hole of carnality. While the contempt for carnality may have come from Plotinus and Neo-Platonism, Augustine goes much further. Augustine was the first to add the concept of inherited guilt (reatus) from Adam whereby an infant was eternally damned at birth. Augustine's concupiscence was at the heart of his anti-Pelagian defense of original sin, which was confirmed at numerous councils, and was followed by the great 13th-century Schoolmen. However, in 1567, [Pope Pius V](#) separated Original Sin from concupiscence.

Only a few Christians accepted Augustine's double predestination chasm, until the Protestant Reformation when both Luther and Calvin embraced Augustine's deterministic teachings wholeheartedly.

The [Catholic Church](#) considers Augustine's teaching to be consistent with free will. Only God knows in advance who will and won't be saved. If you knew that you wouldn't even try to be virtuous.; tying virtue to salvation makes it contingent and that is less inspiring. Virtue should be its own reward

As for the freedom to sin and evil in the divine plan: Jean Bethke Elshtain in *Augustine and the Limits of Politics* tried to associate Augustine with Arendt in their concept of evil: "Augustine did not see evil as glamorously demonic but rather as absence of good, something which paradoxically is really nothing. Arendt ... envisioned even the extreme evil which produced [the Holocaust](#) as merely banal [in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*

Continuum of consciousness

Illumination and ultra consciousness

[Epistemological](#) concerns shaped Augustine's intellectual development. His early dialogues [*Contra academicos* (386) and *De Magistro* (389)], both written shortly after his conversion to Christianity, show the development of his doctrine of [divine illumination](#). The doctrine of illumination claims God plays an active and regular part in human perception (as opposed to God designing the human mind to be reliable consistently, as in, for example, Descartes' idea of clear and distinct perceptions) and understanding by illuminating the mind so human beings can recognize intelligible realities. According to Augustine, illumination is obtainable to all rational minds and is different from other forms of [sense perception](#). It is meant to be an explanation of the conditions required for the mind to have a connection with the ultimate intelligible entity. [This is what is referred to as "ultra-consciousness" in my book Ciampa, [Saltafide](#).]

Testimony and extra-consciousness

Augustine also posed the [problem of other minds](#) throughout different works, most famously perhaps in *On the Trinity* (VIII.6.9).

In contrast to Plato and other earlier philosophers, Augustine recognized the centrality of [testimony](#) to human knowledge and argued that what others tell us can provide knowledge even if we don't have independent reasons to believe their testimonial reports. Relations of minds to others includes love.

[Hannah Arendt](#) began her philosophical writing with a dissertation on Augustine's concept of love, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin* (1929): "The young Arendt attempted to show that the philosophical basis for *vita socialis* in Augustine can be understood as residing in neighborly love, grounded in his understanding of the common origin of humanity."

Time and Eternity

Catholic theologians generally subscribe to Augustine's belief that God exists [outside of time](#) in the "eternal present"; that time only exists within the created universe because only in space is time discernible through motion and change.

Augustine's meditations on the nature of time are closely linked to his remarkable insights on human [memory](#). See [Frances Yates](#), *The Art of Memory* where she cites Augustine's *Confessions*, 10.8.12. Augustine's *Confessions*, and his ground breaking insights into the aspects of consciousness dealing with memory, language and intention had continuing influence on philosophy throughout the 20th century, including Immanuel Kant, Bertrand Russel, and especially modern [phenomenology](#) and [hermeneutics](#). [Edmund Husserl](#) the father of phenomenology writes: "The analysis of time-consciousness is an age-old crux of descriptive psychology and theory of knowledge. The first thinker to be deeply sensitive to the immense difficulties to be found here was Augustine, who labored almost to despair over this problem. [Martin Heidegger](#) refers to Augustine's descriptive philosophy at several junctures in his influential work *Being and Time*."

Augustine

EXCERPTED FROM [CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES](#)

(354-430 AD)

The Plotinus insight that evil is in fact unsubstantial and a privation of goodness (Plotinus, *Enneads* I.8), becomes Augustine's "privatio boni," a kind of 'goodness deficit,' which we can fill if we so choose. This, as we shall see, is the engine of free will, which is most important thing Augustine did for us.

Augustine is a saint of the Catholic Church, as is his mother Santa Monica. Mary and Jesus, are the only other instance of mother/son, multiple saints, in the same family. Augustine is clearly the greatest Christian philosopher, which you may already know, but you may not know that his influence has reached far beyond Christianity and religion. His insights on perception and linguistics guided many scientific explorations, and his philosophical views on skepticism,

knowledge, will, the emotions, freedom and determinism set the tone for philosophical discussions that continue to this day.

Augustine's philosophy was not just a clerical philosophy, not just an "apologetic" justification of church dogma. For Augustine, as with Plato, reason is the runway to the lift off point, without which there could be no leap of faith; "credum ut intelligam" are the two most important words in Augustine's writing. More so than Irenaeus, Augustine made it possible, for Christians to be philosophers as well, not without a few paradox puddles, as we shall see.

After his momentous conversion from a libertine life style and Manichaeism heresy to the, still new, third century Catholicism, he was confronted with the dogma of biblical revelation, established by Irenaeus. Eventually it became his organizational responsibility, as church leader, to enforce that dogma and stamp out heresy, which he did more with persuasion than persecution. Despite Irenaeus' unification efforts, pagan rituals were still very much alive in Augustine's congregation, which, by some accounts, was more than 10% of the entire Roman Empire. This explains the occasional dogmatic tone of some of his writings. Nevertheless we can say, along with most scholars, that he was a philosopher, what ever else he was.

For Augustine (and Plato) a philosopher is an earthbound human but nonetheless a lover of divine wisdom. Augustine was a Roman living in North Africa, and Cicero was his main source for the Hellenistic philosophies. The Stoics also provided him with ideas about rising above earthly greed and suffering, (*Letter 155.16*; Tornau 2015: 278).

Like Irenaeus, Augustine afforded salvation to virtuous pre Christians, particularly Plato, who was allowed to remain in the pantheon of idealism, even though he was not baptized and knew nothing of Christ. Augustine was too wise to remove the keystone from the arch between faith and reason. As late as *City of God* 8 (ca. 417) he grants that Platonism and Christianity share some basic philosophical insights.

Like Platonism, Augustine's Christian philosophy taught that a complete understanding of God will only be possible after this life, when we see him "face to face" (*Letter 120.3-4*). Augustine decries the intellectual hubris of human belief systems that ignore the divine truth. However, unlike Plato and more like Irenaeus, Augustine's divine truth is revealed in Scripture. (*De libero arbitrio 3.56*; 60; *Confessions 3.10-12*). I have a problem with that. I have trouble with sanctified words coming from humans, especially humans so far removed from the original divine inspiration. More than truth, tooth of dogma preserves preserves these "sacred" words, which have dubious authorship.

What would the scriptures be like if they had been written by Plato? Would he treat Paul and the new testament authors as sophists? Imagine Christ and Socrates in a dialectic, strolling across the garden. What would they say to each other about being put to death for a belief? What would they say about burning heretics? I think Augustine tried to imagine the conversation I just described. There is as much Plato as there is Jesus in Augustine's writing. Augustine was more philosophical than dogmatic, especially in regard to neoplatonism.

What follows was gleaned from encyclopedias in print and online; two most amazing works that I used are: the eight volume Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Macmillan and Free Press) and the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Neo-platonism ideas found in Augustine:

*transcendence and immateriality of God;

*superiority of the unchangeable over the changeable (cf. Plato, Timaeus 28d);

*ontological hierarchy of God, soul and body (Letter 18.2);

*incorporeality and immortality of the soul;

*dichotomy of the intelligible and the sensible realms (attributed to Plato in Contra Academicos 3.37);

*non-spatial omnipresence of the intelligible in the sensible (Confessions 1.2–4; Letter 137.4)

*causal presence of God in his creation (De immortalitate animae 14–15; De Genesi ad litteram 4.12.22);

*existence of intelligible (Platonic) Forms that are located in the mind of God and work as paradigms of the sensible things (De diversis quaestionibus 46);

*doctrine of evil as lack or privation of goodness;

*understanding of the soul's love of God as a bogus erotic desire for true beauty (Confessions 10.38). [There is no other thinker, to my knowledge suggesting that erotic passion is religious passion gone awry.]

**inwardness of the intelligible and the idea that we find God and Truth by turning inwards (De vera religione 72).*

This last point stands out because it blunts some of the prickly dogma points. And in my book, it makes room in Catholicism for philosophy, including our hypersubjectivity; Catholics can float, as well.

Augustine expands and elaborates the *connectivity* of consciousness, which begins in Plato. Augustine's theory of knowledge—his so-called doctrine of illumination—is a distinctly non-empirical epistemology based on Plato's doctrine of recollection. Like Plato, Augustine thinks that true knowledge must include communication with reliable present and absent partners; he blesses our conga line, he "illuminates" our conga line. His doctrine of Illumination involves a sun borrowed from Plato's *Republic* (508a-509). Just as that sun is visible in itself it also illuminates the objects of sight and enables the "eye" of the soul, essential for intellection. In *De trinitate* Augustine establishes the upper layer of consciousness, which is closest to the divine mind and, at the same time, "connected" to the intelligible reality "below" (*subiuncta*). The layering of consciousness is obviously adapted from Plotinus. Knowledge of objects and self-knowledge is the path to transcendence (Confessions 3.11; Augustine's biblical proof is Romans 1:20). He blesses out inner dialogue with the selves and our self ascension. Ascents of this kind are ubiquitous in Augustine's work (*De libero arbitrio* 2.7–39; Confessions 10.8–38; *De trinitate* 8–15).

It is important to understand that none of this is automatic. Cognition does not simply result from the presence of Christ in our soul but from our continuously "consulting" the inner teacher, on a regular basis. So this is an active process not a passive blessing. This idea must have inspired Kierkegaard. This strong voluntary element intimately connects Augustine's epistemology with his ethics and, ultimately, with his doctrines of *will* and *grace*, and most importantly for me, to my inner teacher.

Striving for wisdom takes place in a fallen world with all the set backs and hindrances because of original sin. The notion of original sin was not invented by Augustine; it had roots in African Christianity, especially in Tertullian. However, the view that original sin is a personally imputable guilt that justifies eternal damnation is reinforced in Augustine with a quasi-biological theory that associated original sin closely with sexual concupiscence. Augustine applies his concept of volition to the sins of the flesh, which he invented, by the way. Before Augustine, lust in and of itself was natural and ok as long as you as you were ready to lock horns with other males in rutting season. It was Augustine who first came to deplore this animality. Augustine invented shame. Before Augustine public toilets had no walls and body parts below the belt were a source of pride.

Post Augustine genitalia had to be hidden from sight and used only in private, if at all.

I accept the fact that lust is a pit from which we must ascend, but I always wondered: why give us genitals and sexual pleasure if we're not supposed to enjoy them? Now I reason that this is one of the hurdles on the human race course, one of those water traps on the golf course of life, a paradox puddle for me to hop, powered by my will.

Will

It has been claimed that Augustine "discovered" the will, which, maybe, makes up for his inventing shame. The will is the proper locus of our moral responsibility. The only element that is in our power, is our will or inner consent, for which we are therefore fully responsible. There are no pre-set winners and losers. According to Augustine, "volitions" are imputable to me alone, and it is I who am responsible for my choices and not some evil force, as Manichean dualism would have it. (*Confessions* 7.5; *City of God* 5.10).

Augustine's notion that free will is a gift from God, means that you have no choice in whether or not you have a choice. So you do have a choice and don't have a choice. Here is one of those paradox puddles to hop if we are to keep Augustine in the conga line. Some of these paradox puddles are shallow semantics; some are deeper.

In the Pelagian controversy, Augustine was confronted with a deeper paradox. (*De spiritu et littera* 52–60; cf. *De correptione et gratia* 6).. (*City of God* 22.30; *De correptione et gratia* 33). Why would God give us the freedom to choose if the result of the choice was already established in advance?

Augustine's answer is that as long as it is **not** known to **you**, your choice is free; free to you, but predetermined and known by God. What God knows is not for you to know. Plato would go along with that. Since you are blind to the future, you are also free, and that does not require that God also be blind to the future. That's quite a hop; it works for me, and gives Augustine a lot of pull in the direction conga line.

Augustine's most important contribution, "privatio boni," mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is a refinement of Plotinus's notion of evil as not a thing itself but a lack of a thing, namely goodness, aka love. (Plotinus, *Enneads* I.8)

Augustine helped redefine evil as low love levels, which is as important as it is misunderstood. Hanna Arendt, a modern Augustine scholar, got in trouble for applying this “low love level” to the so called evil of Adolph Eichmann. She was banished by her fellow jews who commissioned her to write about the Eichmann trial. They wanted devils not “banality.” Still her book, The Banality of Evil, is the most cogent philosophical work on this Augustinian/Plotinian/ neoplatonic replacement of evil with low love levels. I should explain why she is not in our conga line: I felt that there was enough said about her in this first section, and that her ideas are covered by earlier philosophers in the conga line. That being said, all her books are beautifully written and I would encourage you to read everything she ever wrote, as I did.

The fact that low love levels, unlike “evil,” can be filled gives us some hope that bad guys can be rehabilitated and is consistent with our dynamic view of consciousness and free will. There are of course different degrees of goodness (*Letter 18.2*), but you may be wondering, can there be negative degrees of goodness? Augustine answers in Aristotelian terms: an evil will has no “efficient” cause, but only a “deficient” cause. Aristotle agreed with Plato that ‘the only evil is ignorance,’ and that is essentially what Augustine is saying. Ignorance is a lack of something rather than a thing in itself. This lack may also be seen as a lack of will power, which would have to be a non permanent condition to comport with the notion that even bad guys have free will. (*City of God 12.6*).

There is good will and bad will. Bad will is just as bad as bad acts. Augustine’s notion of volition meant that choosing to commit a crime is a crime. In Augustine’s criminal code no overt act was necessary to prove conspiracy. Coveting your neighbor’s wife was bad even though you never touched her. A person who has contemplated adultery is guilty even if his attempt is unsuccessful. Conversely, the lack of consent of a rape victim keeps her free of sin, even if she feels physical pleasure in the physical act. (*City of God 1.16–28*)

Temptations according to Augustine, are part of the game’s obstacle course; no one is to blame for the temptation hurdle, only for crashing into it rather than leaping over it. Temptations well up from original sin, and they haunt even the saints. Our will must be empowered by divine grace. The power of will was somehow diminished by original sin and had to be restored. (*Contra Iulianum 6.70.-1.35*).

The restoration of will by the divine grace is best illustrated by yet another garden story; this one in Augustine’s garden at the end of the book, Confessions. Immediately before his conversion Augustine suffers from a “divided will”, feeling torn between the will to lead an ascetic, esthetic, virtuous Christian life and the will to continue his previous, sexually active life. His ability

to choose is restored by God's answer to his call, which immediately frees Augustine to opt for the ascetic virtuous life (ibid. 8.29–30).

This connection of divine grace and free will is worth mulling over for as long as it takes, because it is, for me, the key to buoyancy. I never looked at the dance of life that way before Augustine's story came into my life. It never occurred to me that God taps you on the shoulder and then it's up to you to turn around and accept Him as a dance partner. There is still a choice to dance or walk away; stay in the game or quit. [Keep this in mind when you get to the end of the Whitehead chapter.]

Augustine's critics see grace and will as paradoxical, but again I think there is a hop over that paradox puddle. Augustine's belief that you can't have one without the other, puzzled me at first. But in the end I bought it, because I believe life is a game and that is what the game is all about. There has to be a graceful super power to have created the game which, leaves me with choices to make and I can't make the right choices without some help from my "inner teacher." Could some One who created a contest at one point then go on to coach you on how to succeed? Why not? Or maybe he sends a son or a surrogate to do the coaching.

Grace

Scholars see the main inspiration for Augustine's doctrine of grace as the apostle Paul. According to the Paulist determinism accepted by Augustine, God decides "before the constitution of the world" who will be exempted from the damnation that awaits fallen humankind and who will not. This knowledge is however hidden to human beings, to whom it will only be revealed at the end of times (*De correptione et gratia* 49). Paul's determinist accounting of **why** some get grace and some don't, are not clear, and so, neither are Augustine's. Augustine admits, that this accounting eludes human understanding but insists that it is certainly just. You wonder how you judge something to be "just" which is beyond your understanding? So do I.

Remember Augustine may be a saint but he was also only human, and Plato reminds us that human beliefs are fallible. Clearly Augustine's truth is not divine truth; he would be the first to admit that he is not God. It was Augustine the bishop who had to accept the idea of Paul's predestination. This looks to me like another one of the places where Augustine the bishop bumped into Augustine the philosopher. None of these bumps are off-putting.

The most important contribution of Augustine to our conga line is his preservation and continuation of the Platonic idea that you can come to know

God by knowing your self. In order to illustrate what he means by “seeing things by ourselves” “in the light of truth” Augustine often cites the example of the Socratic dialogues.

Augustine’s inner teacher, his inner Christ and his “illumination.”(De magistro . 390; De magistro 38–39, cf. Ephesians 3:17) validate our self inflation and self ascension. That allows me to have both Christ and philosophy in the same inner sanctum. That’s all you need to get to where you’re going.

Our core belief that hypersubjective inflation can only be accomplished by will power, energized and maintained by diligent and continuous self-analysis, is validated by Augustine’s corollary proposition: that the inner teacher, must be consulted frequently.

Besides being an important philosopher and scientist and a sponsor of our conga line, Augustine is also an inspiration to many literary writers. Augustine is in the literary hall of fame. His most famous work, the Confessions, is the precursor of the modern tradition of autobiography. Coming at philosophy from a first-person perspective was never done before Augustine, and so set the tone for subsequent works, including this one.

Pico della Mirandola

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1463–1494)

Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola was born on February 24, 1463, to a noble Italian family and not so noble Italian demagoguery. Italy was a seething caldron of new flavors that would change the world forever; one of the secrets of the Italian piquancy was Pico. There would be no recognition of this fact until centuries later. The Renaissance may have been the rebirth of creativity for artists, but not for philosophers. Wondering was replaced by dogma. Any thoughts of ascension were confined to a one track cog railway with one conductor, the pope. Any individual attempts were run over by the train.

After Augustine, and we could also include Boethius (480-524), the desire to remain connected to the eternal questions of the Ancient Greeks and the Classic philosophers of Rome, took a back seat to the solid answers of Scholasticism. This hardening of the philosophical artery lasted all the way up to Aquinas, the 13th century Italian, who refused to think of himself as a philosopher and in fact felt that philosophical questioning weakened the the one source of the only truth, divine revelation. Who and how that revelation was passed on was entirely up to the Church and the one man who governed all the Italian and all the Catholic minds, the Pope. Most people were relieved that they no longer had to think for themselves.

Somehow, Pico continued to wonder and found Plato and Aristotle and a brand new way to put them together. Pico was a free thinker who came to metaphysics by means of his own physics; he built his very own runway, even though lifting off on your own was forbidden. Because of his social status, he got away with it, for a time.

I must digress, here, for yet another instantiation of cognitive consonance. In my post Catholic/pre-Christian hippy days in Venice (not Italy, California). My guru, Henry Geiger knew all about Pico and, back in the sixties, one night sitting by an open fire which took the chill out of Malibu hills, Henry's profound baritone, like the low notes of a cello, en-toned Pico's entire oration on human dignity. It was something I thought I would never forget.

But I did forget it, until after this book was practically finished. Somehow, just before dawn one morning, an anonymous italic text appeared in a folder on my Iphone. I swear I don't know how it got there. It was like discovering a note in a bottle. Remember it was anonymous, so I had no idea how it got there or from

whom, but I was spellbound. I was astounded at the relevance, and the elegance of the prose. After some extensive online detective work I discovered who was behind this ghostly TAP on my shoulder; it was Pico della Mirandola, the founder of human dignity and individual freedom. I dropped everything read all of Pico anew, which is how we get to this point.

Now let me tell you why Pico is in the conga line. Pico's Conclusions in 1487 put forth his 900 theses, an amazing amalgam of all the transcendental belief systems in the whole world, including ancient and medieval philosophers, pagan rituals, Christian teachings, the Old Testament, Jewish Kaballah, Muslim esoterica, Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, Pythagoras; and also standard religious and secular philosophers, such as Aquinas, Albertus and other scholastics, Averroes, Avicenna, Plotinus, Proclus, and, of course, Plato and Aristotle. Such a compendium had never been seen before, or since. This was Pico's very own conga line, but that is not the cognitive consonance, that fascinated me; it was his idea of "theurgy," part of the *Oration*,, which was never delivered, but somehow found its way to me while I was writing this book.

"*Theurgy*" is Pico's hop over the biggest paradox puddle in metaphysics, theodicy, which will come up again when we meet Leibniz down the line. Theodicy refers the paradoxical coexistence of the goodness of God and the evil in the world he created. Of all the answers to this riddle, the one I like best is that God had to leave open the possibility of being bad otherwise how could you be rewarded for being good.

For me, the brilliance of prelude, the *Oration* does not carry over to the symphony, which has some sour notes. The main body of Pico's Conclusions rely on the abracadabra word magic of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism). Pico was the first Christian to treat the mystical knowledge of Kabbalah as valuable. Kabbalists regard the Hebrew text of the Bible, as the word of God. But instead of looking behind the words they focus on the very letters and the vocalization of the names of the *Sefirot*, which are names, not of God per se, but of aspects or manifestations or emanations of divinity. Since God in his highest essence remains hidden, finite beings can only come to know the Infinite in the ten *Sefirot*. Much of the literature of Kabbalah describes these *Sefirot*. This sounds to me like rubbing the vase to produce the magic genie. It may be that Pico, without any endorsement, was including this to round out the completeness of his catalogue of belief systems. It is clear from his other words that Pico has the broad grasp of consciousness that reaches beyond words and beyond spacetime, which is why he is in the conga line, without the Kabbalists.

Pico has his own, pre-Wittgenstein, analysis of what we have called "word pool" and "word spin." For Pico the spinning is a positive force that empowers

concepts beyond language, but he sees language as the gateway to wisdom. The elements of language are letters and numbers, and these signs are but secret codes to hidden meaning, whose enigmas are the key to esoteric understanding. Sounds like Pythagoras, who Pico knew all about. Pico's mystical linguistics goes beyond the Kabbalah and the old testament. That is made clear later in the *Oration*, where the mysterious force is decidedly Christological and Trinitarian. His *Oration* on the Dignity of Man—as it came to be called is much more famous than the larger work it precedes.

Pico was powerful enough to sponsor a great philosophy fair in Rome right under the Pope's nose. Pope Innocent VIII went along, at first. Pico was allowed to invite all of the so called philosophers of the day, to provide a counterpoint that would perfect and anneal his 900 theses, but it never happened. The pope saw the derailment danger to his one track cog railway and put Pico in jail. So no one came and no one ever got to hear the *Oration* on human dignity, which is the declaration of independence of Humanism.

In the first few pages of the *Oration*, God tells Adam that he, alone of all creatures, can make himself whatever he wants to be. Whatever we start out as, we must strive to become bodiless angels, sexless and *selfless*. Mystical union with God is Pico's final goal, and extinguishing the self is a necessary prerequisite. Pico's prescription for buoyancy comports with our own: cutting away mundane ballast and then self inflation, or in Pico's words:

“Let a *holy* ambition possess our spirit, ...let us cleanse the soul by washing away the dirt of ignorance... and flood the soul, purified and well tempered, with the light of natural philosophy so that finally we may perfect it with knowledge of divinity.”

The hypersubjectivity of personal will power is underscored in Pico prescription for ascent: “let us climb for the heights, panting...since **we can do it if we will it...** “

Pico disposed of much of his property, giving some to the Church and some to his family. Pico gave new meaning to Franciscan asceticism which had been flourishing in Italy for centuries. At the same time Pico's thoughts reached Girolamo Savonarola, the fearsome millenarian preacher. Savonarola made gun powder out of Pico's fairy dust and used it in his revolution against the corrupt hierarchy of the Church, but the hypersubjective transcendence idea, which is more important for us than church reform, was not to re-emerge for three or four centuries after Pico's death.

Even though he was silenced, eventually “the truth will out,” and it did. It took a while. The new pope Alexander VI, persuaded by Pico's admirer Lorenzo Di

Midici pardoned Pico. Pico's last breath was spent blowing out the candles of superstition. Pico would have us save our breath for self inflation. The book *Disputations Against Divinatory Astrology*, was hardly finished, when Lorenzo, Pico's protector, died, and suddenly Pico and all his friends also died. It was not until their bodies were exhumed in 2007 that we knew for sure Pico was poisoned on 11- 17, 1494. If I wanted to subscribe to the numerology mystery of Pico's esotericism, I would wonder about the birth of another Italian, my sister, on 11- 17, 1944- all the same numbers rearranged, and then there was 1492 when Italians discovered America, but, alas, I didn't buy any of the lotto tickets with those numbers at the pizzeria when I was in Modena, where Pico's profile on the pizza box cover made him the father of the enlightenment which occurred fifteen generations after Pico, which would have made him the great, great, great, etc. grandfather... In fact Pico got no respect in those three centuries after his death; his conceptual mesh was seen as a philosophical mess, and it was Immanuel Kant who was credited with the discovery of the individual as a philosophical subject. By the end of the eighteenth century, Kant had so thoroughly revolutionized philosophy that its history had to be reformulated in Kantian terms by Jacob Brucker in 1742, who's only mention of Pico was as "that worst of all monsters, a Platonizing, Judaizing syncretist." It was not until a half century later, in Wilhelm Tennemann's revisionist *History of Philosophy* (1798–1819) Pico is credited for sparking the German enlightenment, as a proto-Kantian advocate of human freedom and dignity.

The important thing is that this young Italian who lived less than half a life in an epoch of philosophical eclipse, somehow uncovered human dignity, exalted the individual, and most importantly. somehow, inspired the concept of hypersubjectivity for me.

Descartes

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1596–1650)

How do I know I exist when the mind I need to prove it is also in doubt. This may be the biggest problem philosophy ever faced. How do you prove that life is not a dream? What if some demon spiked the well with LSD which created a hallucination which we think is life, like in the movie Matrix? Descartes should have been given screen credit for that movie and one other, a 1998 movie called The Truman Show.

The Truman Show poses the problem of a human subject born and raised in a made up world which is actually an extensive TV set, with actors playing all the roles of family, friends and neighbors. The only one who isn't acting is the duped subject, Truman, who was actually born on camera, on the set. His naïveté provides the entertainment for a world wide TV audience. Hidden cameras all over the TV town watch him grow up and marry a perfectly beautiful wife played by the perfectly beautiful Laura Linney. Truman is played by Jim Carey.

This life long reality is unquestioned, since he is kept from seeing anything beyond the set. His occasional doubts are allayed by real time directorial prompts to the actors who improvise the dialogue which enforces the scripted reality.

What if you and I are unwitting characters in such a reality show? Could the morning coffee I hold in my hand be a hallucination? How can I know that it's real, that I am real?

Descartes answered by making the question itself the answer. Descartes brilliantly turned the question on itself. This is the most brilliant philosophical jujitsu in history. "Cogito ergo sum" 'I think there fore I am.' In other words, if I didn't exist, who is it that is asking the question? Descartes is the founder of 'ontology,' without which we would have no way to prove or even wonder about existence and reality.

You might think that Descartes's "cogito" really only proves that consciousness exists, which is enough for me, but then there is all the stuff around me; how do we prove that? Descartes had doubts about the material world but that did not keep him from insisting that there was a material world, 'res extensa,' governed by mechanistic discoverable laws and an immaterial, 'res cogitans,' which

included the invisible consciousness. Descartes restated the Platonic mind over matter proposition for generations to follow, or not.

In mathematics, he developed Cartesian coordinates, probability, the techniques that made possible algebraic (or “analytic”) geometry. In natural philosophy, he can be credited with several specific achievements: co-framer of the sine law of refraction, developer of an important empirical account of the rainbow, and proposer of a naturalistic account of the formation of the earth and planets (a precursor to the nebular hypothesis).

On the darker side his mechanistic physiology and theory that animal bodies are machines made possible the ravaging of the animal planet, but that is all part of his incomplete proofs for material universe, *res extensa*. As for *res cogitans*, you gotta believe; there is no other way. I decided that Descartes’s *cogito* is at least extendable to all cogitation. You will recall in the earlier section of this book I added an ‘us’ to Descartes ‘sum’ which means that all of us thinking together exist. As far as that other stuff, there can’t be nothing outside my head; as we have shown, ‘nothing’ is impossible to conceive let alone prove. So there must be something there, as to what, exactly, that is, there there are as many opinions as there are people, but that’s what keeps us talking to each other.

Descartes’s doubting is an important contribution to idealism. His “cogito ergo sum” could have been “dubito ergo sum:” I doubt therefore I am. Descartes made the very doubting process itself the core of existence. Doubt is why Descartes is in the conga line. His investigations of the knower along with what is known created the dualism which has suddenly reared its head again in the quantum physics quandaries.

The dualism separating *extensa* and *cogitans*, body and soul, was in fact well established before Descartes, but his use of one to validate the other is an example of unique brilliance. If not the first, Descartes is the most prominent thinker to rationalize existence, by turning the question on itself.

He is not a hero for all thinkers; scientific monists deplore the cut of Cartesian dualism, as though it were a philosophical amputation; whereas enlightened dualists see the other leg as essential to a stabile stance. Without Descartes there would be no Hegel, no Husserl, no Heisenberg, no Schrodinger, no Einstein, no phenomenology, no quantum physics superposition, and no metaphysics. He is essential to the discovery of mathematics for dealing with the inevitable uncertainty of the material universe and, more importantly, essential to the distinction between subjects and objects.

Along with Plato and Augustine, Descartes is in the pantheon of great metaphysical minds; there are dozens of books by him and hundreds about him. Here we just needed these few basic steps for our conga line. Should you chose to know more, a list of his important works follows.

MAJOR WORKS BY DESCARTES

Discourse on the Method (in French, 1637), with its essays, the *Dioptrics*, *Meteorology*, and *Geometry*;

Meditations on First Philosophy (i.e., on metaphysics), with its *Objections and Replies*, (1641, 2nd edition. 1642);

Principles of Philosophy, covering his metaphysics and much of his natural philosophy (1644);

Passions of the Soul, on the emotions (1649).

Treatise on Light, containing the core of his natural philosophy (, 1664);

Treatise on Man (1664), containing his physiology and mechanistic psychology

Rules for the Direction of the Mind (1701), an early, unfinished work attempting to set out his method.

Leibniz

Gottfried Wilhelm (von) Leibniz (sometimes spelled **Leibnitz**) 1 July 1646 – 14 November 1716) was a prominent German **polymath** and one of the most important logicians, mathematicians and natural philosophers of the **Enlightenment**. As a representative of the seventeenth-century tradition of **rationalism**, Leibniz developed, as his most prominent accomplishment, the ideas of **differential and integral calculus**, **independently** of **Isaac Newton's** contemporaneous developments. He became one of the most prolific inventors in the field of **mechanical calculators**. While working on adding automatic multiplication and division to **Pascal's calculator**, he was the first to describe a **pinwheel calculator** in 1685 and invented the **Leibniz wheel**, used in the **arithmometer**, the first mass-produced mechanical calculator. He also refined the **binary number** system, which is the foundation of nearly all digital (electronic, solid-state, discrete logic) computers.

In philosophy, Leibniz is most noted for his **optimism**, i.e. his conclusion that our **universe** is, in a restricted sense, the **best possible one** that God could have created, an idea that was often lampooned by others such as **Voltaire**. Leibniz, along with **René Descartes** and **Baruch Spinoza**, was one of the three great 17th-century advocates of **rationalism**. The work of Leibniz anticipated modern **logic** and **analytic philosophy**, but his philosophy also assimilates elements of the **scholastic** tradition, notably that conclusions are produced by applying reason to first principles or prior definitions rather than to **empirical evidence**.

He wrote only two book-length philosophical treatises, of which only the *Théodicée* of 1710 was published in his lifetime.

if God is **all good**, **all wise**, and **all powerful**, then how did **evil come into the world**? The answer (according to Leibniz) is that, while God is indeed unlimited in wisdom and power, his human creations, as creations, are limited both in their wisdom and in their will (power to act). This predisposes humans to false beliefs, wrong decisions, and ineffective actions in the exercise of their **free will**. God does not arbitrarily inflict pain and suffering on humans; rather he permits both *moral evil* (sin) and *physical evil* (pain and suffering) as the necessary consequences of *metaphysical evil* (imperfection), as a means by which humans can identify and correct their erroneous decisions, and as a contrast to true good.^[74]

Leibniz's best known contribution to **metaphysics** is his theory of **monads**, as expounded in *Monadologie*. He proposes his theory that the universe is made of

an infinite number of simple substances known as monads. Monads can also be compared to the corpuscles of the [Mechanical Philosophy](#) of René Descartes and others. These simple substances or monads are the "ultimate units of existence in nature". Monads have no parts but still exist by the qualities that they have. These qualities are continuously changing over time, and each monad is unique. They are also not affected by time and are subject to only creation and annihilation. Monads are centers of [force](#); substance is force, while [space](#), [matter](#), and [motion](#) are merely phenomenal.

Leibniz's concluded that the first reason of all things is God. The contingent world must have some necessary reason for its existence. Leibniz uses a geometry book as an example to explain his reasoning. If this book was copied from an infinite chain of copies, there must be some reason for the content of the book. Leibniz concluded that there must be the "*monas monadum*" or God.

Best of all possible worlds and Philosophical optimism

The [Theodicy](#) tries to justify the apparent imperfections of the world by claiming that it is [optimal among all possible worlds](#). It must be the best possible and most balanced world, because it was created by an all powerful and all knowing God, who would not choose to create an imperfect world if a better world could be known to him or possible to exist. One again reasoning alone brings this argument to the tautology chasm.

Leibniz answers one tautology with another, asserting that the truths of theology (religion) and philosophy cannot contradict each other, since reason and faith are both "gifts of God" so that their conflict would imply God contending against himself.

Because reason and faith must be entirely reconciled, any tenet of faith which could not be defended by reason must be rejected. Further, although human actions flow from prior causes that ultimately arise in God and therefore are known to God as metaphysical certainties, an individual's free will is exercised within natural laws, where choices are merely contingently necessary and to be decided in the event by a "wonderful spontaneity" that provides individuals with an escape from rigorous predestination.

It is in the end the holy, hole-y plan.

PROBLEM OF EVIL-THEODICY

The problem of evil acutely applies to monotheistic religions such as [Christianity](#), [Islam](#), and [Judaism](#). Polytheist religions can have good gods and bad gods, but if there is only one good God how can there be evil.

The best known presentation is attributed to the Greek philosopher [Epicurus](#) by [David Hume](#), who was responsible for popularizing it. Hume summarizes Epicurus's version of the problem as follows:

"Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then from whence comes evil?"

One version of this problem, and the most difficult to dispose of with pure reason, includes animal suffering from natural evil, such as the violence and fear faced by animals from predators, natural disasters, over the history of evolution. This is also referred to as the Darwinian problem of evil, after Charles Darwin who expressed it as follows: [[]'the sufferings of millions of the lower animals throughout almost endless time' are apparently irreconcilable with the existence of a creator of 'unbounded' goodness. — [Charles Darwin](#), 1856[]]

There is no surviving written text of Epicurus that establishes that he actually formulated the problem of evil in this way, and it is uncertain that he was the author. An attribution to him can be found in a text dated about 600 years later, in the 3rd century Christian theologian [Lactantius](#)'s *Treatise on the Anger of God*[[] where Lactantius critiques the argument. Epicurus's argument as presented by Lactantius actually argues that the gods are distant and uninvolved with man's concerns. The gods are neither our friends nor enemies.

[Gottfried Leibniz](#) introduced the term theodicy in his 1710 work *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal* ("Theodicy Essays on the Benevolence of God, the Free will of man, and the Origin of Evil"). He argued that this is the [best of all possible worlds](#) that God could have created.

The problem of evil is often formulated in two forms: the logical problem of evil and the evidential problem of evil. The logical form of the argument tries to show a logical impossibility in the coexistence of God and evil, while the evidential form tries to show that given the evil in the world, it is improbable that there is an omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good God.

Responses to the problem have traditionally been discussed under the heading of [theodicy](#) refutations, and defenses.

One such defense attributes the paradox to the fact the **limitation of human understanding**. Since no human can fully understand God's ultimate plan, no one can assume that evil actions do not have some sort of greater purpose. Ontological dualism, an idea found in the Platonic school, with its two realities,

one of God and Truth, another of human and perceived experience and belief, offers a similar explanation. It is simply beyond our human intelligence.

Skeptical theism defends the problem of evil by asserting that God allows an evil to happen in order to prevent a greater evil or to encourage a response that will lead to a greater good. A variant of that defense is that the problem of evil is derived from probability judgments which are **inductive** in nature and there exists the logical possibility of hidden or unknown reasons for the existence of evil which cannot be induced by human intelligence. Not knowing the reason does not necessarily mean that the reason does not exist. Therefore, existence of God and the existence of evil are logically compatible. It need not even be true, since a false though coherent explanation would be sufficient to show logical compatibility.

The limitation of human understanding is the only defense to could apply to animal suffering and human suffering caused by natural, non-human sources. Of course, one can object to the proposition that you don't know because you can't know as being tautology, and there is no getting around that without a leap of faith.

Free will-the hole in plan

The problem of evil is sometimes explained as a consequence of **free will**, an ability granted by God. Free will is both a source of good and of evil. People with free will "decide to cause suffering and act in other evil ways", and it is they who make that choice, not God. Further, the free will argument asserts that it would be logically inconsistent for God to prevent evil by coercion and curtailing free will, because that would no longer be free will.

Soul-making or Irenaean theodicy

Irenaean theodicy, posited by **Irenaeus** (2nd century CE–c. 202), has been reformulated by **John Hick**. It holds that one cannot achieve moral goodness or love for God if there is no evil and suffering in the world. Evil is **soul-making** and leads one to be truly moral and close to God. God created an **epistemic** distance (such that God is not immediately knowable) so that we may strive to know him and by doing so become truly good. Evil is a means to good for three main reasons:

1. *Means of knowledge* – Hunger leads to pain, and causes a desire to feed. Knowledge of pain prompts humans to seek to help others in pain.
2. *Character building* – Evil offers the opportunity to grow morally. "We would never learn the art of goodness in a world designed as a hedonistic paradise" (*Richard Swinburne*)

3. *Predictable environment* – The world runs to a series of natural laws. These are independent of any inhabitants of the universe. Natural Evil only occurs when these natural laws conflict with our own perceived needs. This is not immoral in any way

A related Cruciform theodicy begins with Jesus' suffering "the entire spectrum of human sorrow, including economic exploitation, political disenfranchisement, social ostracism, rejection and betrayal by friends, even alienation from his own family...deep psychological distress... [grief]..." ridicule, humiliation, abandonment, beating, torture, despair, and death. Christ had to demonstrate the humanity in his divinity.

Evil as the absence of good (privation theory)

The idea that evil does not exist as such but is merely a low level of good goes back to the Plotinus layers of goodness emanating from the One and reaches all the way forward to the present day philosophy of Hanna Arendt's and her belief that evil is banality.

In the 2nd-century Clement of Alexandria, said that evil does not exist as a positive, but exists as a negative or as a "lack of good." Augustine adopted the privation theory, and in his *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*, where he points out that blindness is not a separate entity, but is merely a lack or privation of sight.

Another 'sine qua non' defense is that evil is a necessary backdrop for morality. The existence of evil implies an ethical standard against which moral value is determined, which also implies the existence of God.

The counter argument, by David Hume, is that the existence of evil can be inferred from the suffering of its victims, rather than by the actions of the evil actor, so no "ethical standard" is implied.

Christianity has responded with multiple traditional theodicies: the Punishment theodicy (Augustine), the Soul-making theodicy (Irenaeus), Process theodicy (Rabbi Harold Kushner), Cruciform theodicy (Moltmann), and the free-will defense (Plantinga) among them.

Both Luther and Calvin explained evil as a consequence of the fall of man and the original sin. Calvin, however, held to the belief in predestination and omnipotence, the fall is part of God's plan. Luther saw evil and original sin as an inheritance from Adam and Eve, passed on to all mankind from their conception and bound the will of man to serving sin, which God's just nature allowed as

consequence for their distrust, though God planned mankind's redemption through [Jesus Christ](#).^[120] Ultimately humans may not be able to understand and explain this plan

Jewish theodicy is experiencing extensive revision in light of the Holocaust. In the Hebrew Bible Genesis says God's creation is "good" with evil depicted as entering creation as a result of human choice. The book of Job "seeks to expand the understanding of divine justice ...beyond mere retribution, to include a system of divine sovereignty [showing] the King has the right to test His subject's loyalty... [Job] corrects the rigid and overly simplistic doctrine of retribution in attributing suffering to sin and punishment."

Eastern Theodicy

Theodicy is not an issue for hinduism. [Hinduism](#) is a complex religion with many different currents or religious beliefs. Indian deities are personal and cosmic facilitators. Its non-theist traditions such as Samkhya, early Nyaya, Mimamsa and many within Vedanta do not posit the existence of an almighty, omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God (monotheistic God), and the classical formulations of the problem of evil and theodicy do not apply to most Hindu traditions. It is important to understand that [deities](#) in Hinduism are neither eternal nor omnipotent nor omniscient nor omnibenevolent. Evil as well as good, along with suffering is considered real and caused by human free will, its source and consequences explained through the [karma](#) doctrine. The theory of [karma](#) with Man as focus, rather than God, has good or evil created by man, without intent, by words and deeds continuously changing karma in the individual and world.

Buddhism accepts that there is evil in the world, as well as [Dukkha](#) (suffering) that is caused by evil or because of natural causes (aging, disease, rebirth). Evil is result of the [three poisons](#): [greed](#), [hatred](#), and [delusion](#). The precepts and practices of Buddhism, such as [Four Noble Truths](#) and [Noble Eightfold Path](#) aim to empower a follower in gaining insights and liberation ([nirvana](#)) from the cycle of such suffering as well as rebirth.

The *Tathagata-garbha* theory leads to a Buddhist version of the problem of evil, (states Peter Harvey), because the theory claims that every human being has an intrinsically pure inner Buddha which is good. This premise leads to the question as to why anyone does any evil, and why doesn't the "intrinsically pure inner

Buddha" attempt or prevail in preventing the evil actor before he or she commits the evil.

One response has been that the Buddha-nature is omnibenevolent, but not omnipotent. Further, the *Tathagata-garbha Sutras* are atypical texts of Buddhism. Mainstream Buddhism, since its early development, did not need to address a theological problem of evil as it saw no need for a creator of the universe and asserted instead, like many Indian traditions, that the universe never had a beginning and all existence is an endless cycle of rebirths (samsara)

Islamic scholars in the medieval and modern era have tried to reconcile the problem of evil with the afterlife theodicy. The omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent god in Islamic thought creates everything, including human suffering and its causes (evil). Evil was neither bad nor needed moral justification from God, but rewards awaited believers in the afterlife. The faithful suffered in this short life, so as to be judged by God and enjoy heaven in the never-ending afterlife.

Leibniz

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1646–1716)

Gottfried Wilhelm (von) Leibniz was one of the great thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and is known as the last “universal genius.” He made important contributions to the fields of physics, metaphysics, epistemology, logic, philosophy of religion and mathematics. Most importantly he is the first to articulate the idea that there is mystical force in and between objects that is invisible but none the less real, surreal, and divine, all at the same time. We could say that he discovered “mattergy” long before I did. Because Leibniz was more than just a philosopher he had a lot more influence on his intellectual peers. Only the most prodigious, eminent scientist, which Leibniz was, could propose this mystical connection between the mundane and the sublime.

As an engineer, Leibniz worked on calculating machines, clocks, and even mining machinery. As a librarian, he more or less invented the modern idea of cataloguing. As a mathematician, he not only produced ground-breaking work in what is now called topology, but came up with ‘calculus’ independently of Newton. In logic, he worked on binary systems, way back before Boule and

Turin. As a physicist, he made advances in the theory of momentum. He also made contributions to linguistics, history, aesthetics, and political theory.

Leibniz demonstrated how the mathematically correct intelligence of the observer could provide a bogus explanation of the observed; he gives the example of a useful average which helps with prices but may not, in fact, be the price of anything ("Letter to Arnauld," 30 April 1687). Leibniz's declaration that a serious error would arise if one took the "objects" of science (matter, motion, space, time, etc.) as if they were real in themselves, anticipated the quantum quandary. The quantum quandary three centuries later led Einstein, Bohr, Schrodinger and Heisenberg down the reason runway to the lift off point.

Leibniz's discussion of a "dipole reality" appears in his "Discourse on Metaphysics." His *soft place* is made up of "**monads**." A **dipole** with **monads** sounds like yet another paradox puddle, and it is, but Leibniz knew how to do the metaphor hop. Leibniz insists that monads are not just basic particles like the atoms conjured up by the early Greek atomists, because they coexist in both the material and the non-material realm.

The mundane material side is referred to as *phenomenal or descriptive* because of Leibniz's realization of the deception of perception. However, it is important to note that, for Leibniz, these are aberrations and not delusions, i.e. nothing happens inside that is not based upon what really happens outside. The inside insight (which Kant would later call phenomena) may not be identical to the outside thing that caused it (which Kant would later call noumena), but they are inextricably related.

Like Plato and Augustine, Leibniz imbues fallible humans with divine souls. Souls act according to the laws of final causes, Aristotle's term for the sublime. The harmony between the two Aristotelian layers, that of efficient causes and that of final cause, is crucial to any understanding of Leibniz, and that is what put him in the conga line. The lower layer of consciousness is just a means to an end, the end is the upper sublime layer.

Leibniz's term, "appetitions" refers to upper layer 'ends' that connect, order and justify the lower layer 'means.' Bodies may appear to act as if there were no souls and souls act as if there were no bodies; but, nevertheless, each influences the other.

Both Berkeley and Kant are indebted to Leibniz for this mundane idealism, just as Leibniz is indebted to Descartes and just as Descartes is indebted to (you guessed it) Plato. Even abject materialists are forced to subscribe to subjective

idealism. Newton, Leibniz's contemporary, also owes a debt to the Leibniz's layering of reality.

Leibniz's idea of 'little perceptions' gives a phenomenal account of the connection to the real "indiscernibles": there will always be differences in the petite perceptions of otherwise very similar 'monads'. We hear the roar of the ocean and not the composite sounds of each drop splash.

The key to Leibniz's metaphysics is contained in his Principle of Sufficient Reason (hereinafter referred to as PSR), which, simply stated, says that *nothing is without a reason (nihil est sine ratione)*. So, unlike Spinoza, there is a master plan, a universal cause and a God with a purpose. How do I justify having such opposing definitions of the infinite in the same conga line? Because the infinite by definition is undefinable, so it's all guess work; why not include all the guesses and then make up our own guess.

As we saw, Leibniz's 'monad' is different from the early greek 'atom' especially since every monad is synchronized with one another by God, according to his vast conception of the perfect universe.

For Leibniz, space, time, causation, and other material phenomena, are all illusions (at least as humanly conceived). However, these illusions are well-founded on and explained by the true nature of the universe at its fundamental level. For example, Leibniz argues that things seem to cause one another because God ordained a pre-established harmony among everything in the universe. Furthermore, as consequences of his metaphysics, Leibniz proposes solutions to several deep philosophical problems, such as the the nature of space and time. In the mind of God, there are an infinite number of infinitely complex concepts, much like Spinoza's "infinite attributes." However, unlike Spinoza, God, for Leibniz, is not only unimaginable, but must be imagined by stepping outside of time, where we find God not creating, but *allowing* the universe to be actuated and sustained in existence. Leibniz's God wound the clock and and lets it run it's course, keeping a watchful eye on it all the time. I'm not sure what else God does while He's just watching the clock run on its own.

But have no fear God knows what He's doing, God could not create a universe in which there are *both* more sheep than cows *and* more cows than sheep. According to Leibniz, God chooses the universe that is the most perfect. Thus, according to Leibniz, the actual world is the *best of all possible worlds*. The paradox puddle here is that there must be another God who built the clock and who established the standard for the best of of all possible worlds. (Voltaire's *Candide* has a great time splashing around in this paradox puddle.)

Leibniz agrees with Spinoza that the human mind can eventually come to know it all; the differences may not be observable at the moment, but will “unfold in the fullness of time” into a discernible difference (*New Essays on Human Understanding*, 245-6). Nevertheless, Leibniz also sees that not all monads are explicable in terms of physical, efficient causes; there is still some final cause mystery in the upper layer.

While Leibniz’s philosophical system demands a certain sense of determinism about the universe, he does not deny the existence of free will. Leibniz’s *compatibilism* (a word used to describe theories where determinism is found to be compatible with free will) makes several attempts at how free will can be determined in advance. If that doesn’t make sense, Leibniz leave it and move on. In “On Freedom,” Leibniz writes: “Instead of wondering about what you cannot know ..., act according to your duty, which you do know” (*Discourse on Metaphysics*, §30). For Leibniz, that is as close to reason, faith can get. This comports with Plato’s notion of human fallibility, and my fourth grade teacher, Sister Mary Carlotta’s explanation: “God works in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform.”

THEODICY

We have already used the term theodicy in this work; now it’s time to take closer look. Leibniz coined the term to refer to the reconciliation of God’s benevolence with the evil in the world. In the *Theodicy*, Leibniz is able to demonstrate that ‘the best possible universe’ does not mean *no* evil; in fact, *less* overall evil is impossible. He also shows us that the uniqueness of God, his omniscience, omnipotence, and benevolence may well be totally consistent with the challenging contingencies of the world he created. His Principle of Sufficient Reason (*Theodicy* §7: G VI 106–07/H 127–28) suggests that this apparent paradox puddle may be a mirage, a phenomenal problem of human perception. The proper order of the universe exceeds one’s ability to judge it. In other words, leave it and move on.

Leibniz argues that a perfect being is necessary to the universe and since perfection cannot be crammed into our understanding bound by space and time, it is unanalyzable. The unanalyzability does not effect its perfect existence; therefore the necessary God exists whether we know it or not.

As part of our Platonic human fallibility, Leibniz points out that since we are all limited and imperfect, evil and sin are necessary for created beings to be creative (see *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §30). In other words, if we weren’t put in a pit to start out we would never learn how to climb. Or more simply put without a ‘down’ there could be no ‘up.’ This would become the most

acceptable Christian reply to the Epicurean divine doubt, theodicy. I mentioned this in our discussion of Pico della Mirandola.

Leibniz's place in the conga line right behind Descartes doubled the energy flow toward the Cartesian rational metaphysics that was the hall mark of 18th century Western Philosophy and eventually lead to 19th and 20th century idealism, and what has come to be called the German enlightenment.

Kant's views on space and time, sufficient reason, the distinction between phenomenal and metaphysical reality depend on Leibniz. In fact Kant would not be with us now were it not for Leibniz. No Leibniz, no Kant; no Kant, no Hegel, no Heidegger, no Bergson (all of whom we will meet as we move down the line).

Leibniz did not write a magnum opus; there is no single work that can be said to contain the core of his thought. While he did produce two books, the Theodicy and the New Essays Concerning Human Understanding, Leibniz's thought must be pieced together from his many essays and letters. I left that work to others, and as it turns out, I had several Leibniz scholars to choose from; without the mystical Internet, the mystical Leibniz connection between the real and the surreal would not have been possible for me.

This prompts a digression where I must side step out of the time line to rave some more about the TAPs and SAPs of our new information age and marvel at the metaphysical force of universal consciousness which powers the internet. This chapter and this book would not have been possible without the consciousness extension provided by my absent partners. Along with all the fear mongering and time wasting diversions, somehow the wisdom of the ages is also at my finger tips. There is no other way to explain this development except as a step in the right direction toward the universal consciousness and that "best of all possible worlds" Leibniz left for us to discover and enjoy.

Spinoza

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1632 -1677)

Spinoza used three first names Bento, Baruch and Benedictus. All three names, in Dutch, Hebrew and Latin, mean “blessed.” This does not mean, however, that he was blest by all three cultures.

Spinoza was born into an Amsterdam, Portuguese-Jewish community, which did not appreciate his philosophizing; particularly his insistence that the commandments of the Torah were not given by God; that got him in trouble with Dutch Christians as well as Jews.

Spinoza also denies the immortality of the soul; and strongly rejects the notion of a transcendent, providential God. So what is he doing here in our conga line?

I think Spinoza would be ok with a lift off point on the reason runway, as long as he can back into it, rather than taxi to it. Spinoza backs into metaphysics. The proposition that: ‘man is created in the image and likeness of God’, read backwards is: ‘God is created in the image and likeness of man.’ That is the backward religious belief that Spinoza backs into for lift off. Spinoza is here, not because of what he thinks God is, but what he thinks God is not. His defacement of the man made images of God bends our conga line but does not break the connection.

Spinoza is not the first to dethrone the anthropomorphic God. We mentioned Xenophanes earlier; in the fifth century BC. You will recall, he said if a cow were to draw God, it would look like a cow.

Spinoza’s omni present God doesn’t look like anything or anyone. Spinoza’s God is diffused throughout the *rock* and the *soft place*, *i.e.* throughout the material world and the immaterial world, throughout the *res extensa* and the *res cogitans*, so much so that we may not even need the distinction any longer. One of his works “On God” tells us in a few words what he means by God. “By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, *i.e.*, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes....,”

“Infinity of attributes” must mean that God is, or has, absolutely everything including perfect power and perfect wisdom; whatever that is. God is also a “unique” substance. By ‘unique,’ he doesn’t mean unusual; he means the only substance. There is only one substance in the universe; it is God; God is everything and everything is God. Remember Thales, the father of philosophy and his unified substance?

For proof of God, Spinoza backs into a null hypothesis; he challenges: “if you deny this, conceive, if you can, that God does not exist.”

He demonstrates the impossibility of the null hypothesis in a winding blizzard of terms and philosophical algebra, which is more than we need for our purposes.

The idea that God is not just a man with a beard but an eternal unified energy field appeals to my scientific nature; however, this reified, depersonalized God is not someone I can connect with. What’s the point of having a God you can’t connect with? It is too disappointing for me and also unbelievable to think that God doesn’t care about me. Where oh where is love?

From what I read, Spinoza would insist that my Augustinian ‘inner teacher’ is a figment of my imagination, an anthropomorphic God. According to Spinoza this anthropomorphic delusion, besides being false, caused painful missteps throughout history. Spinoza points out that such anthropomorphic God figures have historically been wrathful monsters who have enslaved us by superstition and driven us to barbaric treatment of each other. Where oh where is love?

For Spinoza, love, caring, thinking, feeling and understanding, are natural processes just like photosynthesis or thermodynamics; they happen in the mind therefore, they are predetermined in their occurrence as a body in motion governed by laws and properties of physics and mathematics and Nature. He says:

“I shall treat the nature and power of the Affects, and the power of the Mind over them, by the same Method, I treated God and the Mind, and I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a question of lines, planes, and bodies.”

Spinoza doesn’t have a God who would answer questions. God doesn’t need to have a reason for anything; reasoning is an unconnected human trait. Spinoza denies that the universe could exist because of the arbitrary act of some fickle personal God. For Spinoza’s monistic cosmology, there are no alternatives to the actual world; there are no other possible worlds, and there is no contingency or spontaneity within the world.

Spinoza points out that the traditional Judeo-Christian God is a being who causes a world distinct from himself to come into being by creating it out of nothing. This God produces that world by a spontaneous act of free will, and could just as easily not have created anything beside himself. This makes no sense to Spinoza.

Spinoza also backs over Plato's human fallibility, but to a lift off point nonetheless. He disagrees with Plato and insists that we **can** know God perfectly and adequately in this life time. "The knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence that each of us has is adequate and perfect" (IIp46). "The human Mind has an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence" (IIp47).

I assume this would include my knowledge of God, and what if it differed from Spinoza's?

Men naturally confuse the sublime with the mundane. They assume that everything out there, and up there, is the same as what they see and feel about themselves. My guess is that Spinoza would answer that I am not free to choose a different knowledge of God. Spinoza says:

"In the Mind there is no absolute, or free, will, but the Mind is determined to will this or that by a cause that is also determined by another, and this again by another, and so to infinity" (IIp48).

Spinoza's God does not "do" things for the sake of anything else. The order of things just follows from God's essences with an inviolable determinism. All talk of God's purposes, intentions, goals, preferences or aims is just another part of the anthropomorphic error. Everything that exists, Spinoza calls "Nature" which is brought into being with this pre-existing deterministic necessity.

I was about to drop Spinoza from our conga line with his monistic cuckoo clock world, before I discovered some wiggle room for our neoplatonic dualism and our game of life free play. The differences in the way things depend on God, i.e. the "infinite modes" of God, creates what Spinoza calls multi random events and an infinite variety of specific applications; this, Spinoza says, adds the spice to life, and, I say, is exactly what we have been calling the game of life, in which we have choices to make about floating or drowning in the sea of troubles.

Plato showed us that human fallibility must have a backdrop of divine perfection. Spinoza agrees that human fallibility is the result of our fortuitous and haphazard encounter with things in the external world. For this "knowledge derived from random experience;" to be flawed there must be an unflawed divine knowledge of 'Infinite modes' which include the laws governing thought, and these feed downstream to "affections," tributaries of God's attributes. So ultimately

Spinoza and I would see through our individual foibles to the same true knowledge of God. This does not quite jive with Spinoza's belief that some minds are more virtuous than others and closer to God they do not sweat the small stuff, and those greater minds are at peace. Presumably a mind greater than mine and closer to God might have a different view. Spinoza says that it is inevitable and unavoidable to think about God beyond our human space, even for the philosopher who forbids this practice. In the end, I'm sure Spinoza would have to agree that we can't imagine a God who knows everything and doesn't care.

Spinoza believes that all beings are naturally endowed with *conatus*: "Each thing, as far as it can, by its own power, strives to persevere in its being." This resonates with our notions of high and low love levels, our will power, virtue/virtuosity, our ascetics of esthetics, all of which rest on free will. Spinoza's advice that we should strive to learn how to moderate and restrain the passions and become active, autonomous beings, stumbles over his predeterminism but eventually gets to our "ascetic esthetic" virtuosity. If we can achieve this, he says, then we will be— "free, but only to the extent that whatever happens to us will result not from our relations with things outside us, but from our own nature."

Spinoza said that our virtue, consists in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding, abstracted from all considerations of time and place, reaching all the way to God. Spinoza's "adequate knowledge" and his 'virtuous acts' which lead to freedom from strife and ultimate connection to the mind of God necessitate free will, and self inflation, if only by implication.

I guess what keeps Spinoza in the conga line is his exaltation of the "inward worship of God." Inner piety belongs exclusively to the individual, and, Spinoza believes, it is an inalienable, private right which cannot be tampered with by any sovereign. Spinoza says that no one can limit or control another person's thoughts anyway, and it would be foolhardy and destructive for a sovereign to attempt such a thing. This supports individual freedom and individual spiritualism.

Spinoza almost endorses the idea of universal consciousness in that he says: "insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, they must always agree among themselves" (IVp34–35).

Hegel credits his pantheism to Spinoza, which connects to Fichte's super "I" and Schopenhauer's "will" and Bergson's "elan vital."

Locke

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES
(1632-1704)

John Locke looks, at first glance, like he's in lock step with a marching band. One could object to my inclusion of Locke in the conga line because of his monumental *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) which is the corner stone of British empiricism (all knowledge comes in through the senses), but I believe Locke's "knowledge" has a deeper layer.

Locke opposed all authoritarian dogma including those of the established Church of England. Locke's anti-authoritarianism, deplores imposed constraints of dogma which leaves room for our individual spiritualism. Locke believes that using reason to try to grasp the truth, and determine the legitimate functions of institutions will optimize human flourishing for the individual and society both in respect to its material and spiritual welfare.

There is a divinity in Locke's natural law, which, in my book, connects the freedom node to the God node. The third level of Locke's tripartite layering of knowledge, 'intuitive knowledge', as distinguished from the more mundane layers of 'demonstrative knowledge' (math and science) and 'sensitive knowledge' (sense data), I think, leads to a universal consciousness and, inevitably, to the divine connection and the metaphysical triad.

Locke's distinction between the legitimate and illegitimate functions of institutions presuppose an order beyond nature which can be intuited by humans. Locke's empiricism inspired and was inspired by the scientific experimentation of the era which resulted in the apotheosis of scientists and "scientism." However, his *Letter Concerning Toleration*, builds a special inner sanctum for hypersubjectivity.

Locke's bold and pioneering efforts to keep the church dogma out of government and government mandates out of individual development smoothed the runway all the way out to the lift off point. This is blatant heresy as far as organized religion was concerned. Fortunately for Locke, heretic roasts were not on the menu for the Church of England, which is founded on the protestant "heresy." Despite the fact that I could find no direct mention of it, I'm guessing Locke would allow us to include our metaphysical lift off at the end of his "intuitive knowledge" runway, as long as it doesn't become an institutional prerogative forced on others. So, yes, Locke is not in a lock step and he can dance in the conga line.

Berkeley

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1685- 1753)

“To be is to be perceived.” This was George Berkeley’s way of saying ‘it’s all in your head.’ There is no reality beyond what we think we see. If Protagoras provided the lemons in 450 BC, Berkeley made the lemonade in 1750 AD. As we saw earlier, Protagoras suggested that the subjective mind had no way to measure, and therefore, no way to realize, objective reality on the outside. Protagoras created this philosophical dragon which Plato attempted to daze with ideal rays and which Descartes attempted to hobble with double doubt. But Berkeley saddled, and road the monster to the promised land of absolute idealism.

George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, was a brilliant critic of his predecessors, particularly Descartes, and Locke. He was a talented metaphysician. In the *Principles* and the *Three Dialogues* Berkeley’s extreme metaphysics hops over physics completely with the claim that everything that exists is all and only thought and depends on a mind for its existence. Immaterialism is all there is, i.e. matter does not exist, as such. All physical objects are composed of ideas, or as he put it in his pithy latin, “*esse est percipi*” (to be is to be perceived). This is quite different from Hume’s “seeing is believing;” this is ‘seeing is existing.’ In other words there is nothing to see beyond perception.

It is true that he did not say much about consciousness, in so many words, but he didn’t have to, since, in his mind, consciousness is all there is. All his words make it clear that for him reality consists exclusively of mind and ideas. Samuel Johnson a countryman and contemporary suggested that Berkeley’s mind of God is the repository of the the Platonic original uncensored set of ideal forms of all subjects and objects.

Despite the fact that he was a bishop, Berkeley was less interested in organized religion; like Augustine, he was a wide-ranging thinker with interests in the psychology of vision, mathematics, physics, morals, economics, and medicine. Although many of Berkeley's first readers greeted him with derision; nevertheless, he did influence both Hume and Kant.

Berkeley's *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* speed down the shortest runway of solid pragmatism and lift off into the most vertical climb in all of metaphysics. Just as God could not exist without Berkeley's mind; Berkeley's mind could not exist without God. Like Descartes, Berkeley turns the question of God on itself. You couldn't question the idea of God unless the concept of God already existed in your mind. God is in your mind and gives you the freedom and the ability to question; even atheism is made out of theism.

The question of whether God is conceived in your mind or you are conceived in God's mind becomes immaterial, literally and figuratively. This resonates with our notion that immaterialism has no sequence of events. No telling whether God made man first or man made God. There is no cause and effect, no chicken / egg conundrum, no distinction between matter and energy. My "mattergy," would be all in your head, according to Berkeley, which is OK with me. Berkeley decried abstraction and philosophical terms, and felt that every day knowledge was enough, and so, it was unnecessary to explain universal consciousness any further than all minds think alike.

Burke

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1729–1797)

No doubt influenced by Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* in 1690, which was the first attempt to survey the human mind since Aristotle, Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, in 1757, emphasized, the passion of consciousness and its influence on conduct. Life is much richer for those who see the difference between "sympathy" and ordinary compassion. Those who distinguish ideas of beauty from the ideas of pleasure are also on a higher level. Burke saw beauty (like goodness) as a sixth sense which, if followed, leads to a higher social order (civilization).

The roots of human activity, Burke thought, were the passions of curiosity, pleasure and pain. Curiosity stimulated the activity of mind on all matters. Avoidance of pain and the quest for pleasure (including comfort) underly self development which allows us to rise from this low level need to a mid level need of sociability, i.e. partnerships which involve sympathy, imitation and ambition. Imitation establishes habit, and ambition produces change in both the individual and those around him, but "sympathy" does much more. Sympathy establishes an interest in other people's welfare; more than that, "sympathy" extends consciousness so that we mentally identify with partners. The scope of "sympathy" includes anyone and everyone, unlike compassion, which applies only to those in a worse situation than oneself.

Like Maslow's hierarchy, the lower level energy of pleasure/ pain, has a mid level energy just above it, and above that an apex where= 'sympathy' resides.

Burke's "sympathy" must be like Platonic love and Christ's neighborly love, and Plato's "agape." I think, given his distinction between "sympathy" and "compassion," Burke would agree that this human race, this obstacle course, this game of life, has a loving coach rather than a 'whip in hand' circus ring master.

While Burke was bending Locke's ideas toward idealism for the English speaking world, Kant was laying the foundation for German idealism, whether he knew it or not. It's as though there was some groundswell of idealism under both cultures which just happened to erupt in time for the industrial revolution.

Hume

7 May 1711 – 25 August 1776- was a Scottish [Enlightenment philosopher](#), [historian](#), [economist](#), and [essayist](#), who is best known today for his highly influential system of philosophical [empiricism](#), [skepticism](#), and [naturalism](#).^[1] Beginning with *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), Hume strove to create a naturalistic [science of man](#) that examined the psychological basis of human nature. Hume argued against the existence of [innate ideas](#), positing that all human knowledge derives solely from [experience](#).

A central doctrine of Hume's philosophy, stated in the very first lines of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, is that the mind consists of perceptions, or the mental objects which are present to it, and which divide into two categories: "All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call impressions and ideas."

After establishing the forcefulness of impressions and ideas, these two categories are further broken down into *simple* and *complex*: "simple perceptions or impressions and ideas are such as admit of no distinction nor separation", whereas "the complex are the contrary to these, and may be distinguished into parts". Hume believes that complex perceptions can be broken down into smaller and smaller parts until perceptions are reached that have no parts of their own, and these perceptions are thus referred to as simple.

A person's imagination, regardless of how boundless it may seem, is confined to the mind's ability to recombine the information it has already acquired from the body's sensory experience (the ideas that have been derived from impressions). In addition, "as our imagination takes our most basic ideas and leads us to form new ones, it is directed by three principles of association, namely, resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect":^[71]

Hume denies the existence of any part of consciousness prior to experience, and believes that self consciousness is impossible. All we are is our observed experiences. Hume's separation between Matters of Fact and Relations of Ideas is often referred to as "Hume's fork."^[1] Hume, himself would be reluctant to be called a dualist despite the fork he created

However, there has to be something in our minds to collect and compile the experience and make ideas out of it. Hume would have us like computers collecting data and creating information, but he fails to see that that could never happen without an operating system created by another superior intelligence.

The presumption that the past will follow some order observed in the present, which he decries, is also at the same time the admission of the existence of an apriori - mentality, of consciousness.

Hume admits of an apriori consciousness which he also denies:

Hume's belief that observation is the only road to truth, is tantamount to "seeing is believing". This contradicts his own teaching on the illusory nature of perceptions.

Hume, in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779), suggested that, even if the world is a more or less smoothly functioning system, this may only be a result of the "chance permutations of particles falling into a temporary or permanent self-sustaining order, which thus has the appearance of design.

if chance is a name you give to the natural order, then it is, by definition, above nature, i.e. supernatural, and all you have accomplished theologically with your "chance" proposition is to give God a nickname.

Kant

(22 April 1724 – 12 February 1804) was a [German philosopher](#) and one of the central [Enlightenment](#) thinkers.^{[23][24]} Kant's comprehensive and systematic works in [epistemology](#), [metaphysics](#), [ethics](#), and [aesthetics](#) have made him one of the most influential figures in the history of western philosophy.

Kant also deals with the distinction between subjects and objects. While not directly attaching “subject” to consciousness, he does associate subjectivity with some divinely installed consciousness. He might have objected to those terms but he does say that the [subject](#) must supply laws that make experience of objects possible, and that these laws are synthetic, *a priori* laws of nature that apply to all objects before we experience them. Whether he called it that or not, that rings of “universal consciousness,” which I find is an essential metaphysical consolation, but nonetheless true.

Kant's basic morality - the categorical imperative implies, ineluctably a universal consciousness. Kant is known for his theory that there is a single moral obligation, which he called the "Categorical Imperative." Categorical imperatives are principles that are intrinsically valid; they are good in and of themselves; they must be obeyed in all situations and circumstances, Kant believed that the moral law is a principle of reason itself, and is not based on contingent facts about the world. Accordingly, he believed that moral obligation applies only to rational agents. Unlike a hypothetical imperative, a categorical imperative is an unconditional obligation; it has the force of an obligation regardless of our will or desires. In other words, to be moral in the Kantian sense, one must think universally. Kant stated: Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law.

In his doctrine of [transcendental idealism](#), Kant argued that [space](#) and [time](#) are mere "forms of intuition" which structure all [experience](#), and therefore, while "[things-in-themselves](#)" exist and contribute to experience, they are nonetheless distinct from the objects of experience. Kant defines his theory of perception in his influential 1781 work the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which has often been cited as the most significant volume of metaphysics and [epistemology](#) in modern philosophy. Kant maintains that our understanding of the external world had its foundations not merely in experience, but in both experience and *a priori* [concepts](#), Firstly, Kant distinguishes between analytic and synthetic

propositions: an analytic proposition is true by nature of the meaning of the words in the sentence — we require no further knowledge than a grasp of the language to understand this proposition. On the other hand, a synthetic statement is one that tells us something about the world. The truth or falsehood of synthetic statements derives from something outside their linguistic content, just where or what that thing is, is not clear. Kant does tell us that the possibility of experience depends on certain necessary conditions — which he calls *a priori* forms — and that these conditions structure and hold true of the world of experience. His main claims in the "[Transcendental Aesthetic](#)" are that mathematic judgments are synthetic *a priori* and that such things as [space](#) and [time](#) are not derived from experience but rather are its preconditions. So for Kant, all experience is based on the perception of external objects and some undefined *a priori* knowledge. The external world, he writes, provides those things that we sense. But our mind processes this information and gives it order, allowing us to comprehend it. Our mind supplies the conditions of space and time to experience objects. According to the "transcendental unity of apperception", the concepts of the mind (Understanding) and perceptions or intuitions that garner information from phenomena (Sensibility) are synthesized by comprehension. Without concepts, perceptions are nondescript; without perceptions, concepts are meaningless. Although Kant would want to argue that there is no empirical way of observing the self, he cannot get around the logical necessity of the self. "I am therefore conscious of the identical self in regard to the manifold of the representations that are given to me in an intuition because I call them all together **my** representations, which constitute **one**."

Kant insists that an external environment is necessary for the establishment of the self, but doesn't see that the self is essential for the establishment of the external environment. Just where that self consciousness comes from is not clear to Kant, or for that matter to all that went before Kant and came after him, including, Heisenberg with his principle of uncertainty, and Schrodinger's double reality where the "cat" can be dead in one and alive in the other. This is the same mysterious chasm that lies between Plato's "belief" and "truth."

Many of Kant's most important disciples and followers including [Fichte](#), transformed the Kantian double vision into a more radical form of idealism. Whether or not Kant agreed with Fichte, because of Kant's 'synthesis,' he would have to agree that the objective order of nature and the causal necessity that operates within it depend on the mind's processes.

Kant's chasm between the two worlds, known as the two-aspect view, means that we are not able to transcend the bounds of our own mind, meaning that we cannot access the "[thing-in-itself](#)." Nevertheless, Kant speaks of the thing in itself as a *transcendental object*, a product of the (human) understanding. This is

where Kant should have lifted off the reason runway into metaphysics, but didn't. As for Kant's book *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, it was emphasized that Kant reduced religiosity to rationality, religion to morality and Christianity to ethics.

Kant

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1724-1804)

Because he wrote to dazzle his peers and not for the ordinary reader, Immanuel Kant's tongue twisting terms are mind bending, and the most interpreted and misinterpreted words of wisdom in the history of philosophy. I spent a lot more time with Kant's actual words than I did with any other philosopher in our conga line. I did take advantage of TAP (temporally absent partners) and SAP (spatially absent partners) scholars, but that still left a lot of confusion. Again thanks to the information age I live in, I had Kant speaking to me in my earphones and also had his words on my Iphone whenever I needed to consult him directly.

I boil it all down to the proposition that metaphysical believing and reason are separate powers of consciousness with which we are all endowed. Although he never discovered any tunnel or bridge between the *rock* and the *soft place*, Kant would agree that there must be a connection between the two. Kant was not a bridge builder; he was more the surveyor, mapping the borders of the subcontinents to be bridged: noumena and phenomena.

"Critique," the very first word in of all his titles makes Kant the critic of the metaphysical play that was unfolding, rather than the playwright. None of Kant's critiques were ever intended to refute metaphysics but rather to perfect it: *Critique of Pure Reason*; *Critique of Practical Reason*, and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, though unintelligible for ordinary readers, inspired future metaphysical thinkers for generations to follow, either directly or indirectly.

Kant divided human knowledge into 'analytic' and 'synthetic.' Analytic knowledge includes self evident propositions, such as 'all bachelors are single' which Wittgenstein would later call tautology. The proposition: 'Bachelors are not as happy as married men' is 'synthetic', i.e. not necessarily true and therefore requires some further proof.

For centuries the analytic/synthetic distinction was considered crucial in that, among other things, it set math apart as not requiring any proof. In the twentieth century Godel demonstrated that Math not only requires proof but can never find enough. Other modern philosophers attack the distinction as pointless, including Wittgenstein, already mentioned, Quine and Putnam.

Nevertheless, Kant's epistemology was essential to the dialogue that followed in the German enlightenment. However, as we shall see, it was too narrow to stand on its own. Kant himself would come to see that.

Perhaps the central and most controversial thesis of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the idea that human beings experience only appearances, not things in themselves; including the concepts of space and time which are only subjective forms of human intuition. Kant calls this proposition "transcendental idealism," in which all objects in space and time do not exist independent of appearances; indeed, space and time themselves are only appearances. If there is anything out there beyond appearances, we'll never know for sure. And yet for us to know that, we must have some access to the missing knowledge, which Kant calls "pure intuition," an inborn, a-priori part of consciousness-

Kant's "transcendental idealism" which distinguishes between a world of appearances and a separate but real world of things in themselves is not original; the seeds of this distinction can be found in early Greek thought and Descartes. However, Kant distances himself from Protagoras or Berkeley; Kant insists that "things in themselves" are absolutely real in that they would exist even if no human beings were around to perceive them, i.e. the proverbial tree falling in the forest, would go down in the objective world even if there was no subjective ear to hear it fall. Appearances are not absolutely real, or absolutely accurate, because their existence depends, not only on the object but on the subject's aberrations, the human fallible perception. But the subjects and objects are somehow connected. So appearances are mental entities or mental representations. This, makes transcendental idealism a form of phenomenalism in which the subjects are real only because objects exist.

So in a sense we could say Kant agrees with the dualist dipole reality, even though he might object to being called a dualist. In Kant's ontology, (theory of reality) objects have two different aspects: one aspect that appears to us, and another aspect that does not. And how do we know that hidden aspect exists? That's the wheels up point in the Kantian runway which is not clearly marked at all. Kant spends lots of wordy analysis considering the two major figures of past philosophy Plato and Leibniz. He greatly admires Plato and pretty much accepts the idea of ideal forms; he admires Leibniz, as well, but is critical of his 'monads.'

For Kant, in order to be self-conscious, one cannot be wholly absorbed in the contents of perceptions but must distinguish consciousness from the rest of the world; that means there must be a “rest of the world.” We must represent an objective world in order to distinguish our subjectivity from it, and we represent an objective ‘rest of the world’ by” judging.” We are somehow able to judge that some representations necessarily belong together. Judging is an act of what Kant calls synthesis, (synthetic as opposed to analytic), which he defines as “the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition.” In other words, to synthesize is to combine several representations into a single (more) complex representation, and to “judge” is specifically to combine concepts into a judgment.

Kant expands the materialist, experiential conception of self-consciousness, as is suggested by Locke. Kant believes that self-consciousness arises from combining (or synthesizing) representations with one another within the subjective realm regardless of their connection to any object. The smell of my favorite coffee this morning reinforced not only the continuity of the coffee but also, on some deeper level, reassures me that I am the same guy who discovered this Cuban coffee ten years ago. The continuity of experience is the necessary correlate for our sense of a continuous self. For Kant, it is the synthesizing process itself that is consciousness, and our awareness of its continuity is self-consciousness. That, in itself, is a very important contribution to western philosophy, eastern too, come to think of it.

So how do we make metaphysics out of this? Well there has to be some one or some thing beyond the object and subject realm that inserted, implanted.... the ‘a-priori,’ inborn propensity, ability, divine gift, or whatever you want to call self-consciousness, and that would have to be a super natural being, since, by definition, it is beyond nature. Kant never said any of that but I believe it can be fairly inferred from what he did say in so many words, so many, many words.

Also, I would offer as a proof of Kant’s metaphysics, his insistence that no empiricist account, alone, could possibly explain self-consciousness, which is based on changing experiences. The ‘change’ in changing experience implies a constant backdrop, which is in Plato’s ‘Form world’ and our *soft place*. This implied metaphysical backdrop is reflected in what we may call Kant’s principle of ‘apperception’ which involves ‘a priori’ knowledge about the necessary and universal knowledge which precedes, and therefore, cannot be based on experience.

“Understanding” judges sense data, “reason” speculates beyond it. Reason provides rules for thoughtful discourse, and originates synthetic thinking. So, we may call self-consciousness the highest principle of Kant’s theoretical

philosophy, since it is the basis for all of our a-priori knowledge about the structure of nature and the divine consciousness behind it. Reason leads us to the 'a-priori' conceptual truth and also leads us to God and Christ. Yes, that's in Kant; at least I thought so. Kant could be mistaken for being Godless because of the worldly ethics he is famous for. The fact that you don't need God for Kant's ethics does not mean there is no God in Kant. There has to be a God who put the ethical problem in your path and gave you the 'understanding' and will power to choose the high road or the low road around it.

Kant's most famous single fundamental principle of morality, on which all specific moral duties are based, he calls the **categorical imperative**. To figure out what is right or wrong, you are simply to imagine the whole world doing it and then decide whether you would want to live in such a world. The moral law is a product of worldly reason, not otherworldly fire and brimstone. Moral rightness and wrongness apply only to free agents who control their actions. So, whether he said it or not the categorical imperative implies the freedom node of Kant's metaphysical triad.

Kant himself may have deemphasized his own effect on spiritualism and metaphysics, but British metaphysics and the German enlightenment say otherwise. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) brought Kant to England specifically to restore man's connection with God which was nearly erased by Hume and Bentham. The Coleridge restatement of Kant's metaphysical understanding which at the same time includes and exceeds science, rekindled British metaphysics. Hegel's logical idealism relies on Kantian metaphysics, as does the absolute self of Fichte, who knew Kant personally and was endorsed by him. Much later when the German enlightenment was all but extinguished and Germans were goose stepping to Hitler's hysterical rant, psychiatrist, Karl Jaspers, was led back to Kant to quell the barking dogma of Naziism. Despite the fact that Kantian philosophy goes back-and-forth on the idea of transcendence, Jaspers wove Kantian concepts into a kind of transcendence. Jaspers' "*Ciphers of Transcendence*" reformulates Kant's 'pure reason' and makes it a bridge, a shaky rope bridge, but nonetheless a bridge, between the *rock* and the *soft place*.

I must add bit more about Jaspers here, who is not in the conga line because he was a psychiatrist not a philosopher, but his little bit of philosophy is worth noting here.

Rather than 'floating,' Jaspers sees the movement from the *rock* to the *soft place* as 'foundering' or falling toward metaphysics. Falling or rising, foundering or floating all work as a 'critique of pure reason' which get's you to the lift off point on the reason runway.

Schiller

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1759–1805)

Friedrich Schiller is sometimes referred to as the German Shakespeare. In his relatively short life, he authored an extraordinary series of dramas and was also a prodigious poet, composing the “Ode to Joy” featured in the culmination of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and enshrined, some two centuries later, in the anthem of the European Union. He was a friend of Goethe’s, and so, I assume, he must also have known Fichte, and if he knew Fichte, he must have been inspired by him.

In addition to his literary accomplishments, Schiller was a philosopher. While his philosophical writings are primarily concerned with aesthetics, his critique of Kant’s *Critique* focused on Kant’s conflicted idealism, which is why he is in the conga line after Kant, to clarify and compensate for mis-steps.

One of those Kantian mis-steps which Schiller brings to our attention has to do with Kant’s claims that there could be no objective principle of beauty, and that aesthetic experience is a purely subjective pleasure. The idea that beauty is only in the eye of the beholder is too shallow for Schiller. Schiller uses Kant’s own logical steps to demonstrate that beauty is an absolute form, but nonetheless real. In a sense Schiller is re-Platonizing post-Kantian beauty. It is the Fichteian struggle of consciousness to overcome the inertia of instinct which ultimately invokes beauty; I didn’t say creates beauty but invokes beauty, brings it down from the *soft place* to the *rock*. Schiller’s term ‘heautonomous,’ literally ‘self-self-governing’, refers to the double subjective/ objective instance where the sublime form or inspiration is “*both given and obeyed by the thing.*” The qualities of being autonomous and heautonomous, Schiller claims, persist in the object whether it is being observed or not, i.e. beauty is located in the object, not in “the eye of the beholder.” And so, there could be no beautiful activity on the *rock* without our reaching up from the *rock* to the absolute perfection of the *soft place*. This is how beauty is brought to earth from the heavens above by humans and animals.

Wait, animals?

Yup, animals. I’m not sure I understand it, but it’s there in Schiller, and we will see it again later in the chapters on Fechner and Popper. I can’t say whether the

latter two knew anything about Schiller, but all three of them suggest that the innate propensity to creativity extends beyond human consciousness to plants, insects and other beings. Any self-determining act of any being becomes “an *analogy* of the pure determination of the will” and so an “*exhibition of freedom*” and, therefore beautiful whoever or whatever performs it.

The amalgamation of subject and object is also demonstrated by the interaction of the inner soul with the outer suffering in the world. Each subject has more or less grace in its subjectivity, which affects his/her objectivity.

In refusing to succumb to pain, “the beautiful soul becomes heroic” and “transforms into a *sublime* soul.” Whether or not he knew it, Schiller was also resonating with Saint Augustine’s notion that suffering is always an opportunity for growth. Consciousness is timeless and contains timelessness of ideas. Modern Greeks, in every day conversation, still use a bromide which came from The Agamemnon of Aeschylus written c. 458 BC: “*mathos pathos*,” which means we learn from suffering.

According to Schiller a beautiful soul is a graceful soul and it: “carries out humankind’s most exacting duties with ease... with joy, ... and with grace... It is in a beautiful soul that sensuousness and reason, duty and inclination are in harmony, and grace resides in their every expression. ... because we recognize in the beautiful soul an image of human perfection, such harmony elicits our approval and love.” We applaud our fellow creators when their practice reaches the level of art. We look up to those high floaters, even when they are only characters in a story.

Schiller points out that merely witnessing another’s domination of the lower self by free will is thrilling; it gives us a vicarious esthetic joy, which Kant’s confuses with pleasure. This is sublime joy, not earthly pleasure. This is the high ride resulting from Schiller’s self inflation.

Schiller also has some dark thoughts about those who occasionally crawl out from under the *rock* and desecrate creation with their violent ignorance. In “Concerning the Sublime” [*Über das Erhabene*], drafted between 1794 and 1796, Schiller claims that nothing...

“is so beneath the dignity of human beings as to suffer violence, for it destroys the individual’s humanity.”

These eruptions can only be contained internally by the wrong doer, “*idealistically*, when he takes a step beyond nature and thereby negates the concept of brute force in regard to himself.”

A person never tested, may never become aware of their moral powers. We should, then, be grateful for personal or historical events that disrupt the peace and beauty and produce the sublime challenges, since without them there can be no dignity. Crawling out from under the *rock* can be an exercise in ascension. Once we understand the underlying unity that grace suggests, we can correct the excesses brought about by Kant's rigorous separation of reason, duty and inclination.

Schiller's response to Kant's depiction of duty was taken up by none other than Kant himself, who in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* devoted a footnote adopting Schiller's correction.

For Schiller's audience whether in a Greek amphitheater or binging on a Netflix series, witnessing tragedy as an art form is an "inoculation against unavoidable fate."

But Schiller was talking about art made with love, not craft made for profit; unfortunately mass audiences are a profit center rather than communication partners.

We are 'on screen' rather than 'on scene,' more than ever before. Unfortunately instead of inspiring us, the bogus vicarious experience dupes us into buying more than we need and dopes the will into settling for non choices. It seems that massive profits reward mass exploitation; the esthetics has become an anesthetics; audiences are number and dumber than ever before; so it seems, but things change. This could well be the Fichtian back step that precedes the next two steps forward.

Fichte

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (19 May 1762 – 29 January 1814) was a [German philosopher](#) who became a founding figure of the [philosophical movement](#) known as [German idealism](#), which developed from the theoretical and ethical writings of [Immanuel Kant](#). Like [Descartes](#) and Kant before him, Fichte was motivated by the problem of [subjectivity](#) and [consciousness](#).

Recently, philosophers and scholars have begun to appreciate Fichte as an important philosopher in his own right due to his original insights into the nature of [self-consciousness](#) or [self-awareness](#). Fichte was also the originator of [thesis–antithesis–synthesis](#), an idea for history’s hop-scotch development of ideals. This insight is often erroneously attributed to [Hegel](#).

Fichte’s essay *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung* ([Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation](#), 1792) investigated the connections between divine revelation and Kant’s [critical philosophy](#). It was thus believed by the public to be a new work by Kant. When Kant cleared the confusion and openly praised the work and author, Fichte’s reputation skyrocketed. Fichte’s critics argued that his mimicry of Kant’s difficult style produced works that were barely intelligible. After considerable external pressure Kant dissociated himself from Fichte.

Fichte achieved fame for originating the argument that consciousness is not grounded in *anything* outside of itself. The phenomenal world as such, arises from self-consciousness; the activity of the ego; and moral awareness. His student (and critic), [Arthur Schopenhauer](#), wrote in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Vol. I, §13: “For this purpose, he at once did away with the essential and most meritorious part of the [Kantian](#) doctrine, the distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* and thus that” [chasm] “between the [phenomenon](#) and the thing-in-itself.”

Fichte introduced the notion of intersubjectivity. In *Foundations of Natural Right* (1797), Fichte argued that self-consciousness was a social phenomenon — an important step and perhaps the first clear step taken in this direction by modern philosophy. For Fichte, **a necessary condition of every subject's self-awareness is the existence of other rational subjects.** These others call or summon (*fordern auf*) the subject or self out of its unconsciousness and into an awareness of itself as a free individual. **Mutual recognition** (*gegenseitig anerkennen*) **of rational individuals is a condition necessary for the individual... [consciousness]**

The argument for [intersubjectivity](#) is central to the conception of selfhood developed in the [Foundations of the Science of Knowledge](#)^[56] (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, 1794/1795).

Fichte's consciousness of the self depends upon resistance or a check by something that is understood as not part of the self yet is not immediately ascribable to a particular sensory perception. In his later 1796–99 lectures (his *Nova methodo*), This resonates with the ultra-consciousness described in my book *Saltafide*.

[Søren Kierkegaard](#) was also a student of the writings of Fichte:

Fichte was dismissed from the University of Jena in 1799 for atheism. For Fichte, God should be conceived primarily in moral terms: "The living and efficaciously acting moral order is itself God. We require no other God, nor can we grasp any other" ("On the Ground of Our Belief in a Divine World-Governance"). Fichte was forced to go to Berlin where he was initiated into [Freemasonry](#) in the Lodge Pythagoras of the Blazing Star where he was elected minor warden.

After the collapse of the [Holy Roman Empire](#), where German southern principalities resigned as member states and became part of a French protectorship, Fichte delivered the famous [Addresses to the German Nation](#) (*Reden an die deutsche Nation*, 1807-1808) which attempted to define the German Nation, and guided the uprising against Napoleon.. The campaign against Napoleon began, and the hospitals at Berlin were soon full of patients. Fichte's wife devoted herself to nursing and caught a virulent fever. Just as she was recovering, he himself was stricken down. He died of [typhus](#) in 1814 at the age of 51.

Fichte

EXCERPTED FROM [CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES](#)

(1752-1814)

Johann Gottlieb Fichte is the unsung hero of metaphysical positivism [my own term for the antipode of 'logical positivism']. The positivism comes from his belief in the inevitability of progress.

This historical progress super current is the reason things are continuously getting better just after they get worse. One step back and two steps forward. This certainly appeals to me, even though, sometimes the second step forward

seems hard to imagine. The idea of the three step dance of historical progress is not only a hopeful view, it is also hard to refute. Nevertheless there are those in and out of the conga line who would refute this pollyanna wheel of fortune view of history. However, I must point out that the refutation is itself the antithesis to Fichte's thesis and a process to some new synthesis; so the refutation rolls on the very wheel it tries to flatten.

The three step dance is well known to anyone who dabbles in history or philosophy, but most people do not know Fichte, and that's because credit for the three step dance of historical progress is usually attributed to Hegel. It was actually Fichte who taught everyone, including Hegel the dance of progress. It was Fichte who originally pointed out that the life struggle between ideal purpose and instinct results in a push-pull kind of progress. It was Fichte's idea that a thesis spawns its own anti-thesis and then merges into a new and better synthesis, which then becomes the new thesis. Kant's endorsement of Fichte's Critique of Revelation caused some confusion about Kant being a co-author, maybe because of the "Critique," in the title, but Kant had nothing to do with the authorship of this concept. While he was not the co-author, Kant had talked about synthesis before Fichte and so did Aristotle and Plato and Parmenides before that; so in a sense we could say they are all co-authors. I have already suggested that no one owns an idea, but my point here is simply to defuse the common misunderstanding that Hegel invented the three step dance of historical progress.

Inspired by Kant, Fichte developed, during the final decade of the eighteenth century, a radically revised and rigorously systematic version of transcendental idealism, which he called *Wissenschaftslehre* - "Doctrine of Scientific Knowledge."

Perhaps the most characteristic, as well as the most controversial, feature of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is Fichte's effort to ground his entire system upon the bare subjectivity of the absolute self, or, as Fichte expressed it, the "pure I." As I pointed out earlier this resonates with Berkeley's matter-less mind.

Fichte offers rational proofs to justify the 'absolute' self, which is non material but nevertheless very real. He brought faith closer to reason and validated the connection of consciousness to the soul, even though he never used the word "soul" because of his aversion to organized religious dogma.

Goethe was so impressed with Fichte, he arranged for his academic post at Jena, the hotbed of the German enlightenment. During his career at the University of Jena (1794-1799) Fichte's metaphysical speculations affected the

philosophy of science, ethics, law and religion in Germany and later in all of Europe.

Fichte's greatest contribution to our conga line is his discovery of the power of the will to reshape nature. Fichte pointed out that as every willed act collides with nature, it also molds nature. This insight into the interaction of the subjective realm with the objective material realm is unique in all of philosophy and resonates with our ramblings in the first section about will power and "focus." This also makes Fichte the unsung father of existentialism. Fichte's emphasis on willed action makes him a pioneer existentialist. For Fichte the ego posits the non ego, and in the mystical Fichte dance, the non self and self are merged. This makes life a duty to act. One should never disavow the duty to act as being beyond one's ability. "**If I ought I can.**" This is as simple as it is solid, and also the core belief for existentialists. Sartre branded deviation from this simple duty as "bad faith." Fichte's belief that faith is an act- a leap- inspired his friend Goethe's famous line "in the beginning was the deed."

'Existentialism' is the opposite of 'essentialism'; 'existence' is the pure being and 'essence' is what that being becomes as a result of choices made and actions taken. In the statement 'I am John,' the "am" refers to my existence; the "John" refers to what I have become, my "essence." I don't spend a lot of time on the question of what came first existence or essence, because I believe, as I pointed out earlier, that sequential order, which is so essential on the *rock* is out of order in the timeless *soft place*.

The Oxford Atheist circle would no doubt object here: "you can't have it both ways; either he is an existentialist or a metaphysical idealist." I say he can be both. Soren Kierkegaard, who we shall meet down the line, makes this point much more convincingly.

For now, all hail to Fichte and his self affirmation, later called self actualization by Maslow and hypersubjectivity which this book is all about.

Schelling

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (27 January 1775 – 20 August 1854), later (after 1812) **von Schelling**, was a [German philosopher](#). Standard histories of philosophy make him the midpoint in the development of [German idealism](#), situating him between [Johann Gottlieb Fichte](#), his mentor in his early years, and [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel](#), his one-time university roommate, early friend, and later rival.

The function of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* is to exhibit the ideal as springing from the real. The change which experience brings before us leads to the conception of duality, the polar opposition through which nature expresses itself. Unlike Hegel, Schelling did not believe that the absolute could be known in its true character through rational inquiry alone. This accords with the Platonic division of truth and belief.

Schelling's theodicy, though he did not call it that is hard to grasp, but well worth trying. The problem he thinks comes from our natural propensity to divide thesis and antithesis, and our "binary blinders" (my term from [Saltafide](#)), which blind us to the "synthesis". He did not say any of this in so many words. He said: "Has creation a final goal? And if so, why was it not reached at once? Why was the consummation not realized from the beginning? To these questions there is but one answer: Because God is *Life*, and not merely Being." (*Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, 1809)

In 1955 Jaspers published *Schelling*, representing him as a forerunner of the [existentialists](#), below are a few choice quotes:

- "Nature is visible spirit, spirit is invisible nature.
- "History as a whole is a progressive, gradually self-disclosing revelation of the Absolute."
- "Only he who has tasted freedom can feel the desire to make over everything in its image, to spread it throughout the whole universe." (*Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*, 1809)

Schelling excerpt from

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1775–1854)

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, along with Fichte and Hegel, is one of the three most influential thinkers in German idealism. The same confluence of consciousness that reached Jena and engulfed Fichte, Schiller, Goethe and Kant spread to the Lutheran seminary where Schelling and his fellow student Hegel (before he got to Jena), were adding a new upward slant to history. Schelling seems to some scholars to be 'all over the place,' disorganized, which may be the reason Hegel became much more well known. Some scholars suggest that the disorganization makes the philosophical point that there is no orderly way to consider consciousness. For Wittgenstein and Heidegger, Schelling marks that outer limit of the systematic task of philosophy, "the end of philosophy and the task of thinking" as Heidegger says.

Besides influencing Hegel, and Fechner, Schelling's importance has to do with his response to the mechanistic determinism of natural philosophy which arose because of the scientific revolution of that time. In his *Naturphilosophie (Nature Philosophy)*, we find a modern view of nature that reaches beyond science. Like many of his contemporaries Schelling was challenged by the Kantian chasm. Unlike his colleagues, he saw that no solid bridge could ever be put in place between the ledges of the phenomenal and noumenal realms, because they were dynamic, fluctuating, energy fields. In his anti-Cartesian account of subjectivity, Schelling proved to the world, and especially to Nietzsche and Heidegger, how the thinking subject can never fully understand objective reality and can never be fully transparent to itself.

Schelling also advanced Fichte's self consciousness idea, significantly. Fichte's Subjective Idealism was transformed by Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), wherein only a being capable of intuiting itself as simultaneously representing and represented can account for the unity of the process of representation and the represented object. For such a being, that is 'I', there is no predicate other than itself. It is a subject which is its own object. Consciousness becomes aware of its own originality and universality at the same time. Consciousness of consciousness creates a subset of Fichte's absolute subjective idealism. The subject and the object are identical, being both ideal and real at once.

The Fichteian 'I' is transformed by Schelling into a dynamic history of self-consciousness, which comes into being in three stages (yet another three step dance) the first, "original sensation," the second "reflection," and the third "the absolute act of will."

There is clearly a connection between Schiller and Schelling but, again, I found no direct reference, perhaps I was distracted by the alliterative tickle of this triumvirate: Schiller, Schelling and now Schopenhauer.

Schopenhauer

(22 February 1788 – 21 September 1860)

Arthur Schopenhauer

was a [German philosopher](#). He is best known for his 1818 work *The World as Will and Representation* (expanded in 1844), which characterizes the [phenomenal](#) world as the product of a blind and insatiable [noumenal will](#).^{[18][19]} Building on the [transcendental idealism](#) of Immanuel Kant, Schopenhauer developed an [atheistic](#) metaphysical and ethical system that rejected the contemporaneous ideas of [German idealism](#).^{[6][7]} He was among the first thinkers in [Western philosophy](#) to share and affirm significant tenets of [Indian philosophy](#), such as [asceticism](#), denial of the [self](#), and the notion of the [world-as-appearance](#).^{[20][21]} His work has been described as an exemplary manifestation of [philosophical pessimism](#). Nevertheless he was a major influence for other great minds namely [Friedrich Nietzsche](#),^[25] [Ludwig Wittgenstein](#),^[26] and [Anthony Ludovici](#),^[27] scientists such as [Erwin Schrödinger](#) and [Albert Einstein](#),^[28] psychoanalysts such as [Sigmund Freud](#)^[29] and [Carl Jung](#), writers such as [Leo Tolstoy](#), [Herman Melville](#),^[30] [Thomas Mann](#), [George Bernard Shaw](#),^[31] [Machado de Assis](#),^[32] [Jorge Luis Borges](#), [John Patric](#),^[33] and [Samuel Beckett](#),^[34] and, notably, the composer [Richard Wagner](#).

Better off dead! That at times appears to be the dark message of an otherwise crucially important Western philosopher. He is important to our leap of faith, Saltafide, because his philosophy lays tracks for our train of thought and then almost derails it. The tracks follow the bi-rail dualism laid down by Plato and Kant, distinguishing mind and matter as separate realms. The key to our metaphysics is that there are two tracks going on together the one immaterial the other material. Plato connects frail human belief to the divine realm of perfect forms. Kant follows suit but will not go all the way to any divine realm. Schopenhauer follows suit and actually mentions Nirvana. The dangerous skew in the tracks, which can lead to derailment, comes from his characterization of the 'will' to live as a curse rather than a blessing.

Schopenhauer argued that Christianity constituted a revolt against what he styled the materialistic basis of Judaism, exhibiting an Indian-influenced ethics reflecting the [Aryan-Vedic](#) theme of spiritual self-conquest. He saw this as opposed to the ignorant drive toward earthly utopianism and superficiality of a worldly "Jewish" spirit: [Judaism] is, therefore, the crudest and poorest of all religions and consists merely in an absurd and revolting [theism](#). Its [κύριος](#) ['Lord'], who has created the world, desires to be worshipped and adored; and so, above all, he is jealous, envious of his colleagues gods. Sacrifices made to

rival gods bring down lightening bolts of enraged retribution. Schopenhauer points out that it is most deplorable that this religion has become the basis of the prevailing religion of Europe; for it is a religion without any metaphysical tendency. While all other religions endeavor to explain to the people by symbols the metaphysical significance of life, the religion of the Jews is entirely immanent and furnishes nothing but a mere war-cry in the struggle with other nations.^[210]

The case could be made that there is no celebration of life in Schopenhauer and yet there is this idolization of the arts and particularly music. However this appreciation never reaches sublime or divine. Instead the words used make it sound like the few intellectuals and philosophers who climb this peak get a bit of relief from the day to day dog eat dog lower world. The relief is afforded by asceticism, which seeks to avoid the incessant struggle of the 'will.' Schopenhauer believes that the esthetic relief from the miserable struggle to survive is reserved for the very few, but he doesn't quite explain how or why these few come to be chosen. The will for Schopenhauer is the nasty unavoidable struggle and has nothing to do with our use of the same word in the context of free will, that mixed blessing that leaves us free to choose to make life a curse or a joy. I admit that may be impossible to explain free will in the context of a universe guided by a divine plan, but there is no reasonable evidence for denying either 'free will' or the 'divine plan.' There is joy in Mudville for Schopenhauer; the joy of music, if nothing else. He played the flute.

Schopenhauer

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1788–1860)

It may come as a surprise that this arch pessimist should find his way into our transcendental chorus.

In one sense Arthur Schopenhauer is a gauntlet which every idealist should be forced to run. I ran the gauntlet and the gauntlet changed more than I did. By that I mean my outlook was not darkened and what I knew of Schopenhauer became brighter. Schopenhauer is seen by most as a pit of darkness; finding points of light in this darkness, seemed almost impossible at first, like looking for diamonds in a coal mine. Nevertheless, I think I found a few which add a special luster to our hypersubjective crown.

In Wikipedia I discovered a list of Schopenhauer fans which read like the hall of fame of Western intellectuals: Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Erwin Schrödinger, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Leo Tolstoy, Herman Melville, Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Marcel Proust, Samuel Beckett[, Richard Wagner, Johannes Brahms, Arnold Schoenberg[, and Gustav Mahler. You can see how this would keep me feeling my way through the darkness until I saw whatever they saw.

For most of my conga line thinkers, “will” is the good guy in the game of life drama. Schopenhauer calls his bad guy “will.” Schopenhauer’s will is so bad, he wishes he had never been born; so bad, he seems to value death over life. And since it might result in new life, Schopenhauer would banish making love, and cauterize the reproductive processes, and further, women should be dispensed with altogether or, at least, strictly controlled. I’m not making this up, and it gets darker, to where the extinction of the species is heralded as a desirable end.

Schopenhauer maintains, paradoxically, in his “Essay on the Freedom of the Will” (1839) that everything that happens, happens necessarily. This fatalism is a source of comfort and tranquillity for Schopenhauer. Because we think we have a choice we fight to the death, each of our wills pitted against the wills of others, like the divided bulldog ants (Schopenhauer’s metaphor). It would appear that we only struggle because we think we have a choice about how it ends; and it would follow that if we realize that we have no choice, the struggle would end. If nothing can be done about the course of events, why worry, why struggle.

Schopenhauer adapted this idea from Kant. Without repeating his tortured justification of determinism, suffice it to say that Schopenhauer regards this as one of Kant’s most profound ideas, which I must have missed in my reading of Kant. For me this is like prescribing euthanasia as a cure for measles. Fatalism is a fatal cure; needless to say, this is not part of the Schopenhauer light I discovered.

You would think such a black hole would consume all who approach and me with them, but it didn’t. I was able to hold on to some some sparks, for instance his ascetic esthetic. The esthetic ascetic (word order doesn’t change the meaning of this phrase) of Schopenhauer’s “genius” resonates with our virtuoso virtue, our hypersubjectivity and Maslow’s self actualization. Schopenhauer suggests that the caldron of inevitable suffering which necessitated endless striving and strife could be minimized by an ascetic life style:

“With self-knowledge, we can transform our lives into works of art.”

That’s more like it, I thought, and so did Nietzsche. It’s no surprise that this part of Schopenhauer’s philosophy found an audience with artists and especially

musicians. Schopenhauer's "genius" is a gem hardened and polished by years of struggle as well as inspiration. This makes sense to me.

Arthur Schopenhauer was among the first in the 19th century to suggest that the universe is not a rational place. Schopenhauer had his joust with Kant, which seems to be a right of passage for German idealists. For Schopenhauer the target was Kant's noumena, thing-in-itself, particularly in its Kantian role as the cause of our sensations. Kant puts the 'thing in itself' out of reach, and yet he says that it can hurt when we bump into it. We feel and suffer as a result of the 'thing in itself.' So there is an effect in our Kantian phenomena (subject) caused by the Kantian noumena (object). Schopenhauer finds the separation an unnecessary paradoxical dichotomy and lumps the two together, which seems to be the post Kantian philosophical task. However, Schopenhauer himself is not beyond dichotomies and paradoxes. In *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer separates "Will" (*Wille*) and representation (*Vorstellung*). The German word, "*Vorstellung*," can be translated as "representation," "presentation," "idea," or "mental image." Whatever, you call it, it is separate from Will even though it is connected by the same fulcrum, like a mandible; Schopenhauer's dynamic jaws can chew you up. Schopenhauer does not deny that this is a dichotomy, instead he distinguishes it from Kant's passive gaping chasm because of its dynamics.

In addition to chewing, the dynamic interior can blow a bubble which powers an ascent. Yes, ascent is possible even in Schopenhauer; in fact he thinks the Fichtian three steps are two too many. For Schopenhauer, all we need is the one leap at just at the right juncture. Schopenhauer's bad guy, "Will," is a mindless, aimless, non-rational impulse, but apparently he can also guide you to the lift off point on the reason runway.

There is another realm to be realized, once we make contact with our inner selves. We perceive our body as a physical object among other physical objects, subject to the natural laws that govern the movements of all physical objects, but there is another inner sense in which we "feel" our own body. We can objectively perceive our hand as an external object, as a surgeon might perceive it during a medical operation, but we can also be subjectively aware of our hand as something we inhabit, as something we willfully move, feeling its inner muscular workings. Schopenhauer says that we discover that our body matter, unlike any other matter, has a unique relationship to mind.

From this observation, Schopenhauer asserts that among all the objects in the universe, there is only one object, relative to each of us — namely, our physical body — that has two entirely different ways of being perceived: as representation, i.e., objectively; externally- noumena; and also internally as

phenomena, as part of this 'will.' Therefore, a hand movement is but a single act that has two distinct realizations. It has a subjective willing as one of its aspects, and the physical muscular matter and energy as the other. Sounds a bit like Schelling.

For Schopenhauer this subjective feel of the double aspected synthesis, only applies to one's own body. When he perceives the moon or a mountain, man does not have any direct access to the metaphysical interior realization of such objects; they remain as representations.

It had never occurred to me, while playing the piano, that my hand movements can be viewed from two different aspects of my self consciousness, which may be why I don't play like a "genius." Only a virtuoso puts the double aspect of hand movement together seamlessly. Separating the two aspects of my hand movement provided me a brand new challenge, putting them together, may be more than I will ever be able to do, but I won't stop trying. Schopenhauer's idealism is buried but well worth the digging.

Schopenhauer's idealism is inspired by the Upanishads way before Christ (c. 900–600 BCE); particularly, the view that the universe is double-aspected, having objective and subjective dimensions that are referred to respectively as Brahman and Atman. If not the first, Schopenhauer is the most important link between Eastern wisdom and Western idealism.

At first blush it does appear that Schopenhauer's metaphysical stool will not stand up since it lacks the God leg. He is classified as an atheist by most scholars. Within Schopenhauer's vision of the world as will, there is no God, as such, to be comprehended, and the world is conceived of as being inherently meaningless. The world is represented as being in a condition of eternal frustration, as it endlessly strives for nothing in particular, and as it goes essentially nowhere. Schopenhauer's game has nothing to win. It's a dance not headed anywhere. The only joy, he says, is in the dance itself. But here his joyful dance stepped into a paradox puddle: for there to be joy, it must exist somewhere beyond the dance. That joy is the result of the dance's connection to the perfect dance, which is a Platonic Form. During the aesthetic perception of an individual apple tree, for example, we would perceive the quintessential 'Form' of apple tree shining through the tree. This is the Ur-phenomenon, as Goethe would describe it.

As an aside, Goethe was a part of the salon of Schopenhauer's mother and very close to her, but could not get along with her philosopher son.

This transcendent joy in the Schopenhauerian darkness imparts a universal quality to consciousness (*The World as Will and Representation*, Section 33). Aesthetic perception thus transforms an individually-oriented state of consciousness to a universally-oriented state of consciousness, or what Schopenhauer calls a pure will-less, painless, and timeless subject of knowledge (*The World as Will and Representation*, Section 34). Few seldom have the capacity to remain in such an aesthetic state of mind for very long. Schopenhauer points out that most people never get a break and are forever denied the transcendent tranquillity of the aesthetic eden. Even though eden is reserved for the chosen few, there is a Platonic eden in Schopenhauer's dark cave, rare but there, a sublime state which must be connected to the divine.

As compared to the visual and literary arts, Schopenhauer locates music more deeply in the universal subjectivity. Separate from the other traditional arts, he maintains that music is the most metaphysical art and is on a level closest to the Platonic Ideals (Forms) themselves. In the structure of music, Schopenhauer discerns a series of analogies to the structure of the physical world. Just as the Platonic Ideals contain the patterns for the types of objects in the daily world, musical forms duplicate the basic structure of the world: the bass notes are analogous to inorganic nature, the harmonies are analogous to the animal world, and the melodies are analogous to the human world. If the form of the world is best reflected in the form of music, then philosophical sensibility will be closest to musical sensibility. This partially explains the positive attraction of Schopenhauer's theory of music to creative spirits such as Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche, both of whom connected music and philosophy in their work. Schopenhauer makes music the key to the sensory code which transcends the senses into a universal consciousness. (My words, not his.)

Schopenhauer believes that music achieves this transcendent state right here on earth by embodying the abstract forms of everyday feelings. This allows us to perceive the essences of emotional life, "sadness itself," "joy itself," etc., without the contingent contents that would typically cause suffering. By expressing emotion in this abstracted, sublime way, music allows us to apprehend the *soft place* without the frustration involved in daily life on the *rock*.

I was thinking as I was reading Schopenhauer and listening to his audio books that he would never agree with my metaphysical explanation of how altitude changes attitude and would certainly dispute my inner Christ, my inner teacher, but I kept digging and I discovered that Schopenhauer has a *soft place*, like mine in many respects. The fact that he puts his directly on top of the *rock* instead of beyond it is a distinction without a difference.

It is not a stretch to suggest that Schopenhauer's struggling 'will' is a quest for transcendence and ascendance. He definitely recognizes the vertical climb challenge in the game of life, where each human being starts out as an undistinguished instance of the sins of the whole world (*The World as Will and Representation*, Sections 63 and 64). But he also recognizes that character development (hypersubjectivity) is possible, involving expansion (inflation) brought about by self understanding; this "self-realization" brings with it greater peace of mind (*Ibid*, Section 55).

Schopenhauer's floating is also subject to deflation and re-inflation. His aesthetic buoyancy offers only a short-lived transcendence from the suffering of the daily world. His re-inflation is an ascetic attitude of renunciation and resignation.

In a manner reminiscent of traditional Buddhism, Schopenhauer recognizes that life is filled with unavoidable frustration, 'appointments and disappointments,' and the only cure for that is what we have called the "ascetic esthetic (aka esthetic ascetic)."

Schopenhauer was actually in cognitive consonance with Saint Francis whose moral consciousness and virtue was the result of voluntary poverty and chastity. Believe it or not, beyond the malebolgia, Schopenhauer has a Paradiso above his Purgatorio where St. Francis of Assisi (*ibid*, Section 68) and Jesus (*ibid*, Section 70) emerge as Schopenhauer's prototypes for enlightenment, in conjunction with the ascetic avatars from every religious tradition. And, as if to mollify his Godlessness, he states explicitly that his views on morality are entirely in the spirit of Christianity, as well as being consistent with the doctrines and ethical precepts of the sacred books of India (*Ibid*, Section 68).

Schopenhauer's consciousness includes an upper layer where one's awareness expands beyond the mixed-up, tension-ridden, bittersweet, conflict ridden, tragicomic, daily life. There is a *soft place* far enough away from the pain of the fire and yet close enough to enjoy the warmth. You get there by treating others as kindly as one treats oneself, by refraining from violence and by taking measures to reduce suffering in the world. That's what Schelling wanted us to do. To do that, Schopenhauer says, we have to see through the blinding illusion of separate free wills striving against each other, and embrace the ultimate connection between us. It is harder to harm someone we feel connected to. By compassionately recognizing, at a more universal level, that the inner nature of another person is of the same metaphysical substance as oneself, one arrives at a moral outlook with a more concrete philosophical awareness.

Like Burke, and Scheler this “sympathy” is more than ordinary compassion. This is not merely understanding abstractly the proposition that “each person is a human being,” It is, rather, to feel directly the life of another person in an almost magical way; it is to enter into the life of humanity imaginatively, such as to coincide with all others in a universal consciousness.

Schopenhauer likens his unified consciousness to “the Prajna-Paramita of the Buddhists” (*The World as Will and Representation*, Section 71) where this mystical consciousness is an ocean-like calmness, tranquillity, confidence and serenity, “ecstasy,” “rapture,” “illumination” and “union with God.” There it is.... Schopenhauer’s God.

Schopenhauer’s God lurks in the shadows of daily suffering, but He is there. Schopenhauer’s shading of the Platonic light adds a new chiaroscuro to our conga line image.

Hegel

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (27 August 1770 – 14 November 1831) was a German philosopher and an important figure in German idealism. He is considered one of the fundamental figures of modern Western philosophy, with his influence extending to the entire range of contemporary philosophical issues, from aesthetics to ontology to politics.

Hegel's principal achievement was his development of a distinctive articulation of idealism, sometimes termed *absolute idealism*, in which the dualisms of, for instance, mind and nature and subject and object are overcome. His philosophy of spirit conceptually integrates psychology, the state, history, art, religion and philosophy.

Of special importance is his concept of spirit (*Geist*, sometimes also translated as "mind") as the historical manifestation of the integration without elimination or reduction of seemingly contradictory or opposing ideas: examples include the apparent opposition between necessity and freedom and between immanence and transcendence. This explains why Hegel is often credited as the originator of Fichte's thesis, antithesis, synthesis triad.

Hegel has influenced many thinkers and writers whose own positions vary widely.

Martin Heidegger observed in his personal *Black Notebooks* that Hegel's system in an important respect "consummates western philosophy" by completing the idea of the *logos*, the self-grounding ground, Heidegger in various places further qualified Hegel's thinking "the most powerful thinking of modern times.

Paul Tillich wrote that the historical dialectical thought of Hegel "has influenced world history more profoundly than any other structural analysis. Paul Tillich referred to Hegel's work as "perfect essentialism," later writing "essentialism was in Hegel's system fulfilled." Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote that "all the great philosophical ideas of the past century—the philosophies of Marx and Nietzsche, phenomenology, German existentialism, and psychoanalysis—had their beginnings in Hegel.

The eternity of spirit is here brought into consciousness, and is found in this reasoned knowledge, in this very separation, which has reached the infinitude of

being-for-self, and which is no longer entangled in what is natural, contingent, and external.

Hegel defended the truth in Kantian dualism against reductive or eliminative programs like materialism and empiricism. Like Plato, with his dualism of soul versus bodily appetites, Kant pursued the mind's ability to question its felt inclinations or appetites and to come up with a standard of "duty" (or, in Plato's case, "good") which transcends bodily restrictiveness. Hegel preserved this essential Platonic and Kantian concern in the form of infinity going beyond the finite (a process that Hegel in fact related to "freedom" and the "ought"),

To Hegel, Jesus is both divine and human. Hegel further attests that God (as Jesus) not only died, but "[...] rather, a reversal takes place: God, that is to say, maintains himself in the process, and the latter is only the death of death. God rises again to life, and thus things are reversed”.

If we were to apply our own thinking to the Fichte/Hegel triad as it applies to mortality, i.e. life and death, we could say: life is the thesis, death is the anti-thesis, and the synthesis is rebirth, immortality, soul. Likewise if we were to apply the triad to dualist notions of mind matter, or the physics notion of matter and energy, or the intellectual dichotomy of component and unified whole, all the paradoxes disappear, and there is ONE mensrea, ONE mattergy, ONE unified field. This new synthesis would make Plato happy, Plotinus, Augustine, Leibniz, Kant, just about everyone in this digest would applaud and we would have a new theodicy to apply to the problem of evil, where the 'good' thesis and the 'evil' antithesis come together to form a new synthesis, which we call the connection continuum (see [Saltafide, Ciampa, 2020](#)).

Hegel excerpt from

EXCERPTED FROM [CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES](#)

(1770-1831)

Schiller offered art as a metaphysical consolation for death. For Hegel, it's philosophy; Hegel sees philosophy as the "death of death." Hegel highlights the effect of the *soft place* on our day to day *rocky* schemes. Without the *soft place* there would be no respite from the 'rocky' life and death struggles. Bridging the two worlds makes the day to day suffering easier. Hegel knew Schiller and Schelling (he is up next). Hegel, in his earliest writings extolled Schelling as the mastermind of this new idea comparing the still unknown Schelling to the well

established Schiller, and Fichte, and Goethe. Nevertheless Hegel was to become much more well known than all of the above.

Philosophical examination of life is essential to providing any meaning to life; in the words of Socrates: "the unexamined life is not worth living." Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel knew this and practiced it, which makes him a Platonist. Hegel's contribution to Platonism was indispensable to the flowering of idealized self knowledge at Jena, where he taught. Despite the fact that they were all at Jena together, Hegel had very little to say about Fichte or Goethe, at least that I could find. He mentions Berkeley briefly which suggests that he had at least heard of Berkeley's radical idealism in England. He had much more to say about Kant. Hegel dominated the period of German idealism which occurred in the decades following Kant.

Hegel is in our conga line because of his conversion of the dipole reality between the *rock* and the *soft place* into a single energy field. The Hegel circuit makes the philosophical tug-o-war between monism and dualism unnecessary. For Hegel antipodal forces synthesize eventually and grow together to enhance new states. Differences inevitably merge and become similarities, similarities become unity.

Hegel attempted to elaborate a comprehensive and systematic dance of perfectibility, with the Fichtian one-step back- two step forward. This three step dance guides the development of both objective and subjective reality, or, in Kantian terms, the noumena and the phenomena.

Hegel's first work, Phenomenology of the Spirit (1807) refuted Kant's idea of 'phenomena' and in the process, we must say, practically invented a new philosophy called phenomenology. You will recall that, for Kant, the world was divided into things as they are and things as they appear. Things in themselves Kant called 'noumena' and the appearances he called 'phenomena.' For Hegel the appearances are part of consciousness which progresses toward unification slowly by the same triple step dance that advances social systems and historical epochs, and once sublime self consciousness is unified, it becomes a thing in itself, a noumena. So for Kant consciousness was a phenomena; for Hegel it could become a noumena. This may have something to do with the fact that, in the modern lexicon, ironically, "phenomenon" has come to mean real.

Hegel was not only critical of Kant's phenomenology; he was also critical of Kant's main idea, the categorical imperative. Hegel felt this was a negative morality. 'Don't 's' are not as powerful as 'Do's.' One of the essential 'do's,' for Hegel, would be Christ's "love thy neighbor as thyself," which is much more

powerful than Kant's 'don't do anything you wouldn't want the whole world to do.'

Hegel also points to Christ as a demonstration of the bridge between the *rock* and the '*soft place*.' The incarnation of Christ puts God beyond the world as well as in it.

This is the fulcrum of our divine seesaw:

God coming down; man going up. What about the next cycle: where man goes down and God comes back up? That's for an earlier time when Armageddon was expected. In this new Hegelian world Newtonian mechanics is replaced by quantum theory where particles become waves, waves become mystical energy fields that mix the infinite mind and finite mind. The two poles are bonded by a single force field which continuously powers the human consciousness to new levels.

The bonding synthesis is the result of the three step Fichtian dance which most people attribute to Hegel: thesis spawns antithesis and the collision/fusion creates synthesis, which then advances a new thesis which spawns its own antithesis, etc. His teleological dance was later applied to economics by Marx to synthesize his communism.

This three step dance can also be applied to religious development whereby primitive religion is opposed by its antithesis, humanism and the new synthesis, humanistic Christianity.

That certainly has a nice ring to it.

Applying the three step dance to our own spiritual development process: the collision of subjectivity and objectivity would synthesize into hyper-subjectivity, which is a super consciousness connected to universal consciousness, the divine mind.

Kierkegaard

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (5 May 1813 – 11 November 1855)^[8] was a Danish philosopher, theologian, poet, social critic and religious author who is widely considered to be the first existentialist philosopher. He wrote critical texts on organized religion, Christendom, morality, ethics, psychology, and the philosophy of religion

The [leap of faith](#) is his conception of how an individual would believe in God or how a person would act in love. Faith is not a decision based on evidence that could never be enough to completely justify the kind of total commitment involved in true religious faith or romantic love.

Kierkegaard thought that to have faith is at the same time to have doubt. So, for example, for one to truly have faith in God, one would also have to doubt; the doubt is the rational part of a person's thought involved in weighing evidence, without which the faith would have no real substance. This adds a nuance to the previous idea that evidence does not apply to subjective love and faith. I believe Kierkegaard is saying that while evidence does not apply it cannot be dismissed entirely from human thought processes; rather it must be kept close at hand on the sidelines when it comes to matters of faith. It is put aside but standing by.

Kierkegaard says someone who does not realize that Christian doctrine is inherently doubtful and that there can be no objective certainty about its truth does not have faith but is merely credulous, which I take to mean an acceptable form of gullible. The rational powers naturally create doubt and the will to action freely chose overcomes the doubt. Kierkegaard writes, "doubt is conquered by faith, just as it is faith which has brought doubt into the world".

Kierkegaard also stresses the importance of the self, and the self's relation to the world, as being grounded in self-reflection and introspection. He argued in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* that "subjectivity is truth" and "truth is subjectivity." This has to do with a distinction between what is objectively true and an individual's subjective relation (such as indifference or commitment) to that truth.

Kierkegaard does not dispute the fruitfulness or validity of abstract thinking (**science, logic**, and so on), but he does deny any superstition which pretends that abstract theorizing is a sufficient concluding argument for human existence. He holds it to be unforgivable pride or stupidity to think that the impersonal abstraction can answer the vital problems of human, everyday life. What follows is a Kierkegaard quote that says it all:

"What I really need is to get clear about what I must do, not what I must know, except insofar as knowledge must precede every act. What matters is to find a purpose, to see what it really is that God wills that I shall do; the **crucial thing is to find a truth which is truth for me, to find the idea for which I am willing to live and die."**

Kierkegaard believed **God comes to each individual mysteriously.**

Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, Hong p. 111

The joy, then, is that it is eternally **certain** that God is love; more specifically understood, the joy is that there is always a task. as there is a task there is life, and as long as there is life there is hope-indeed, the task itself is not merely **a hope for a future time but is a joyful present.** Søren Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, Hong p. 279-280, 277

Kierkegaard believed that "all human speech, even divine speech of Holy Scripture, about the **spiritual** is essentially **metaphorical** speech." "To build up" is a metaphorical expression.

One can never be all human or all spirit, one must be both.

When it is said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," this contains what is presupposed, that every person loves himself.

"Love builds up by **presupposing** that love is present. If anyone has ever spoken to you in such a way or treated you in such a way that you really felt built up, this was because you very vividly perceived how he presupposed love to be in you."

Wisdom is a being-for-itself quality; power, talent, knowledge, etc. are likewise being-for-itself qualities. To be wise does not mean to presuppose that others are wise; on the contrary, it may be very wise and true if the truly wise person assumes that very few people are wise.

But in fact Christianity is also the religion of freedom, it is precisely the voluntary which is the Christian. Voluntarily commitment is the glory of the good which Christianity promises. Kierkegaard says that: **There is one thing God cannot take away from a man, namely, the voluntary – and it is precisely this which Christianity requires of man.** *Thoughts Which Wound From Behind – For Edification* 1848 p. 187-188 (From *Christian Discourses* Translated by Walter Lowrie 1940, 1961)

By what is admittedly a mysterious process the abstract God enters a concrete existent in Christ. We must accept this on faith and faith alone, for clearly it

cannot be like the process whereby one existent is related to another; it involves a passage from one realm to another which is not accessible to the human mind. I would add this is consistent with the Platonic “truth” beyond human “belief.”

There has been substantial criticism of Kierkegaard because his philosophy is based on a permanent cleavage between faith and reason. But he could never have built his dynamic bridge without surveying the chasm.

Kierkegaard

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1813-1855)

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard is a Danish philosopher, father of extreme fidelism and what has been called theological voluntarism. If his chiding zeal and passion were cloaked in any priestly vestments, he would be out of place in our conga line. Kierkegaard styled himself as a religious poet, the religion being a very serious strain of Lutheran pietism which is weighed down by sin, guilt, and suffering. Crucial to all pietism is the realization that over against God, we are always in the wrong. That is, we must realize that we are always in sin and have to beg forgiveness from the punishing God. Spinoza and Xenophanes would see this anthropomorphic depiction as a misplaced anthropomorphic reflection of the human savage. I have to repeat once more that defining God is not something we can do with any expectation of absolute truth, but that does not keep any of us from philosophizing about this elusive absolute truth, and, in the end Kierkegaard was a philosopher.

Kierkegaard was particularly enamored of Plato’s dialogue *Meno* where Socrates asks how we come to know anything, which can neither be explained by what we already know or by what we know that we don’t know. How could we possibly know what we need to know? Plato answers this by positing a pre-existing all knowing soul, who’s knowledge we have forgotten as we became finite beings. I have been calling this the universal consciousness; Emerson calls it the ‘oversoul.’ Education is merely reminding someone of what they already knew and forgot. Since new knowledge is an accretion process; there has to be something there to begin with, for learning to snowball as it does. Kierkegaard believes that the only teacher of that pre-existing soul is God. (Philosophical Fragments -1844).

Kierkegaard could not have believed in traditional protestant determinism and at the same time extol the spiritual value of individual responsibility. Kierkegaard's spiritual runway is only wide enough for a private take off and landing. Kierkegaard's lift off can only be accomplished by free will which is why I invited him to the conga line;

Kierkegaard is a Christian revivalist but his assertion that Christian faith can only be accomplished by individual subjective passion, without any managing clergy, makes his spiritualism resonate with our personal, private hypersubjectivity. Kierkegaard would agree with our notion that finding God in yourself cannot be accomplished by regurgitating the good book, or mumbling and fumbling with rosary beads. It is something you have to do to by yourself for yourself, like self-inflation and frequently chatting with your inner teacher, which Kierkegaard calls "re-avowal."

Kierkegaard is known as the "father of existentialism," which is thought to be a godless, intellectual, humanism, but here, the force of the mundane existential action is turned upward. What makes it existentialism is that "choice" is distinguished from "choosing." You don't just choose to get anointed; you have to keep on choosing to anoint yourself frequently and constantly. Kierkegaard's existential re-avowal is his most important contribution to the conga line. Without persistent re-avowal and pruning, the garden of consciousness will be choked off by that perennial weed Kierkegaard calls "angst." Kierkegaard's "angst" could be another name for the self doubt which we described as the 'drag' on the buoyancy of self inflation.

Elsewhere we mentioned original sin and how it found its way into Catholic dogma; Kierkegaard's "angst" seems to be such a built in defect in the human condition. But we do have a choice in how to deal with angst. Angst is a pit, but we can climb out of it. The way out is passionate faith, re-avowed frequently. Salvation is not predetermined, it is up to each of us individually.

As with original sin suggested by Augustine, or inevitable suffering suggested by Buddha, or human fallibility posited by Plato, the pre-existence of Kierkegaard's angst, did not seem fair to me at first. Then I realized that there always was and always will be a pit from which we are challenged to arise, and it's not for me to judge whether or not it is fair. I have to just buckle down, or buckle up, and do what we're here to do. More than anyone Kierkegaard sees that faith is not a single leap but a continuous hopping and hoping.

Like every one after Fichte, Kierkegaard attacked the three step wheel of fortune for crushing free choice. Regardless of our freely chosen act, the thesis, antithesis, synthesis wheel spins in a predetermined circle of possible

outcomes. Kierkegaard believes freedom must escape the limited cycle of events. If I spin the wheel back on Kierkegaard as I did with Fechner, I might crush free will, which apparently I'm free to do and that makes it absurd; and, as it turns out that's ok with Kierkegaard. Christian belief, according to Kierkegaard, is full of paradoxes which are offensive to reason. If we choose faith we must suspend our reason in order to believe in something higher than reason. The freedom node of the Kierkegaard metaphysical triad depends on the absurdity of the human condition, which creates the elbow room for free will to believe. This Kierkegaard philosophical jujitsu is on a par with Plato and Descartes. Kierkegaard's philosophical jujitsu threw me, and it threw heavyweights like Hume to the mat.

Hume's rationality declares religious events, like incarnation "absurd." Instead of resisting the thrust of Hume's rational attack, Kierkegaard turns it back on itself. Kierkegaard makes 'absurdity' the existential bounce to lift off. He says that we believe *by virtue of the absurd*. The absurdity of Jesus dying on the cross for our sins, for Kierkegaard, is simply another opportunity for a leap of faith. That connection Kierkegaard made between absurdity and faith, turned on the Christmas tree lights for me. Now I can see in color the absurdity of the Jesus seesaw: His Christmas descent and His Easter ascent picks me up when I'm down and takes me down when I'm up. Now I can go up and down without getting nauseous. I needed a break from the argument. Who could have suspected that absurdity would add such a bounce to my buoyancy which makes my leap of faith easier to repeat continuously.

Kierkegaard says one's very selfhood depends upon the smoothness of these repetitive leaps. Each leap reestablishes the self; each leap "is a relation which relates itself to itself" (*The Sickness Unto Death*). But unless this self acknowledges the "power which constituted it," it falls into a despair which undoes its selfhood. Therefore, in order to maintain itself in tact, the self must value itself, it does this by constantly bouncing up and renewing its faith in "the power which posited it." This idea should be treasured as the master key to re-inflation without which there would be no buoyancy and I would not be afloat here, as I am right now, rejoicing cognitive consonance with this great high floater.

Kierkegaard's glorification of the absurd subsequently became an important tool for twentieth century existentialists, though usually stripped of its spiritual application. Kierkegaard influenced a broad range of modern philosophers including, Dostoyevsky, Wittgenstein, William James, Bergson, Schopenhauer, amateur philosophers like me, and, no doubt, his contemporary, Emerson.

Fechner

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1801–1887)

Gustav Theodor Fechner is one of the most enigmatic thinkers of nineteenth century German philosophy. (Notice, I didn't say German Idealism.) Fechner first studied medicine, and then broadened into other sciences. His philosophical thinking was torn into two deeply divided halves. On the one hand, Fechner had deep positivist proclivities, with the strictest standards of observation and scientific measurement, which led him to "verificationism," the view that truth can only be verified by scientific experimentation; on the other hand he was a proponent of an early version of phenomenalism which rests on a division of subjects and objects (related to phenomenology's deception of perception).

Fechner's piecemeal scientific quest, by itself, could never satisfy his philosophical longing for a single explanation of the cosmos, which inevitably leads to metaphysics, as we have just seen with Schopenhauer and shall continue to see in all philosophical thinking.

Fechner was a secret admirer of the romantic *Naturphilosophie*, of Schelling. Fechner himself stated that his theory had its roots in Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, where Schelling had developed his own dual aspect theory of the mind and body, according to which the mental and physical, the ideal and the real, are two equal and independent appearances of the absolute. At the same time he was a student of physics and physiology at the University of Leipzig, where his mentor, Ernst Weber, was at the forefront of experimental work on the psychology of perception. Eventually, Fechner realized that data deduced from experiments were dots that needed to be connected and induced into a more general hypothesis.

Fechner's *inductive metaphysics*, rejected the three step synthesis of Fichte and Hegel, which he saw as a wheel of fortune which spins itself out of existence: the wheel mechanically produced each new thesis, and eventually the theory of the wheel itself spawns its own antithesis and replaces itself. It is worth repeating the point we made earlier, that any refutation of Fichte's thesis proceed to an antithesis aspiring to a new synthesis, and, as such, comes around on the very wheel of fortune it would deny. [I'm keeping the wheel regardless of all the post Fichtian critics.]

Fechner's replacement theory rolls in on two steps instead of three. These are the two ways of observing or knowing the human condition: one internal and the other external. The double aspect view is complimentary to other double aspect theories, such as those of Schelling and Schopenhauer.

Fechner's internal appearance begins with how I appear to myself or *self-appearance*; and then proceeds to the external appearance: how I think I appear to others. There are two kinds of knowledge corresponding to each kind of appearance. We know ourselves as minds immediately, i.e., intuitively or directly and without the need to make an inference; but we know others mediately, i.e., intellectually or indirectly, through inferences we make from certain signs, nested in their actions or words. (*Zend-Avesta, Ueber die Seelenfrage* and *Elemente der Psychophysik*.) Fechner explains that there is no mind in itself beyond how it appears to itself; and there is no body in itself, apart from and prior to how it appears to others. So the two aspects also divide between the phenomena and the noumena. Fechner would not appreciate the word "divide." Fechner is concerned with keeping the two aspects together. Fechner tries to avoid being caught between the jaws of dualism and so he calls his dualism "neutral monism," according to which there is one thing which has two aspects or attributes depending on how it is viewed.

Fechner's theory is more focused on the broader self consciousness and the interaction of "two aspects." Other dual aspect theories exclude the possibility of any interaction between the mental and physical appearances precisely because they are such different kinds of consciousness. Spinoza, for example, forbade any causal interaction between the mental and physical because they were such different kinds of attributes of substance (Spinoza 1677: Pars Prima, Propositio VI & X). Fechner saw the interaction as difficult to explain, but he puts is squarely in between the two realms, the two aspects. His *Psychophysik* attempts to explain the interaction, in realistic terms without resorting to any mysticism or metaphysics.

He gets us to accept the fact that nothing exists, originates or acts on the mind without something existing, originating or acting in the body; in other words, everything mental has its inception in the physical organs. This physics is real, both inside and outside; real photons hitting the real eye ball; real sound waves pounding on the real ear drum. But then beyond all that physics is the perception/conception process. Fechner is forced into the *soft place*, the non material realm which moves the theory toward metaphysics.

I would have expected that Fechner, like most medical practitioners would be willing to take account of psychosomatic effects, maybe even go so far as epiphenomenal materialism, allowing the causal interaction between body and

mind. But I was wrong. Fechner dives right into what must be called the deep end of the metaphysical puddle. I am referring to his panpsychism. Fechner's panpsychism holds that all living beings are psychic, with powers of consciousness that are *unexplained*.

Fechner's panpsychism is just as metaphysical as Schelling's and Hegel's idealism. Whether consciousness precedes the action of life or the other way around doesn't make any difference. There is a mystical consciousness; locating it in front or behind physical perception makes the mistake of applying the spatial rules of the *rock* reality to the spaceless reality of the *soft place*. All of these mind-matter connections are metaphysical, but I must say Fechner's is also mind-blowing. Fechner's panpsychism extends to the planets, and indeed the cosmos as a whole, which he says are also psychic or mental. I wonder if Eugene Wigner, (the atomic bomb physicist with the "Friend Theory" mentioned earlier), knew anything about Fechner.

I learned after I had written this chapter once or twice that Fechner's panpsychism originated from a mystical experience which came while he was recovering from a mental breakdown. That got me wondering if this wasn't all just crazy talk. It all began on the day he began to see again, 5 October 1843. He walked into the garden of his house to look at the plants and flowers; suddenly the whole world appeared alive to him; it seemed for the first time to reveal itself to him. The flowers were all illuminated, as if from within. The light they shed seemed to come from their very souls. From that day onward, Fechner made it his mission to be true to that experience, to capture its meaning in philosophical prose (*Nanna* and *Zend-Avesta*).

Mystical experience aside, Fechner insists that his panpsychism is based on the best natural science. While he did not claim certainty or finality for his doctrine, he still maintained that it was the most "likely story" given the latest findings of empirical research. Niels Bohr would agree with that approach.

Fechner writes that it is the purpose of his work to show how plants are part of a world ensouled by God (*Nanna*: xiii). It then seems as if panpsychism can only be proven by the omnipresence of God. But that would be religion not science. Fechner insists that the question of the soul of plants can and should be scientifically investigated on its own, apart from any general metaphysics; he asks: what evidence do we have for the common view that only humans and animals have souls, but not plants?

All belief in the existence of other minds, Fechner reminds us, is based on analogy. We assume that other humans have minds because their speech and actions are like our own; and we infer that animals have minds because, in

crucial respects, their actions are like our own. But we must be careful with analogy, Fechner warns, because we cannot demand that other creatures be exactly like ourselves in all respects. The very nature of analogy means that they are like us in some respects but unlike us in others. Similar does not mean identical.

Fechner makes it his business to argue that all the reasons for ascribing souls to animals also hold for plants (*Nanna*: 7). The most common reason for denying souls to plants, Fechner notes, is that they do not have a central nervous system. If one destroys the nerves of a human or animal, they show no signs of life. It therefore seems that plants cannot have a soul because they have no nervous system. But here Fechner raises an interesting question: are nerves the only possible organs to produce sensation? Nature has many means to the same end, and we should not assume that there is only one way to produce sensation. The fibers of plants could perform the same function as nerves.

Another common reason for denying souls to plants is that they are sessile, i.e. not motile, capable of locomotion; plants apparently cannot change their position, as humans and animals do (*Nanna*: 41, 71). But plants do move; it's just that they move vertically rather than horizontally. Discounting the movements of plants as involuntary, is not fair play. The movements of humans and animals are subject to physical necessity which overrides voluntary movement. The mere necessity of an action—its explicability according to mechanical causes—may have nothing to do with its inner mentality. (*Nanna*: 79). That applies to all living things: humans, animals and plants.

Fechner's natural religion was decidedly not Christianity. His denial of a transcendent dimension beyond nature, his insistence that the mental be embodied in the physical, and his fusion of God and nature, all depart drastically from Christian dogma. Still, Fechner was sympathetic to Christianity, the faith of his family and fathers, and so he attempted to interpret many of its beliefs in terms of his own philosophy. He thought of his philosophy as a new religion which is a synthesis of Christianity and paganism.

Despite his religious pronouncements, Fechner insists that he intends to base his faith upon the best science. Having demonstrated that the earth is an organism, Fechner proceeds to argue that it also has a soul. Because the earth has a body much like our own, we are justified, on the basis of analogy, to assume that it has a soul much like our own. If we regard freedom as a necessary characteristic of the soul, we should also attribute it to the earth, which is an even more self-sufficient and independent being.

Fechner conceives the soul of the earth as present within all individual souls. This leads to a single common consciousness in all individual consciousness, which explains how mutual understanding and communication are possible. Although we are independent and self-sufficient with respect to one another, we all connect to the higher mind. That I know myself and only myself, and that you know yourself and only yourself, does not prevent the higher spirit from knowing both of us and us knowing the higher spirit. The separation between consciousnesses is illusory. That is a rather elegant argument for universal consciousness, which helps sustain my belief in the 'oversoul.'

Fechner says that God in the narrow sense, i.e., God as a single solitary pure spirit, is only an abstraction. God's spirit does not stand outside the material world but expresses itself in and through it [sounds like Spinoza]. I must say this fusion of God into everything and everyone has its appeal. Once again it's anyone's guess as to whether Fechner's finite mind can define the infinite mind of the divine.

Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson (May 25, 1803 – April 27, 1882)^[6] was an American essayist, [lecturer](#), [philosopher](#), and [poet](#) who led the [transcendentalist](#) movement of the mid-19th century. He was seen as a champion of [individualism](#) and a prescient critic of the countervailing pressures of society, and he disseminated his thoughts through dozens of published essays and more than 1,500 public lectures across the United States.

Emerson's religious views were often considered radical at the time. He believed that all things are connected to God and, therefore, all things are divine. Critics believed that Emerson's pantheism was removing the central God figure, "the Father of the Universe" and leaving "but a company of children in an orphan asylum".[Henry Ware Jr.168}

Emerson was strongly influenced by [Vedanta](#), and much of his writing has strong shades of [nondualism](#). One of the clearest examples of this can be found in his essay "[The Over-soul](#)": "We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related, the eternal ONE. This deep power in which we exist and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one.

The central message Emerson drew from his Asian studies was that **"the purpose of life was spiritual transformation and direct experience of divine power, here and now on earth."**

On November 5, 1833, he made the first of what would eventually be some 1,500 lectures, "The Uses of Natural History", in Boston. In this lecture, he set out some of his important beliefs and the ideas he would later develop in his first published essay, "Nature"

Emerson gradually moved away from the religious and social beliefs of his contemporaries, formulating and expressing the philosophy of transcendentalism in his 1836 essay "[Nature](#)". Following this work, he gave a speech entitled "[The American Scholar](#)" in 1837.

He eventually gave as many as 80 lectures a year, traveling across the northern United States as far as St. Louis, Des Moines, Minneapolis, and California.

On July 15, 1838,^[86] Emerson was invited to [Divinity Hall, Harvard Divinity School](#), to deliver the school's graduation address, which came to be known as the "[Divinity School Address](#)". Emerson discounted biblical miracles and proclaimed that, while Jesus was a great man, he was not God: historical Christianity, he said, had turned Jesus into a "demigod, as the Orientals or the Greeks would describe Osiris or Apollo". His comments outraged the establishment and the general Protestant community. He was denounced as an [atheist](#) and a poisoner of young men's minds. Despite the roar of critics, he made no reply, leaving others to put forward a defense. He was not invited back to speak at Harvard for another thirty years. Some scholars point out that in other places Emerson sees that God spoke through Jesus. Emerson wants to make it clear that at that time in that form Jesus was a man, and I might add- 'a man who came from and returned to God.'

The transcendental group began to publish its flagship journal, [The Dial](#), in July 1840. Margaret Fuller (the aunt of Buckminster Fuller) was the first editor, having been approached by Emerson after several others had declined the role. Fuller stayed on for about two years, when Emerson took over, utilizing the journal to promote talented young writers including Thoreau.

In 1841 Emerson published *Essays*, his second book, which included the famous essay "Self-Reliance". His aunt called it a "strange medley of atheism and false independence", but it gained favorable reviews in London and Paris. This book, and its popular reception, more than any of Emerson's contributions to date laid the groundwork for his international fame.

Emerson

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUS
(1803-1882)

Born in Boston Massachusetts, Ralph Waldo Emerson is the key figure of the New England Enlightenment which triggered the American Transcendental movement. Apparently the time was right for an end run around traditional puritan pietism. Emerson's belief that church isn't the only place to find God found an ear with his contemporaries some of whom are in our conga line.

There was a need in Emerson's time, as there is in ours, to make divinity much more accessible. There was no media so you had to find a pulpit outside the church and you had to make sense, because reason had already demonstrated its power over nature. Emerson just happened to do all that and more. His pulpit was a second story balcony just below Beacon Hill, from which his simple words, powered by an extraordinary charisma, boomed across the Boston Commons to the waiting ears of the Boston commoners. While we have an ample record of Emerson's words we can only guess at his tone of voice and the charisma, which seemed to captivate young and old, rich and poor alike in more than 1,500 public lectures across the United States. According to Wikipedia, he charged between \$10 and \$50 for each appearance, bringing him as much as \$2,000 in a typical winter lecture season. His earnings allowed him to expand his property, around Walden Pond, made famous by his disciple and friend Henry David Thoreau.

The same one-to-many insights bellowed from the pulpit to the Boston Commoners became more of a Socratic dialectic with the Boston uncommoners, his piers at the "Saturday club." The Saturday club met the last Saturday of each month just down the street from the Boston Commons, at the Parker House, where you can still sit and have a Parker House roll with your coffee. Can you just imagine overhearing the arguments at the next table between Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Louis Agassiz, all reacting to Emerson's far out ideas. Or better yet, imagine yourself in 1858, hiking behind this same group around the Follensbee Pond in the Adirondack wilderness. Unless you were psychic, you would never have guessed, back then in the mid nineteenth century, that these colliding collisions would spark the American enlightenment aka the New England Enlightenment.

Emerson's epic poem "The Adirondacks" is a poetic journal of the day to day adventures of this non-congregation of rugged individualists who somehow roughed it together for two weeks and somehow turned the inside out. For Emerson this was the inspiration for his essay "Nature." I was warmed by the suggestion in that essay that God is in all things, including me. I thought this must be like the pantheism of other philosophers in the conga line; then I learned that, according some scholars Emerson's pantheism may be pan-deism. Pan-deism is the same as pantheism in one respect but quite different in another. Pan-deism suggests that the God of pantheism may no longer exist. That God set every thing in motion and leaves the rest to humankind. That maybe what Spinoza, Schelling and Fechner were talking about. I'm not ready to go that far; I need to think that God is still with us. And truth to tell, I don't think Emerson would accept that God is on vacation, as was proposed by the pan-deism scholars.

Certainly Emerson believed that God set everything off, and certainly Emerson would agree that God left a lot for us to do, but he also believed that the 'still, small voice,' within us is Christ. Emerson's idea that we carry Christ within is what offended dogmatic Catholic authorities, who, instead of condemning Emerson, should have consulted Saint Augustine's "inner teacher." I don't see how Emerson's 'still, small voice' could have come from the absent God of pan-deism.

As crazy as it sounds, I feel as though I met Emerson personally. The same deep baritone voice that intoned Pico della Mirandola's oration on human dignity was taken over by Emerson. You will recall that I had the privilege of private chats with my mentor Henry Geiger, back in the sixties. Sitting around that same wood burning stove that took the chill out of the hill above the Malibu beach, where MANAS was written and the great minds of the past were connected to my hippy idealism.

Henry's voice had all the charisma I imagined in Emerson's. Our fire side chats were watched over by a portrait of Ralph Waldo Emerson just above Henry's chair on the other side of the wood burning stove. Except for the floppy shirt collar and the copious cravat, you would swear it was Henry's portrait just above the high back chair. The two faces were almost identical. Whether Henry set the scene intentionally, or whether Emerson did, the two faces matched and melded before your eyes and you would swear Henry was channeling Emerson. Before becoming an anonymous Rosicrucian philosopher and publisher, Henry had been an actor in the traveling tent shows that made their way across the west in the roaring twenties. Now he was Emerson. It left me with a life long memory of having sat at the feet of Emerson. I felt like a member of that "Saturday Club."

One night, Henry read to me Emerson's "Self Reliance." Which contains the central belief of his spiritual teachings:

"I have taught one doctrine, namely, the infinitude of the private man.... This rational leap established, the ability for mankind to realize almost anything, including the relationship between the soul and the surrounding world.

Come to think of it that may be the very point at which I was handed the torch of hypersubjectivity, without being aware of it. The torch of spiritual self consciousness was lit by Socrates and passed on through generations of anonymous and famous philosophers. It makes life a journey in which we continually discover and expand our self awareness. Like the baby moving from the discovery of his toes to his nose, from his bodily process to to his mental process; we must keep discovering connections between self and universe, unfortunately most of us loose sight of the process.

Emerson made a careful study of the German enlightenment and Eastern thought, which were not widely known in America in those days. The central message Emerson drew from his Asian studies was that: "the purpose of life was spiritual transformation and direct experience of divine power, here and now on earth." This is what I have been referring to as self ascension.

It would be misleading to suggest that Emerson was merely re-packaging Eastern philosophy. He is considered around the world to be an American intellectual. His speech, entitled "The American Scholar" in 1837, was dubbed America's "intellectual Declaration of Independence" by none other than Oliver Wendell Holmes.

The most important contribution Emerson makes to our conga line is his "Oversoul," which both defines and illustrates the idea of cognitive consonance. As always, I swear to you that my ideas were written before I rediscovered them in Emerson.

Below I have listed some key concepts in our belief system in body text, followed by resonant excerpts from Emerson's '*Oversoul*' in italics:

Wisdom is not anyone's intellectual property:

"... The mind is one, and the best minds, who love truth for its own sake, think much less of property in truth. They accept it thankfully everywhere, and do not label or stamp it with any man's name, for it is theirs long beforehand, and from eternity".

...

Virtue is the essential ingredient of virtuosity:

"When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue..."

God does not live in a cathedral:

"When we have broken our god of tradition, and ceased from our god of rhetoric, then may God fire the heart with his presence."

Metaphysics is the unification of the multiple:

"We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are the shining parts, is the soul... no longer a spotted life of shreds and patches... a divine unity."

Libraries are mausoleums for thought coffins:

"Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civil countries, in a thousand years, have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom."

Consciousness can't tell time:

"The spirit sports with time... We are often made to feel that there is another youth and age than that which is measured from the year of our natural birth. Some thoughts always find us young, and keep us so. Such a thought is the love of the universal and eternal beauty."

Spacetime is perception deception:

"...The influence of the senses has, in most men, overpowered the mind to that degree, that the walls of time and space have come to look real and insurmountable... Yet time and space are but inverse measures of the force of the soul."

Paradox puddle is wordpool:

"An answer in words is delusive; it is really no answer to the questions you ask."

There is no organ of introspection:

"The soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the will; is the background of our being, in which they lie,--an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed."

Self inflation is spiritual expansion:

"It is the doubling of the heart itself, nay, the infinite enlargement of the heart with a power of growth to a new infinity on every side... the man expands there where he works,... With each divine impulse the mind rends the thin rinds of the visible and finite, and comes out into eternity, and inspires and expires its air."

Some of Emerson's critics find his word more of an exhortation than a philosophy. However the words are characterized, I find his insights in "Oversoul" to be some of the most important neoplatonism of the modern era.

...

Emerson influenced the writings, Thoreau, Royce, Melville, Bergson and others around the world, including William James.

James

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1842-1910)

Born in New York City, William James was the oldest of the five children of theologian Henry James, Sr.. The family history deserves a line or two here. William's maternal grandfather was also a theologian. The entire family was involved with Emerson and Carlyle but Papa Henry James was deeply absorbed in teachings Swedenborg, the proponent of a mystical Christian belief system that sought to explode 'selfism' into a broader pantheistic naturalism. Henry James Sr.'s respect for Emerson was passed on to his son William James. I don't mean to suggest here that William was just a chip off the old block, quite the opposite. I am amazed he was able to think for himself at all, surrounded as he was, on all sides, by such powerful theology. Henry James, Jr., the renowned writer of fiction is William's younger brother, who also thought for himself. So this was a remarkable family steeped in theology, but somehow undogmatic enough to encourage world class individual thinking.

It has been said that, while Henry James wrote fiction with the depth of philosophy, his older brother, William, wrote philosophy with the grip of fiction. It was not until 1879, that James began teaching philosophy at Harvard.

James studied chemistry and then physiology, prior to his entering Harvard's Medical School in 1863. For all his science, James was a member of the Metaphysical Club, which included Oliver Wendell Holmes, who had been a member of Emerson's 'Saturday Club' and who also taught at Harvard. And apparently, the Metaphysical Club also included Charles Sanders Peirce, a philosopher of science, who would become the founder of American pragmatism.

James found metaphysical dualism unacceptable; however, his monism replacement does not exclude the possibility of a *soft place* beyond the *rock*. James' so called "monism" does not eliminate spiritualism from materialism it simply smoothes out the wrinkles between the two.

James is equally bothered by the separation between mind and matter and so his "neutral monism," posits one fundamental "stuff" that is neither material nor mental. (*Essays in Radical Empiricism* - 1912). This merger of substance and non-substance lead James to de-materialize ideas so that there are no property lines or property rights connected with ideas, and therefore no one owns ideas. This might have come from Emerson, or might be where Emerson got the idea,

which doesn't matter since based on the import of the idea, neither could or would lay claim to it, or any other idea.

William James was almost omitted from the conga line because of a misleading label 'pragmatism.' I confused pragmatism with empiricism which is antithetical to idealism. But James's pragmatism is transcendental. Transcendental pragmatism sounds like an oxymoron, but James connects these two streams of thought that flow into a metaphysical sea. The islands of individual consciousnesses are immersed in that sea (Memoirs and Studies, p204).

In "The Stream of Thought" James offers a very different account of the flow of 'experience' than those of traditional empiricists such as Hume. Like Heraclitus and Bergson, James' "radical empiricism" finds consciousness to be a flowing stream rather than a chain of "ideas." Our individual consciousness—or, as he prefers to call it, our "sciousness," is a tributary that joins the broader river of "con"...sciousness" that surrounds it. The separation of 'con' and 'scious' is not only clever but also meaningful.

Once again the wonder of cognitive consonance pushes me to yet another side step. A couple of years before I saw the 'con-sciousness' word play in James, I had already written a small book Saltafide (available on saltafide.com) wherein a chapter heading, 'Consciousness' has the prefix 'con' colored differently from the route 'sciousness' to set it apart. I thought that was my own idea, but now, thanks to Emerson and James, I'm slowly coming to the realization that ideas are not to be owned.

James's pragmatism is a "whatever works" philosophy, which includes spiritual beliefs and metaphysics. Any interpretations of James's pragmatism as atheistic are incorrect. James may have eschewed the remote punishing God of the puritan pietists, but James wanted a God that works for the day to day spiritual needs of the individual. He said that any pragmatism that falsified the notion of God, having worked for so many, for so long, would not be pragmatic at all. James would allow any belief system that looked *in* for the divine.

The only thing James was adamant about is that no adamance should preclude whatever sublime belief raises the consciousness of the individual.

James' individual religious experience looks like Fichte's "absolute self." James's naturalism comports with Spinoza's "infinity of absolutes," and Fechner's "panpsychism." James would agree entirely with our bridge between physics and metaphysics.

James's universal "stuff," includes consciousness, and is all over everywhere, and nowhere, like Emerson's *Oversoul*. The James "stuff" would necessarily be beyond spacetime where it would resonate with Plato, Protagoras, Descartes, Heraclitus, Kant, Bergson and just about everyone in the conga line.

James reaches across the conga line to make his own connections. In "What Pragmatism Means" (1907), James connects himself to Schiller and Dewey, both in our conga line. He discovers in both a theory of how new ideas attach themselves to existing belief systems. New ideas are like lego pieces in that they must attach without affecting the pre-existing structure of the belief system. No matter how radically different they may appear, the new idea must leave the overall structure of the belief system intact. This is why eternal verities persevere.

James says "a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in its coming." James looks at faith and reason as different levels of consciousness. He points out that in science, we can afford to await the outcome of investigation before coming to a belief, but in our mystical pursuits we must come to some belief even if all the relevant evidence is not in. This makes faith a leap rather than a step in the right direction.

James wrote and lectured extensively all over the world, which some scholars feel was essential to establishing pragmatism as a worldwide philosophical movement. Scholars also credit James, in this same period, with the establishment of 'personal religion.' Somehow James had no trouble maintaining his balance with one foot in each camp. His Gifford Lectures, which he delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1901-02 were published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in 1902 which, for me, is the closest philosophy comes to useful everyday wisdom.

...

By now you can understand the importance of the first word "Varieties" in the title of this most important work. Variety is essential to James's interest in the inner lives of others. Other writers, like Tolstoy, who share the wonder of the "mysterious ebbs and flows" of thought, led James to a prolonged study of human religious experience. For James, "religious experience" abides **not** in religious institutions, or rituals, but in "the feelings, and acts, of individuals in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine." James would approve of my talking to my selves and my 'inner teacher.'

James calls this worship in the inner sanctum healthy-mindedness as opposed to a morbid "old hell-fire theology." That is not to say that James would shut down all churches. Despite the fact that he would not join any Christian

congregation, James cites liberal Christians as an example of the happy spirit, just as he applauds the “mind-cure movement” of Mary Baker Eddy.

In the chapter on “*The Divided Self, and the Process of Its Unification*” and the chapter on “*Conversion*,” James discusses St. Augustine, Tolstoy, and a range of popular evangelists, focusing on what he calls “the state of assurance.” Central to this state is: “the loss of all the worry, the sense that all is ultimately well....”

There are “four marks” which make any belief mystical. The first is ‘ineffability’: it defies expression...its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others.” Second is a ‘noetic quality’: mystical states present themselves as states of knowledge which are revealed rather than constructed. Thirdly, mystical states are transient; you cannot rely on them remaining for any length of time, or even coming when they are called. The fourth mark is passivity; subjects cannot control the coming and going of mystical experiences. They seem to come to you; you can’t go to them.

The third and fourth seem like they are saying the same thing, which I’m not sure about. I like to think that my inner teacher is always there at my beck and call, not transient or elusive, at all. James ends the chapter by suggesting that these states are “windows” through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world. So maybe my window is more reflective.

James suggests that just beyond the rational intellect, consciousness has a pulse, a “blank rhythm.” Some forgotten verse somehow leaves behind a blank rhythm, restlessly dancing in one’s mind, striving to be filled out with words. I should also add that I find rhythm is at the basis of the connection between the plan and the willed act, especially in performances, whether they be athletic or esthetic. I think the old song “I got Rhythm” became a jazz anthem not only because of its harmonic structure, but also because of its allusion to rhythm as a recall tool. All Jazz artists have in their repertoire so called “rhythm changes.”

Jamesian Metaphysics

Remarkably, James had no trouble maintaining his status as a bonafide empiricist while he embraced metaphysics. At that time, not too many earned their living at Harvard, or anywhere else, as both a psychologist and a philosopher.

Natural human definitions of the supernatural metaphysical God node are bound to be hazy at best. James makes no effort at a precise definition. For James God is a natural human response to the universe. Independent of any proof that God exists, God will always be the “centre of gravity of all attempts to solve the

riddle of life.” James advocates “theism” but calls it: “an ultimate opacity in things, a dimension of being which escapes our theoretic control.”

James takes apart the traditional arguments for God: the cosmological argument, the argument from design, the moral argument, and the argument from popular consensus and shows the flaws in each, but allows God in any form into any heart, however it happens.

The God in James’s own heart is a strange blend of Fechner’s and Bergson’s God. James’s inner teacher is not an absolute infinite intelligence but rather a finite intelligence that is only somewhat smarter than we are. He compares God to a master chess player engaged in a give-and-take with us novices. We are free to make our own moves; yet the master knows all the moves we could possibly make. Nevertheless James describes himself as a supernaturalist. James denies the Hegelian notion of God as an all-encompassing absolute.

In “Reflex Action and Theism,” James describes a personal God with whom we can maintain interpersonal relations, who possesses a much greater power but is not necessarily omnipotent, and has a fine mind, but is not necessarily omniscient.

In “Is Life Worth Living?” James even suggests that God ‘get’s off’ on our adulation; James actually said that God may derive strength and energy from collaborating with our faith. In other words, God needs us as much as we need him. Henri Bergson suggests a similar relationship between a needy God and humans. James would agree with Bergson’s needy God who bestowed creativity on humans just so that He would have someone to share beauty with. There are not too many other takers in the conga line who would go along with this mini God. Plato, Xenophanes and Spinoza, would roll over in their graves. It’s as though in order to keep the divine falcon on his padded forearm, James clipped its wings. While this makes God much more approachable, it also makes God less divine, and leaves the upper slot open for another ultimate divinity. What James calls God is more like a guardian angel who must be accountable to another superior God. In order to have a God with limited powers, there has to be another God to manage the limitations and provide a limitless backdrop for those limits.

While I have a problem with James’s mini-God, it does help overcome the paradox of my inner teacher and the outer umpire in the same game of life. I may need to return to some improved form of Gnostic and/or Manichaeism heresies; James and Bergson might need to do the same.

In the middle of the confused analysis, while writing this very page, my inner teacher whispered his own name and rank: Christ, son of God. I almost forgot the Jesus story. Leaving Jesus out of the the divine seesaw equation, makes it unsolvable. Jesus, **son** of God, may just be what James was looking for to occupy that sub-layer of divinity. Or, if you don't like the filial analogy, or the holy trinity, we could think of Jesus as God's ambassador to humanity. This provides us with a mini-God who is down on the *rock* with us enough to suffers all the bumps and pitfalls but high enough to connect us to an upper God who invented the *rock* and the game of life. I'll stop there in my efforts to explain God, which like all explanations of God is always and only a confused guess.

Confused as it is, there is a God node in James's metaphysical triad and mine. And we can say, with some assurance, that the other nodes of the metaphysical triad are also there. There is no question about the freedom node. As for the immortality node, James believes that the moral values we strive to perfect will somehow survive us, and so do I; otherwise what's the point of self development if death is the only reward.

In *Pragmatism* James subsumes the religious within the pragmatic world, however, in *A Pluralistic Universe* he puts the religious back up on a superior layer. Like the others we have already talked about, James was critical of the "vicious intellectualism" of Hegel but he goes on to embrace the idealist philosophers Gustav Fechner and Henri Bergson. [One we have already met and one we shall meet just ahead]. He praises Fechner for holding that "the whole universe in its different spans and wave-lengths, exclusions and developments, is everywhere alive and conscious." This may be Christian mysticism which came down to him from his father. He seems to embrace Fechner's panpsychism idea that separate human, animal and vegetable consciousnesses merge in a "consciousness of still wider scope."

James deliberately defines "religion" broadly as the experiences of human individuals insofar as they see themselves related to whatever they regard as divine. James's religion does not require a monotheistic God, or a congregation. You are free to believe or not in whatever you discover to be God. This is consistent with the freedom node of the metaphysical triad.

James draws three conclusions regarding religious beliefs: (1) that our sensible world is part of and derives its significance from a greater spiritual order; (2) that our purpose is fulfilled by achieving harmonious union with it; and (3) that prayer and spiritual communion are efficacious. This resonates with my inner coaching.

James joins our non church worshipers in that he suggests that organized religions, more often than not, produce a "sick soul," with a "divided self" who is

morbidly pessimistic, unlike the optimistic and joyful whole, holy spirits who find God for themselves.

James develops lengthy analyses of religious conversion, beatification, and mysticism. In addition he examines philosophical “over-beliefs” regarding the divine. James finds that two psychological qualities in believers enhance their non spiritual lives: (1) an energetic zest for living; and (2) a sense of security, love, and peace. I call this hypersubjectivity.

Because he felt strongly that the good society thrives on a plurality of outlooks, James demands tolerance, respect, and even indulgence for those whom we see harmlessly opposed to our view and happy in their own ways, however misguided that may seem. Since the whole of truth is not revealed to any single human, each of us is entitled to our own personal revelations. This good advice is found in his essay, “On a Certain Blindness.”

I can believe in my inner God and at the same time understand that I need not, cannot and should not define God for everyone else. All I can do is analyze and endorse the good effect it has on human thought, and that thought on human behavior. We all know something; no one knows everything; together we know more than we do acting alone. As gregarious beings we belong to groups where we perform whatever duty membership requires, with the underlying faith that the other members will do their part as well. Faith always precedes action. A government, an army, a commercial system, a ship, a college, an athletic team, all exist on this faithful pre-condition, without which nothing is even attempted. This is how we have come to establish civilizations with family structures and how we came to deplore racism and violence and tyranny and move to eliminate them and create the balanced peaceful society which James calls social equilibrium.

However, James holds that there is “nothing final in any equilibrium of human ideals.” The fact that present laws and customs appear to be progress over earlier less civilized epochs does not guarantee that that progress will continue automatically. There is no Hegelian wheel of fortune systematically churning out human progress. Progress is up to the individual choices made by each and every one of us and the effect it has when it all comes together. However, individual choices are influenced by other more exalted individuals.

In “Great Men and Their Environment” James offers a view of community forces which select and develop great individuals. In turn, that social environment that spawns them is also affected by them. Whether or not an individual will be able to have an impact is, to some extent, determined by society. Thus socially significant individuals and their communities have a dynamic, correlative

relationship. In a follow-up article, "The Importance of Individuals," he maintains that agents of social change, beyond being gifted in some way(s), tend to take greater advantage of given circumstances than more ordinary persons do (*Will*, pp. 225-226, 229-230, 232, 259).

James believes in the importance of heroes. His heroes: Wordsworth, Shelley, Emerson, and Whitman, all have a sense of the "limitless significance in natural things." Even in the city, there is "unfathomable significance and importance" in the daily events of the streets, the river, and the crowds of people. James praises Walt Whitman, "a hoary loafer," for knowing how to profit from life's common opportunities: after a morning of writing and a bath, Whitman rides the omnibus down Broadway from 23rd street to Bowling Green and back, just for the pleasure and the spectacle.

As a psychologist and philosopher, James's description of the stream of thought as neither mental or material, anticipates not only his own "radical empiricism," but Husserl's phenomenology. James's enigmatic juxtaposition of "radical empiricism" and his seemingly metaphysical "pure experience" leaves us with a wish bone with one leg connected to Charles Pierce's American pragmatism and the other connected to phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (particularly the notions "fringe" and "halo.")

Wittgenstein and Russell both acknowledge their debt to James. Russell observed in his obituary, (*The Nation* (3 September 1910: 793-4) that James's unique vision became so powerful because of its author's remarkable "tolerance and ... humanity."

The Gifford Lectures mentioned earlier also included his colleague Josiah Royce, who we shall meet next. James set himself against the absolute idealism of Royce, which did not keep James from recommending Royce as his replacement when James took a one-year sabbatical from his post at Harvard.

Royce

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1855–1916)

In 1882, Josiah Royce was recommended by William James to fill his position at Harvard, while James was on leave. Royce accepted the position at half of James' salary and later became a permanent member of the most distinguished philosophy faculty in America, if not the world. Royce continued to teach philosophy at Harvard for thirty years.

Josiah Royce was the leading American proponent of absolute idealism. Like Plato, Hegel and the the German idealists, Royce secures a place for the finite individual in the infinite universe. Royce is important because of the American twist he provided to idealism. The all American "democratic" twist I am referring to has to do combining the two most unique elements of the human condition: self consciousnesses and gregariousness. The result is the sanctification of communication and community, which is, at once, the most essential least practiced behavior for citizens of a free democracy.

In his thirty years at Harvard, Royce inspired some of his students to become world class authors and thinkers, such as T.S. Eliot, Santayana, W.E.B. Dubois, Norbert Wiener, and C.I. Lewis.

Royce's famous tug-o-war with his Harvard sponsor, William James, known as "The Battle of the Absolute," deeply influenced the philosophy at both ends of the tug line. James's relativism became a bit more absolute, and Royce's absolutism became a bit more pragmatic. So much so that Royce's 'absolute mind' came to be called: 'absolute pragmatism', and James's 'radical empiricism' came to be known as 'transcendental pragmatism.'

I never heard of Royce when I wrote about communication back in the eighties and nineties. Nevertheless, If you were to read Royce and then my obscure books, you would charge me with plagiarism, but, informed as I am by the Parker House intellectuals and others in the conga line, I would now be able invoke Emersonian intellectual communism in my defense.

[The books of mine that I'm referring to are: Communication the Living End , Philosophical Library NY-1988, and Castle of Consciousness, Fingerprint Press, Rochester, NY- 1994, which may still be available on the web site saltafide.com and on Amazon depending on what happened to democracy since I wrote this footnote.]

When so called 'information technology' began, I had no formal credentials but neither did anyone else. There was still no such thing as a "computer science" department in any major university. In the fifties, I had learned a little bit about both social science and neuroscience at the University of Michigan, and of course, I knew about Emerson and James from my mentor Henry Geiger. By the time the sixties rolled around, my writing career was aground in the dried-up great lake of mass media, when suddenly the information age rained down upon me and I was afloat on a new voyage of discovery. Giddy with anticipation, I found myself involved in a technotopian hypothesis we called 'communication theory,' shared by a hand full of early Bitnet (Arpanet) geeks and film makers experimenting with the new electronic image. Networking quickly caught on. Communication theory never caught on and I never became famous, which was good for me and good for the internet, where there were no starring rolls, only bites and bit parts, and no screen credits. 'Sharing' ideas was the order of the day.

I was allowed onto the podiums of higher education without credential, because the information age was too new to have 'experts.' Along the way, I learned something about semiotics. Semiotics seemed to resonate with my communication theory, but I never dug very deep. I'm telling you all this because, without my knowing it, a half century earlier, Royce foresaw this semiotic revolution we call the information age.

Royce characterizes reality as a universe of ideas and/or signs interpreted by an infinite community of minds. Royce's correspondence theory of knowledge (inspired by Kant's transcendental speculations).

Ever since Plato, we have known that in order for the error to be an error, there has to be an ultimate backdrop of truth which, ipso facto, would have to be true all the time and everywhere. How can we know that such a truth exists and not know anymore about it? Royce wondered how the same limited mind could have aberrant views of matter and at the same time access to absolute truth to falsify and sometimes correct them.

Royce considered all the available philosophical answers to that important question and found them all inadequate. There is a gap between the idea of an innate a-priori absolute knowledge, and our fallible, deceptive perceptions and conceptions. Royce's unique contribution to collective consciousness lies in his discovery of the source of the Heraclitan river and the metaphorical "confluence" of all the tributaries that merge and part and merge again downstream from the super-mind.

Royce endeavored to extend and complete critical rationalism in his explanation of the “*fourth conception of being*” detailed in The World and the Individual, where he provides an exquisite metaphysical connection between reality, community and consciousness. The every day self consciousness is but a fragment of this Absolute Mind which casts its misty shadow on our fallible human thoughts. This puts him squarely in our conga line. His Absolute Knower resonates with Plato’s Forms, and Kant’s ‘pure reason,’ and Fichte’s ‘absolute self,’ James’s ‘Stream of Thought,’ and Emerson’s ‘oversoul’.

Royce’s major works include The Religious Aspect of Philosophy (1885), The World and the Individual (1899–1901), The Philosophy of Loyalty (1908), and The Problem of Christianity (1913).

For Royce knowledge has to be “re-presented;” it cannot exist on its own, Knowledge is not merely the accurate and complete *perception* of an object, as empiricism would have it; nor is it solely a *conception*, as idealists maintain. Knowledge is instead a process of interpretation: the true idea selects, emphasizes, and “re-presents” those aspects of the object that will be meaningfully fulfilled in subsequent experience. This “subsequent experience” is at the root of our gregarious connection to consciousness partners which I have called SAPs and TAPs (Spatially Absent Partners, and Temporally Absent Partners).

Royce’s “hermeneutic epistemology” says that knowledge of “the real world is the Community of Interpretation...”. I have made the point on numerous occasions including in this work that everyone knows something; and that no one knows everything, which is why we keep talking. It takes everyone to know all that is known.

Royce’s proposition that any philosophical view is at bottom an expression of individual ‘volition’ connects directly to James’s well-known essay “The Will to Believe.”. In other words, philosophy merely rationalizes action. Or, in the words of Wittgenstein: “philosophy is not a theory but an activity” (Tractatus..., which will be discussed further in the chapter on Wittgenstein.)

This could be mistaken for existentialism, except for the fact that Royce replaces the relativism of existentialism and humanism with an absolute knowledge of Truth. Royce would not accept the ideas of the French existentialists (Sartre and Camus) that human efforts are absurd, unfolding against a backdrop of a meaningless and an indifferent universe. On the contrary, Royce maintains that the concepts of ultimate meaning and reality are powerful and legitimate forces in our lives. Royce maintains that the will to live is

“loyalty to the ideal of an ultimate truth” “Absolute Voluntarism” (Royce 1913 [200, 349]).

The problem of evil is a persistent theme throughout this book and this chapter is no exception. Royce struggled with tragedy in his personal life and sought to understand it better through philosophy. As an idealist he also had to struggle with evil as a metaphysical problem. Royce believes that the sinner “is dealing, **not** with the ‘angry God’ of ...theological tradition, but with himself.”

For Royce, theodicy is not a problem since God is also suffering and therefore is neither cruel nor helpless:

“When you suffer, *your sufferings are God’s sufferings*, not his external work, not his external penalty, not the fruit of his neglect, but identical with His own personal woe. In you, God himself suffers, precisely as you do, and has all your concern in overcoming this grief.”

Grief is not “a physical means to an external end,” but rather “a logically necessary and an eternal constituent of the divine life.”

Naturally, like everyone else who talks about God, the God node in Royce’s metaphysical triad is ambiguous.

As to the immortality node, Royce refers to established religions; he tells us that “the central and essential postulate” of every religion is that “man needs to be saved.” Royce’s salvation may not be the pearly gates up there; instead it may just be a stronger connection down here, to the inner teacher. Salvation comes in the form of guidance toward understanding and accomplishing the highest aim of life, so far as we are able. Given the limitations and fallibility of the human perspective, Royce maintains that this guidance must come from some super-human or divine source. Religion is the sphere of life in which finite human beings are able to get in touch with this divine source of wisdom and guidance.

Royce’s “invisible church” is the loyal community, guided by a divine spirit and devoted to the highest ideals of goodness. In *The Sources of Religious Insight* Royce distinguishes his view from the Jamesean view of religious experience, but it is plain to see that the semiotic synergy between the two insights is much more powerful than the semantic distinctions.

While Royce’s *Sources* concerns the nature of religious experience in general, *The Problem of Christianity* focuses on the question “In what sense, if any, can the modern man be, a Christian?” Royce’s answer actually rejects the static concepts and beliefs (dogma) usually implied by devotion to specific creeds, including those identified with Christianity. The Christian church for Royce is not

the place we go on Sunday in our starched shirts and neckties; it is not a place at all; it is a community of grace. The particular institutions that identify themselves as churches may or may not actually be communities of grace. Royce would also identify grace at work in many communities that are not self-consciously religious. What matters in the end is the process of interpretation; the process of communicating and understanding one another in actual, imperfect, finite communities of grace bound together by loyalty and striving toward the any ideal.

Royce finds traditional accounts of atonement, in Christian dogma, unsatisfactory. In contemplating Christ's willing sacrifice of his own life for the sake of the human community, the sinner may be inspired to change his ways, but, Royce points out, by itself crucifixion does nothing to reconcile the sinner to the community or to repair that community from any harm done. Such reconciliation and healing requires something more than a change of heart. You can't just pray to make amends you have to do something for the community you have offended. Royce's community expiation is different from the "firm purpose of amendment" I learned about in parochial school, which followed the penance: usually an act of contrition and a few 'Hail Mary's.' Forgiveness, is an act of the community and is essential to atonement. Moreover, it involves a recognition of human frailty — not just the moral frailty of the sinner in question, but that of all humans. Things are not made the same as they were before after genuine atonement, but are made better. Everyone in the community is enhanced by the stronger scar tissue where once there was a wound.

If the Catholic Church wanted Royce's blessing, the secrets of the confessional would have to be published in a weekly news letter. Can you imagine the bylines: 'Mrs Robinson had sex with her daughter's boy friendFather Feely still has feelings for altar boys.....'

Royce is critical of many historical churches because they have in his view lost sight of the spirit that ought to guide them. Nietzsche's remark: "Christ was the last Christian" is truer now than it was then.

In the end, however, Royce was a philosopher who worked within the intellectual context of Western civilization and its churches, including the Christian community which can be optimized with a little more philosophy. Christian congregations can become model "loyal communities" when they successfully create the "infinite worth" of the individual as a unique member of the ideal Beloved Community, the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Buddhist community would say that suffering is inevitable but you can do something about it. Royce also endorsed Buddhism as a community of grace.

Royce's *The Problem of Christianity* includes a very sympathetic presentation of Buddhism. He had great respect for non-Christian religions; he actually took the trouble to learn Sanskrit.

I'm sure if Royce knew about the internet and our new age he wouldn't mind extending the 'community of grace' to the virtual communities on the internet, including the spatially absent and the temporally absent partners in our conga line.

Thank God for Royce and thank Royce for a God who is no longer far away and inaccessible. Maybe this inner God is the second coming Jews have been waiting for.

North Whitehead

Alfred North Whitehead (15 February 1861 – 30 December 1947) was an English [mathematician](#) and [philosopher](#). He is best known as the defining figure of the [philosophical school](#) known as [process philosophy](#). In his early career Whitehead wrote primarily on [mathematics](#), [logic](#), and [physics](#). His most notable work in these fields is the three-volume *Principia Mathematica* (1910–1913), which he wrote with former student [Bertrand Russell](#).

Beginning in the late 1910s and early 1920s, Whitehead gradually turned his attention from mathematics to [philosophy of science](#), and finally to [metaphysics](#). He developed a comprehensive metaphysical system which radically departed from most of [western philosophy](#). Whitehead argued that [reality](#) consists of [processes](#) rather than material objects, and that processes are best defined by their relations with other processes, thus rejecting the theory that reality is purely material. Unlike many of his colleagues, monist scientific materialism did not appeal to Whitehead. In fact he was vehemently opposed to scientific materialism. As for the monistic aspect of that belief, where he stands is not as clear.

To consider Whitehead as a dualist would seem, at first blush, to be in conflict with the fact that he criticized Descartes. But this criticism had less to do with the invisible reality of mind and more to do with Descartes theory of indivisible atomic bits, making the material world a static reality. For Whitehead everything is in flux, changing all the time at different rates, there is no such thing as stasis.

The internal impression, what he called “prehension” seems to be set apart from reality, but Whitehead would not go so far as to join the dualists. He uses dichotomy in his philosophy but only for analysis. As we said in Saltafide, dichotomies are simply a looking glass and not reality; dualism and monism in the end are one, all the parts are unified. Whitehead would agree that the network of separate processes are interrelated and the whole is holy. What is strange is that for Whitehead the “holy” is not immutable. God goes with the flow as does man.

Whitehead’s plan requires that an order exist among possibilities, an order that allows for novelty in the world, a hole in the plan. Whitehead would not deny that there is a plan and a hole for freedom, but for Whitehead the hole is as big as the plan. It is hard to imagine anything with a hole as big as the whole, which pretty much describes Whitehead’s, hard to imagine, event base, non-material, “process” reality.

Whitehead denies that the material world exists as static bits of reality. Matter is a network of processes and mind is also a process which continually remakes itself with impressions taken in from the outer reality. Whitehead, I believe, would distinguish, if only for analysis, between the outer “process” and the inner “process”, which we call consciousness.

Whitehead's process philosophy argues that "there is urgency in coming to see the world as a web of interrelated processes of which we are integral parts, so that all of our choices and actions have consequences for the world around us." This fits with the continuum of connected consciousness described in Saltafide, except that, for Whitehead, the “ultra-consciousness” is nothing more than the “extra-consciousness.” By that I mean to say that for Whitehead, whatever is in everyone’s mind feeds God’s mind, and God’s mind feeds everyone else’s mind.

Whitehead thus sees [God and the world as fulfilling one another](#). And yet he sees the changing entities in the world as yearning for a permanence which only God can provide. He sees God as permanent but as deficient . God is merely eternally unrealized possibilities, and requires the world to actualize them. God gives creatures permanence, while the creatures give God actuality and change.

In one sense this could be read as humility where man cannot expect to understand God without God’s intervention; in another sense this could be read as blasphemy where man is defining God, and without man’s thoughts God could not exist. If God needs man to exist then either Man is also God or God only man.

Here it is worthwhile to quote Whitehead at length:

"It is as true to say that God is permanent and the World fluent, as that the World is permanent and God is fluent.

"It is as true to say that God is one and the World many, as that the World is one and God many.

"It is as true to say that the World is [immanent](#) in God, as that God is immanent in the World.

"It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God.

"It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God ...

"What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world ... In this sense, God is the great companion – the fellow-sufferer who understands.”

We said earlier that the interdependency of God and man might be construed as blasphemy where man defines God, or atheism where the man made God is therefore not a God at all. Once again we might turn to Plato to keep us afloat.

Whitehead wouldn't mind turning to Plato, witness his famous remark where he characterized the entire philosophical tradition as "... a series of footnotes to Plato."

Turning to Plato, then, if Whitehead meant to slip his "process" between Plato's "truth" and "belief," instead of tearing down the divine realm, this would add a bridge between the two Platonic states: "belief" and "truth," a skylight in the "cave".

North-Whitehead

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1861–1947)

"Philosophy begins in wonder. And at the end, when philosophical thought has done its best, the wonder remains." [Whitehead, Modes of Thought, Macmillan, 1938]

Alfred North Whitehead and Russell were paired electrons that orbited the British Cambridge circle which rolled out the rational manifesto Principia Mathematica. Whitehead then spun off and magically joined the orbit of the American Cambridge circle [my own term] and changed both circles and himself.

Whitehead was a British mathematician and metaphysician who found a more enthusiastic audience for his metaphysics in Cambridge Massachusetts than he did in Cambridge England. As his collaborator Bertrand Russell comments, "In England, Whitehead was regarded only as a mathematician, and it was left to America to discover him as a philosopher"

So it was that in 1924, after a stint at lesser known colleges in London, Whitehead accepted an appointment as a professor of philosophy at- where else- Harvard University. There he added his spin to the 'American Cambridge circle' already set in motion by William James and Josiah Royce. There, in the same hallowed halls of Harvard, Whitehead added to the metaphysics of American pragmatism. Whatever empiricism was left in the thought of Whitehead from his days in the British Cambridge Circle came to look more like the metaphysical pragmatism of James and Royce and the American Cambridge circle which circles all the way back to Plato. If there is any doubt

about Whitehead's Platonism one only has to look at his famous quote characterizing all of Western philosophy as foot notes to Plato. It seems only natural to add his philosophy to those Platonic footnotes.

Every inch the philosopher, Whitehead was no less the scientist and mathematician. Physics would not be what it has become without Whitehead. James Clerk Maxwell's taught at Cambridge, where Whitehead wrote his Trinity Fellowship dissertation on Maxwell's electromagnetism. In Whitehead's eyes, Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism constituted an antidote to Newton's scientific materialism. Electromagnetism could be a model for the whole universe as "a field of force—or, in other words, a field of incessant activity." The definition of a force field as "incessant activity" is unique to both science and philosophy, especially to any philosophy about consciousness, because consciousness is very much like the electromagnetism which Whitehead describes as incessant activity. Incessancy leads to infinity, anyway you slice it. Faraday remarked that "in a sense an electric charge is everywhere," and Whitehead extended that to the unforgettable universal proposition that "in a certain sense, everything is everywhere at all times." Whitehead looked beyond the light carrying medium proposed by the famous Michelson-Morely experiment. His Enquiry into the Principles of Natural Knowledge, The Concept of Nature, and The Principle of Relativity, published between 1919 and 1922 turned the heads of the great minds in physics. Most importantly, his critique of the problem of measurement raised by Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity opened the door to the non-geometry of spacetime. In 1921, Whitehead had the opportunity to discuss these matters with Einstein himself. And finally, in 1922, Whitehead published a book with a more detailed account of his alternative theory of gravitation, The Principle of Relativity.

Whitehead ventures beyond the spacetime of relativity, where he points out that the only way we can know the geometry of the space we are trying to measure is if we first know the distributions of matter and energy throughout the cosmos that affect that geometry. Thus we are left in the position of first having to know everything before we can know anything. That is mind boggling in every sense of the word.

Whitehead spoke of the "bifurcation of nature into two systems of reality" but only one knowable. In 1920 he resurrected the absolute idealism of Bishop Berkeley and Protagoras, where measured objectivity is an illusion. Whitehead pointed out that all the qualities we attribute to nature are in our head. He meant not to demean the content but to exalt the container, human consciousness. Objective nature without subjective consciousness, he points out is pointless.

Whitehead's ontology is essentially extensive rather than point-like, a force field of waves rather than a sequence of particles. This brought metaphysics closer to quantum physics than it had ever been.

Whitehead's explicit interest in symbols was present in his earliest publication. His theory of "prehension," adds to Royce's theory of symbols. Whitehead points both that our "uncognitive" sense-perceptions are directly caught up in our symbolic awareness as is shown by the immediacy with which we move beyond what is directly given to our senses. Whitehead's "prehension" is prior to and manages the deception of perception.

He saw, early on, the effects of observations on our conceptions of the micro and macro universes, which influenced Godel's "Incompleteness," Bohr's "Complementarity" and Heisinger's "Uncertainty." The observer/observed paradox in quantum physics must have been on his mind when he wrote: "All philosophy is an endeavor to obtain a self-consistent understanding of things observed."

Whitehead describes what we have called time blindness: "...an instant of time conceived as a primary simple fact is nonsense."

Development is an illusion. Becoming is real. The basic units of becoming for Whitehead are "actual occasions." Actual occasions are "drops of experience," that contribute to the "feeling" of relatedness to concrete reality, which should not be taken as actually real or "concrete.'

To mistake these interior phenomena as real would be to commit the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. But that is not to say feeling is a mere abstraction. Rather, it is the first and most concrete manifestation of an occasion's relational engagement with reality. This comports with Royce's ideas of the validation of re-presented knowledge by subsequent usage.

Whitehead's Science and the Modern World offers a careful critique of orthodox scientific materialism and his Process and Reality in 1929 layers the inner and outer realities; his term "prehension" suggests the inner reality as a 'sine qua non' for "extension," our contact with the outer world. The holistic character of prehension and the analytical nature of extension invite the reader to interpret the former as a theory of "internal relations" and the latter as a theory of "external relations."

It should be noted however that the internal reality is all we can count on (Berkeley would say the internal reality is all there is; there is a slight difference),

and so Whitehead's "superject" (fused object/subject) is the internal atom of the ultimate externality.

Just as fusion exceeds fission in physics, joining metaphysical elements is more powerful than separating them. Whitehead's fusion included the antipodal elements of consciousness, science and religion:

"Philosophy attains its chief importance by fusing the two, namely, religion and science, into one rational scheme of thought."

Whitehead was in no sense condoning current organized religion. He wrote that religion is the last refuge of human savagery.

"Indeed history, down to the present day, is a melancholy record of the horrors of human sacrifice, and in particular, the slaughter of children, cannibalism, sensual orgies, abject superstition, hatred as between races, the maintenance of degrading customs, hysteria, bigotry,... can all be laid at the feet of organized religion."

Nevertheless, Whitehead didn't believe that organized religion was all bad. Like Royce, Whitehead believed that religion can be "positive or negative" depending on what it does and for whom. If it provides a lift off from the reason runaway it's good.

In Religion in the Making, Whitehead says: "The point to notice is its transcendent importance." In Science and the Modern World, he explains transcendent importance as something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized.

For our conga line purposes the most important Whitehead insights are in *Process and Reality* where he declares that God is the major element for self consciousness, self appreciation, self love and self determination. According to Whitehead: "God is the organ of novelty and order." Without the intervention of God, there could be nothing new in the world, and no order. God inspires order novelty and originality.

Whitehead is responsible for the advance, if not the founding of "process theology." Process theology is hard to pin down as it took many twists and turns after Whitehead, but the most important and consistent aspect of process theology fits nicely into our conga line next to the mini (less than omnipotent) God of James and Bergson. Process theologians look to a God who is more like Christ than Zeus. This closer (and in our case, inner) God is supremely affected by temporal events and is "the fellow sufferer who understands."

God does not force, but tenderly persuades each actual occasion to actualize—from “the absolute wealth of potentiality.” God, according to Whitehead, “is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness.”

The game of life is not a fickle game show where God enjoys watching humans stumble, but rather an art class where we are introduced to beauty, or better still, a youth orchestra where the patient conductor is leading us to the divine experience of feeling perfect music flow through the imperfect minds and bodies of those who keep trying to play better.

Even the dark minds of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer have the one bright spot reserved for music and the arts. All of the philosophers in our conga line, and many not in our conga line, see the esthetic aspect of consciousness as a step up, or a leap off the *rock* in the direction of the *soft place*.

One of his later works Adventures of Ideas, 1933, is purported to have been his complete outline of philosophical and cultural ideas as they relate to his brand of metaphysics. This was Whitehead’s conga line of consciousness, which, I discovered only after writing this chapter, and which commands much more discussion than we have room for here. This should be a book of its own. [Maybe it will God willing]

While he is widely recognized for his collaborative work with Bertrand Russell on the Principia Mathematica, Whitehead also made highly innovative contributions in the area of ‘process metaphysics,’ the details of which are lost to us because of his strange dying wish. In accordance with his testamentary instructions, all those papers were destroyed following his death. Nevertheless, he left enough to become immortalized.

Bergson

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1859- 1941)

Henri Bergson's creative evolution bent Darwinism into a new philosophical dimension. Bergson's evolution projects the constancy of change into a super state which is naturally supernatural. That's a mind twister, and you do have to twist your mind a bit to get it around Bergson's paradoxical metaphysics. For Bergson, concepts, percepts and intuition are not themselves material and are in a flux nevertheless they have very real effects on the matter and energy of the universe. To talk about immaterial subjects any writer is forced to use material metaphors; Bergson's metaphors are elegant.

One of Bergson's more memorable metaphors pictures an elegant cape hung on a coat hook. The cape warms and gives form to the invisible wearer. Bergson points out that it would be a great error to confuse the cape with the hook. We can cloak our invisible 'selves' in the cape; we can only hang ourselves on the hook. Bergson points out that the cape is an essential heuristic which gives form to invisible subjects. Intellect divides and measures and imposes form on the featureless flux of sur-reality, only to facilitate communication. This is another way of saying what Protagoras said back in ancient Greece: "Man is the measure of all things."

Measurements, spacetime, metaphorical capes, mattergy, energy, *rock, soft place* are all heuristics, without which there would be no communication about abstract ideas. Bergson's movie metaphor is yet another self aggrandizing instance of cognitive consonance between the great Bergson and little old me. I remind myself here that I am still under oath and I swear that I came up with the movie reel metaphor in an earlier book before I knew anything about Bergson.

Places everyone, and ACTION!

Bergson uses the persistence of vision which makes the still frames of the motion picture reel look like action as a metaphor for the process of conceptualization. This beautifully demonstrates the mind's inference of motion, and more importantly the innate, intuitive power of inference. Without this power we would never have been able to see the dynamic's which underly the still frames of recorded events. Again, I swear I never saw that Bergson movie, "The Cinematographic Mechanism of Thought" in Creative Evolution, before I made my movie metaphor in a book I wrote back a few years ago.

I used the cinematic metaphor to juxtapose the nonmaterial, subjective roll of images, which I called the “reel” world, with the material, objective “real” world it represents. At the time I thought the homonym ‘real and reel’ was fetching. That may not be what sparked Bergson’s movie metaphor. Whatever else it was it was synchronicity across space and time and what I call cognitive consonance which is as real as it is reel.

There is something innate that creates conceptual tools before and beyond actual tools to deal with what Whitehead called thinking about the “incessant activity” of our invisible universe. We learn from Protagoras, Whitehead, Bergson and others in the conga line, that scientific conceptual tools are no sharper than philosophical metaphors, when it comes to cutting into abstractions.

Bergson demonstrates the unreality of scientific analysis by highlighting the contradiction between the growth of complexity right alongside the so-called evolutionary progress in Darwinism. If survival is the endpoint of evolutionary development, simplicity would have been much more efficient than complexity.

Though not the first to decry static materialist concept of reality, Bergson is the most influential. According to Bergson, scientific materialism is like a grammar that only recognizes nouns; reality is a verb, an “action word” which is ever changing. With only our perceived discontinuous images of reality, we would be blind to the fluid continuity of the surreal. This idea flowed freely between Whitehead and Bergson.

For Bergson consciousness, which includes “intuition,” uses the brain and not the other way around. Bergson does not wish to fall into the crack between empiricism and rationalism, empiricists being blind to the unity of consciousness and rationalists being blind to the complexity of psychological events.

Unity and multiplicity are not either/or. With Bergson’s dynamic realization of “duration,” we can have both and move from one to the other in no time at all. Bergson has to unify his dichotomies in order to justify both heterogeneity and continuity. Bergson’s unity in multiplicity is just beyond the cutting edge of the intellect, where the loom of intuition entwines the separate strands of consciousness. Free will to act is innate to human existence (Matter and Memory). That means that not every fabric of consciousness has the same weave.

For Bergson, ‘intellect,’ unlike ‘intuition,’ atomizes the material world; the particles of that atomization have to become waves for the metaphysical world; both are real. For Bergson, ‘intuition’ and metaphysics are part of mind and

coexist with the lower layer, day to day intellect. Intellect is the mind adapting itself to the atomization of reality, particularized for measures and communication. Intellect alone will never get you to any understanding; understanding is beyond the lift off point in the reason runway. You have to lift off to experience the coign of vantage afforded by that superstate "Intuition." We can go from intuition to intellectual analysis but not back the other way; we can never arrive at intuition from intellectual analysis.

The function of the 'intellect' is to oversee action (behavior) in the material world. Some willful action breaks through boundaries of intellect and expands consciousness. Bergson would have this expanding consciousness expand to intuition and he says the potential for that expansion is innate. Bergson would agree, then, with our belief that everyone is born with everything they need for self inflation and hypersubjectivity, all of which comes wrapped in will power which anyone is free to unwrap or not.

Like many in our conga line, Bergson ran afoul of dogma and organized religion. The creationist faction of the Catholic Church, ignoring the word "creative" and alarmed by the word "evolution," condemned Bergson's philosophy. If spiritualism were the aim of religion, instead of condemning, they should applaud Bergson's creative evolution.

I have already pointed out that Bergson's God is not all powerful; in fact he is a needy God, looking for love like we are; this comports with "process metaphysics" and also with the Jame's God who needs us as much as we need him. Bergson believes that God gave us human creativity so that he would have fellow creators for his love.

I am happy to have discovered Bergson. He is a key TAP in our conga line. There is, however, a wrinkle in our relationship. He says that we are all born with a Platonic delusion. The assumption that there is a pre-existing other world of Ideal Forms is natural, but, nevertheless delusional. Bergson believes that Platonists are blinded by the human compunction to stabilize reality into understandable digestible mouthfuls. The real untamed flux is unacceptable to the low minds which need the stasis of heavenly perfection, the ideal Platonic Forms. Bergson relies on the fact that the low mind needs help from the high mind which is more flexible, more courageous and able to contemplate the flux. This high mind, which he calls intuition, is "inborn." I can hear Plato almost shouting: "isn't that the very a-priori instinct you said was delusional?"

I would invoke Wittgenstein here to break up the fight and demonstrate that the problem is not philosophical but semantic, which would offend both Plato and Bergson. Like any good compromise it offends both parties, but in the end

brings them together, which is great, because I don't see how Bergson can have Bergson's mobility without Plato's stability, and I don't see how Plato could get to his stability without Bergson's mobility. I am sure that Plato would welcome Bergson's flowing river into his constant, static riverbed. And I welcome both into the flowing but eternally static conga line.

Bergson's newer ideas in his last major works, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, and a collection of his essays, The Creative Mind, appeared in 1934. According to some Bergson scholars these ideas move closer to the Platonism which he challenged in his earlier works, and also closer to spiritualism and even Christianity.

As we have seen earlier, it makes no sense to say there is nothing beyond what we can see and touch. There is always more to know. Where does that "more" come from and where does your "intuition" come from? What is it that change continuously alters? It is natural for you not to know; it is a painful mistake for you not to believe.

Plato aside I feel sure Bergson would approve of our self inflation and floating to where we can see beyond the flipping pages of the calendar, like the stills in the nickelodeon movie, and glimpse the energy flow of eternity, beyond the day to day passage of time. That is the most creative, and at the same time realistic, conception of the immortality node of all the metaphysical triads, but still in line with our conga.

In Creative Evolution, Bergson adds picture puzzles to his store of metaphors. The puzzle picture is conceived and painted by an artist and then cut up to be put together by a child. The child putting together the pieces of a puzzle has a pre-existing whole picture, but the artist painting the picture relies on the unfolding of some inner inspiration from another realm; there is no pre-existing picture for the artist to copy. What the child is doing is intellectual; what the artist is doing is intuitive and metaphysical. This is exactly the argument Penrose used to distinguish the artificial intelligence of a computer from human intelligence. (I don't know whether Penrose knows Bergson.)

Both the Bergson and Penrose distinctions sound Platonic to me. Plato would say that the creative, but nevertheless fallible, human consciousness has access to the perfection of the divine Forms, but that "access" does not include a complete vision of the divine perfection.

Penrose, as we know, believes that eventually human intelligence will know it all. Like so many of our modern philosophers, Bergson does not believe that progress is guaranteed by any Fichtian/Hegelian wheel of fortune. I must point

out, once again, that they are riding on the very wheel they are trying to replace. Both Bergson's and Penrose's ideas can be seen as "anti-thesis" to a "thesis," about to become a "synthesis." They both need the wheel of creative evolution; the one they are trying to remove.

Bergson continually comes up with anti-theses to form new syntheses. For instance, he looks at the conflicting views of relativism and determinism and finds fault with both. Relativism is dazzled by the multiplicity of points and determinism is blinded by the line of points. Relativism is a river without banks; determinism is banks without a river. Both these paths, separately taken, Bergson says, lead to an eternity of death rather than life.

Only by inverting our philosophical mind, according to Bergson, can we transcend the immobility of idealism and see a mobile dynamic reality of ever changing tendencies, a river which never freezes.

Creative Evolution appeared in 1907 and was translated into English by Bertrand Russell, who initially objected that Bergson would turn humanity into a hive of bees with his notion of intuition. Eventually Russell was forced to admit that Bergson floats up beyond the paradox of idealism/pragmatism fostered by traditional philosophical classification.

As I said earlier, for Bergson the mind is more than gray matter. Bergson would be pleased to know that since his death, neuroscience has been forced to consider a more "creative evolution." Dr Hammeroff's discovery of subatomic particles (tubules, mentioned earlier) of the brain cell has mystified even the likes of Roger Penrose.

Bergson's super consciousness, which is beyond the intellect's intuition," moves with the rhythm of our conga line: with Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic thinking, Scheler's value-captions and Royce's intuition and, of course, all of which, without a stretch, can be tied into Leibniz monads and Descartes' *res cogitans* and then all the way back to Plato's ideal realm..

I believe Bergson's epistemology is neoplatonic; so is his psychology. Bergson's psychology is a 'physio' and a 'socio' scientific staircase to spiritualism. Mind has images of its own body from the outside reflections coming from other minds and another set from inside sensations. Putting together what I think of myself and what others think of me, is a life long pursuit which accounts for the level of development of the individual and the community in which the individual is nested. Bergson's addition of the community effect harkens back or forward (not sure which) to the "American Cambridge circle" of James, Royce and Whitehead. Bergson came to America and must have known about what I have

dubbed the 'American Cambridge circle,' and the importance they placed on community and its effects on the mystic interior consciousness.

Memory itself, according to Bergson, is divided into pure memory, which is more conceptual recall, but still coordinated with current mental activity, and habit or muscle memory. None of these non material energies can be isolated to specific neurons. Bergson's consciousness is beyond spatial coordinates but not beyond temporal understanding. Bergsonian consciousness still takes time; a sense of time and temporal sequence is essential to understanding, according to Bergson. Understanding is deeper and broader than pure intellect. Cultures which have not clearly marked the lift off point in the reason runway are not happy places. Closed societies are dominated by pure intellect, which suppresses the mystical. Mystics are creators who struggle to escape survival strife; (like Schopenhauer's genius and Fichte's absolute "I"). These mystics, Bergson believes, will eventually find the lift off point and create open societies.

I see Bergson's super creative consciousness as hypersubjectivity; his instinct to expand, as self inflation. On my own I could not find the words to describe this connection. I needed Bergson's lift off point on the intellectual runway, where measurements and classifications exist **only** for heuristic communication purposes. I am still challenged to find the heuristics to communicate beyond the lift off point, but Bergson tells us this can *evolve creatively*

Bergson's international fame expanded after his delivery of the Gifford Lecture at Edinburgh University in Scotland (where James and Royce reshaped pragmatism). At around that time, the Solvay Conferences met in Brussels not far from France, to explore blank spots in the new science. According to Merleau-Ponty, Bergson debated Einstein regarding a "crisis of reason." (Bergson published his reflections on Einstein as *Duration and Simultaneity - Mélanges*). His new two lane bridge to the *soft place* made Bergson a *rock star*.

In 1928, twenty years after Creative Evolution, Bergson was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature by default. The Nobel Prize committee could not find any worthy recipient in 1927 and so awarded it to Bergson one year later, for no particular work, just for the brilliant way he presented his new ideas.

In World War I, the French government sent Bergson to the United-States to bring his philosophy to Wilson's new international politics. He met President Wilson and apparently they got along well enough for him to stay and help form the "League of Nations," (The League of Nations remained in existence until 1946, when it was replaced by the United Nations.)

Henri Bergson was one of the most famous French philosophers that I never heard of, famous for applying philosophy to science and international relations, but more famous for connecting individual freedom and spirituality.

Before Bergson's lecture at Columbia University, entitled "Spirituality and Liberty," the New York Times published a long article on him which generated the very first traffic jam in the history of Broadway, and, I might add, the last and only traffic jam ever caused by a philosopher.

Bergson died on January 3, 1941 at the age of 81. World War II had of course already begun, and he must have witnessed Germany, occupying France. I can only imagine what he thought.

Bergson's God is always changing (Two Sources of Morality and Religion); don't ask me from what to what; God only knows. One is left to guess at just what this meant for his high mind and how it would justify his earlier belief in an almost pantheist, Spinozan God. There is a rumor that, like Wittgenstein, Bergson was yet another Jewish intellectual who converted to Catholicism near the end of his life; as did Scheler. Who is Scheler?

Scheler

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1874 –1928)

Scheler, Schiller, Schelling, Schopenhauer; is not only fun to pronounce, but would make for a sublime harmony were they to sing quartets at the Wirtshuas, in Jena. The audience would recognize three of the quartet, no doubt; the university at Jena was named after Schiller and everyone knows Schelling and Schopenhauer, so who is this fourth voice, Scheler?

Max F Scheler was added to the quartet and the conga line, not only because of the alliterative tickle his name brought to German idealism, and not only because he taught, with Fichte, Hegel, and Goethe, at Jena, the cradle of the German enlightenment, but also because he uses phenomenology as a stepping stone to our kind of uniquely Christian metaphysics. (We will learn more about phenomenology, as such in the chapter on Husserl.)_

Like Wittgenstein, Scheler was a German Jew who embraced Catholicism, and like Wittgenstein, Scheler was lesser known than some members of his fan club, which included William James, Husserl, Heidegger and Ortega y Gasset; this later fan hailed Scheler as the “Adam of the philosophical paradise.”

The fact that most people never heard of Scheler is due in part to the fact that, like Husserl, he happened to be Jewish, in his prime at the wrong time; the Nazis would not allow him to teach or publish for the decades that they dominated. Despite the fact that he was banned from universities he continued to profess against the Nazis in hotel rooms rented by his close friend Dietrich von Hildebrand. It was also at this time that Scheler became co-editor, along with Husserl, of the journal that spread phenomenology around Europe and the world. Prior to the Nazi take over, Husserl had already emerged as the founder’ of phenomenology and then, after and during the Nazi era, Heidegger took over. For a time Scheler continued as the inside man; Scheler saw some flaws in Husserl’s thinking which weighted down phenomenology and kept it from ascending from the mundane to the sublime. Only Scheler saw phenomenology as the runway to a new lift off point. This separated Scheler’s phenomenology from Nazi philosophy and separated Scheler from historical pioneer credit. Of course, Scheler opposed Heidegger’s philosophical exhalation of the Nazi ideology, and that didn’t help. The Nazis shut Scheler down but didn’t shut him up. Scheler continued to philosophize to the few brave souls who could find their way to the hotel rooms where Scheler held forth. You can banish Jewish

intellectuals but you can't keep their ideas from changing the world, even the dogmatic world.

I was surprised to find that Pope John Paul II in 1954, wrote his doctoral thesis on "*An Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing a Christian Ethics on the Basis of the System of Max Scheler*", and later wrote many articles on Scheler's philosophy. I thought that was pretty amazing both for the Pope and Scheler. When's the last time a Catholic pope accepted the ideas of a Jewish mystic? That would have to be Peter and Christ.

Thanks to John Paul II as well as to Scheler's student Edith Stein, many Catholics are able to philosophize and still keep the faith.

Scheler sees the metaphysical triad as being beyond logic or science, or so called objective evidence. The whole point of phenomenology is that the *rock* is different from the *soft place* and there is no such thing as objective evidence in the *soft place*. Phenomenology, if only by implication, must be beyond evidence.

Back in World War I, Scheler saw what no one else could see. He saw the very first demonstration of global consciousness, the very first collective experience shared by *all* of humanity. Without Scheler we would never have realized that it was a horror show that opened the new globe theater [or should I say, the new global audience.]

All of Scheler's 'mind over matter,' contemporaries, having witnessed a collective consciousness, were reinforced in their beliefs. Jung was already publishing with and beyond Freud, in Switzerland and Vienna. Jung's ideas of collective unconsciousness and "synchronicity" must have come from Scheler's global audience idea. Maybe that's where I got the idea of universal consciousness. I have no evidence of these connections, but if you know anything about Scheler's philosophy and Jung's synchronicity, you know that evidence is irrelevant.

The globe theater has now converted to a massive global screen, and the new show also happens to be a horror show, with the same plot: whether tyrants can turn the ignorance of the misguided into a fascinating, new blood bath. And if the real blood spilling out of the screen doesn't keep you in your seat, there is a second feature on the pandemic invasions from inner space.

I wondered whether the new horror show will eclipse consciousness, until I read Scheler. He says the immanence of global tragedy will guide global thinking toward a new desperate search for meaning, which, come to think of it, may have something to do with the magical reappearance our Conga line. That

sounds like divine intervention, which doesn't happen on its own; we have to position our collective consciousness to accept it, by lifting off the reason runway of strategic intelligence and counter intelligence. For Scheler, the experience of the holy or of the absolute is not given through rational proof, but in the counter evidential mode of revelation. A *phenomenology* of religious experience is, for Scheler, a description of the essential "givenness" of revelation. There is no worldly way to prove revelation to anyone who has not had a religious experience. That is not say that only the few are chosen and others are completely left out.

Scheler, like Calvin, three centuries earlier, explains that a human being is by nature a God-seeker. This is not to say that everyone believes that there is a Christian God, but even the atheists are forced to commit religious acts. Their negation of the divine only makes sense in the context of the religious act. In Scheler's own words: "Every finite spirit believes either in a God or in an idol" (GW V, 261) An idol is a finite object that is treated as if it were infinite, as if it were God (GW V, 263). In the act of idolatry, this false God may be wealth, fame or power, etc.. We all have our religion whether it is secular or divine.

[The collected works of Max Scheler are published as *Gesammelte Werke*, abbreviated GW whose volumes each have a roman numeral and then a page number].

Scheler sees different religions as tributaries flowing into the same river. The tributaries may have different pathways but there can be no backwash. No religion can be used to contradict any other religion. Scheler agrees with the Hume/Wittgenstein proposition that beliefs cannot serve as philosophical foils. That is not to say they won't become war cries from time to time. Scheler sees the religious banner disappearing from the battlefield as the understanding of the divine grows. [God I hope he's right.] Acknowledging a genuine religious diversity does not commit one to the view that all religious ideas or beliefs are of the same value, but rather to the realization that there are genuine and irreconcilable differences between them. How we reconcile them will determine whether the future will be one of war or one of peace.

As I write these words the Taliban have promised to stop killing in the name of Allah in Afghanistan, but Putin's Orthodox priests have blessed his massacre of Ukrainians; at the same time Ukrainian priests have bolted from what was once one religion. The Christian banner appears on both bloody battle flags.

The God node of Scheler's metaphysical triad is is a mini-God, like others we have already seen, in that God did not create the world, but allowed it to become. The world, i.e., life-urge, is the realizing factor of spirit and, in allowing the world to become, God makes it possible for goodness to be realized; goodness is 'possible' not inevitable. This creates another paradox which we

have already discussed, but does, at the same time, solve the theodicy paradox. Instead of two Gods we have two ways of looking at the same God, two aspects. So there could be a God coach and a God judge, Whether or not that's one or two is already been shown to be a silly question. Who's counting? The last question is rhetorical. to be asked with a yiddish accent for the full effect.

The God node of Scheler's metaphysical triad seems to have another layer which allows super nature to become nature, which means nature is free to become something entirely unexpected. But where does the power of that freedom come from, and why? This is hazy for me, but then, as I keep forgetting, how can any God definition, Greek or Hebrew, East or West be anything but hazy?

We do, however have a more understandable freedom node in Scheler's metaphysical triad. It could well be considered as derived from Kant's 'categorical imperative.' Scheler's freedom node includes a "basic moral tenor" an innate capacity to obey rules; however, the preordained moral tenor is a challenge not gift. Bad choices are possible for Scheler when a person chooses a lower value over the higher ranking value.

For Scheler the rocky reality show challenge includes finding God, which happens as you discover the deeper spiritual values. Scheler is all about values. As the deeper spiritual values are realized, existence takes on a more meaningful form and ultimately points to the deepest value, the divine.

The notable and substantial differences between Scheler and other phenomenologists come into play in this quest for value. Scheler's value-based metaphysics sets his phenomenology apart from the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger and moves him closer to Merleau-Ponty, to be discussed presently.

Scheler believes that we are naturally attracted to that which is of greater positive value, and tend to move away from, or are repelled by, that which is of lesser or negative value. It's almost as if values have a mass that results in more or less gravitational pull, or better yet, a reverse gravity that results in more or less buoyancy. The preference of certain values to others implies that the internal ranking of values is present in every external experience.

Acts of sacrifice best demonstrate value preferencing. For the sake of "freedom" soldiers give their lives. For the sake of a particular life value such as health, we may sacrifice pleasurable experiences such as an overindulgence of ice-cream. An order of value preferencing is present in every experience great and small,

and every individual possesses such an ordering ability, what Scheler calls “an ethos.”

Scheler agrees with Kant regarding the a-priori back drop which makes rational sense out of sensory phenomena. This allows us to adjust for the deception of perception. Scheler disagrees with Kant as to how values arise out this innate aspect of consciousness. For Scheler values are not formed after the fact as a result of experience and relations with other minds in the culture. Values are given a-priori; they are there before any experience, in the soul. An object of perception such as an oak tree is not only green or large, but also pleasurable, beautiful and magnificent; those values were there before the tree was planted. Objects of experience are bearers of values. The value an object bears is given intuitively through a type of “valueception.” We “see” the beauty of a painting just as we “see” its colors. The grasping of value is our most original and primordial relation to the world. An object has value for us before it is perceived or known. Scheler suggest that our innate values are ranked in an ascending order: pleasure, utility, vitality, culture, and holiness.

For Scheler Philosophy begins and ends with love. Scheler describes the essence of philosophical thinking as "*a love-determined movement of the inmost personal self of a finite being toward participation in the essential reality of all possibles.*""*a loving act of participation by the core of the human being in the essence of all things*" (GW V, 68).

This places Scheler solidly in our conga line; the fact that he ties this basic essence, love, back to Plato, puts him at the front of our conga line. Furthermore Scheler justifies the vagueness of our *soft place*. Scheler insists that this realm of existence is not “objectifiable,” and so cannot be expected to be explained by the worldly tools of human knowledge, which is not to say that it has no effect.

Practical knowledge, the mastery of skills required to survive on the *rock* world, is only the first of three types of knowledge. In addition to practical knowledge, Scheler describes two other types: erudition (*Bildungswissen*) where philosophical knowledge abides, and knowledge of revelation. This last type is akin to the notion of super consciousness.

Practical knowledge is motivated by physical pain or fear of error, erudition is motivated by wonder, and the higher knowledge of revelation can only be described as awe. This explains why the philosopher lives in reverence of the world, and in astonishment of the world’s inexhaustible depth and secrets. I’m sure Scheler’s philosopher category was not meant for only Phd’s and would

include all amateur philosophers like myself or anyone who wonders in awe at love.

We have seen the layering of knowledge almost everywhere in the conga line, Bergson, Whitehead, Kant, Spinoza, Schopenhauer, to name a few, and of course Plato. Nevertheless, Scheler's layer cake is the most delectable, the easiest to swallow and good for the heart. [As I wondered whether Scheler would agree that 'practical knowledge' might also be rooted in love, a chef on my wife's TV in the next room explained that the basic ingredient of a great recipe was 'love.']

Like Plato, Scheler would distinguish the philosophical love '*agape*' from the erotic love, which is driven by "a lack." Sex has become lackluster for me as I realized, with Scheler, that lust was driven by a lack that can never be filled from the outside. It took a long time for feminine beauty to become something I admire rather than something I had to conquer.

Scheler's Christian *agape* defines love as giving, rather than taking. Love spills over into and streams out of objects of any kind, of its own accord, without any special effort. Love opens our spiritual eyes. Hate closes them. This comports with the Platonic notion that the only evil is ignorance and also the Augustine and Arendt notion discussed earlier where evil (hate) is merely a low love level.

Love is the lift off energy from the reason runway. With this understanding of the relation of love to knowledge, Scheler declares that "knowledge is ultimately from the divine and for the divine" (GW VIII, 211).

Scheler says there is no point where your mind ends and any other begins. The consciousness of oneself as a self and as a person is always experienced within the context of a "member of a totality" (GW II, 510). Every experience, in other words, assumes as background the "experiencing with one another" as well as the responsibility for others and the co-responsibility for the community.

Scheler's "Miteinanderleben" comports with all of the philosophers in the conga line who find connections between all consciousnesses: Husserl's "intersubjectivity;" Royce, James and Whitehead's community, etc.. Scheler demonstrates the positive aspects of this communal energy which connects members of different kinds of groups with various levels of commitment including such things as citizenship where individuals realize their citizenship and become a collective person.

Within the notion of the collective, Scheler describes three different types: the state (or nation), culture (or people) and the church. The main difference

between these three circles is the circumference which determines the radius of responsibility out to the individual member. Every citizen of the state is co-responsible for every other citizen, a limit defined by state or national borders. A culture is demarcated by the borders created by shared values, beliefs, and ideas. These borders are often more expansive than a state, but many different cultures can be found within a state, as well. The church is the most expansive circle. It is the fullest realization of what Scheler calls “the love community” (*Liebesgemeinschaft*). You can, now, see why a Catholic Pope would embrace Scheler.

In the case of the experience of others, there is an affective or emotional understanding of others prior to any intellectual or rational understanding. In *The Nature of Sympathy* (original German title, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* literally means the *Essence and Forms of Sympathy*), Scheler provides a detailed analysis of the different types of shared feelings, which are themselves reducible to loving. We are always wondering what it must be like to be in another’s consciousness; that wonder comes from and leads to love.

The deepest experiences of love for the other reveals the ‘absolute’ or holy value of the other, grasping who the other could be or ought to become. For Scheler, it is possible that another person may know me better than I know myself and he or she may be able to direct me to my ideal way of being.... -.

On a more mundane level, Scheler describes *Psychic Contagion* (*Gefühlansteckung*) a version of what the 60’s hippies called a “contact high,” which is where you walk into a gathering where everyone else is rejoicing, stimulated by circumstances or chemicals, and all of sudden you’re high, as well. I would throw in the yawn syndrome and the audience effect. The yawn syndrome is where some one in the room starts to yawn and somehow every one else starts to yawn. Psychologists call this entrainment. The same is true for applause; the more extreme the audiences reaction to what is on stage the more irresistible it is.

Scheler includes mob violence as one of the syndromes of this overwhelming connection proclivity. We become conscious of having been swept up by this extra-consciousness only after the fact, realizing perhaps that we are already laughing or crying or killing. History is full of examples of this communal energy gone bad, exploited, by tyrants, as with Hitler’s amazing rallies, and KKK lynch mobs.

[And just when I think things are changing for the better I see the Trump mob which stormed the capital ready to support his next presidential run. Scheler helps me to keep hoping and trying to make things better in my own small way.]

Husserl

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1859-1938)

Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl was born in Prossnitz (Moravia). His parents were non-orthodox Jews; Husserl himself and his wife would later convert to Protestantism. The significance of his Jewishness to the German history of phenomenology will become clear after you read the chapter on his pupil Heidegger. For now let's just say the Nazi's removal of Husserl from his perch in the German enlightenment left a blot on the escutcheon of idealism.

Edmund Husserl was the principal founder of phenomenology which influenced all its adjacent disciplines such as linguistics, sociology and cognitive psychology. "Phenomenology" is based on the distinction between noumena and phenomena which we saw in Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Scheler as well as other German Idealists. Phenomenology, as such, is still on the reason 'runway' downstream of the lift off point, but I think you will agree that Husserl's taxi path does lead to lift off.

Husserl's brand of idealism is called 'transcendental phenomenology.' Naturally the word "transcendental" right next to "phenomenology" caught my eye, but the major reason for having Husserl in our conga line is his "intersubjectivity."

As the term indicates, the interior consciousness of subjects are somehow connected by a channel which underlies all communication. Husserl's intersubjectivity channel is an a-priori feature of consciousness, which plunges us into metaphysics, if only by implication. Where does anything "a-priori" come from and why? Husserl does not spend time wading in the paradox puddle; he gets right to the connection point.

In the regular course of interaction we naturally attribute "intention" to the acts of other subjects. Husserl points out that we instinctively put ourselves into the other's shoes. "Transcendental phenomenology" allows the objects of perception, which includes other subjects, to "reconstitute themselves" in consciousness. (*Ideas* (1913). Within consciousness, "moments of matter" and "moment of quality" allow reflection and introspection to become projections of expected experience. Suddenly the perfectly natural process becomes magical and mystical.

By comparing the observed acts of others to our own, the object of perception becomes the subject of connection. The interior engine of self consciousness generates illusions of the exterior consciousness of others, i.e. empathy energy. Husserl's egocentric inner self expects the same of the other inner selves. This belief allows 'A' to ascribe intention to the acts of 'B' "appresentatively," i.e., without having to deploy the mechanism of inference. This empathy then, is an instinctual, 'knee jerk' reaction; so this process is deeper than the powers of inference. It lives in a preconscious "lifeworld."

Each community has its own flavor of "lifeworld", called "homeworld." (*Husserliana*, vol. VI, pp. 126–138, 140–145). It's OK if you can't see the line between 'lifeworld' and 'homeworld.' You can skip ahead, but I will take a bit more time to draw the distinction: 'homeworld' seems to be a child of 'lifeworld.' The important thing is that they are both inborn and precede our interactions with others in general or particular groups of others.

Husserl says: "Lifeworld expectations "predelineate" a "world-horizon" of potential future experiences. This pre-process of inter subjectivity expectation prepares my extra-consciousness for communication before I enter a new room or a new country or new group of any size, or a new culture, or an old culture with which I am familiar.

These propensities underly the development of our language skills and other interpersonal tools, which rest on the system of expectation standards. These expectations follow the "lifeworld" system of intersubjective standards. Some of these standards are restricted to a particular culture or "homeworld." A "homeworld" might be that underlying, collective unconsciousness compact "... on which normal Europeans, normal Hindus, Chinese, etc., agree..."

The "homeworld" is "a priori" in being "unconditionally valid for all subjects and objects, (*Husserliana*, vol. VI, p. 142). Somehow this compact between consciousnesses has borders and yet like an unexplored sea extends to beyond those borders and underlies thoughts wherever minds are thinking. Husserl gives the example of some general concepts on which the thoughts of minds float universally: "... shape, motion, sense-quality" as well as our prescientific notions of "spatiotemporality", "body" and "causality," which are the basic axiomatic conceptions that provide the foundation for our understanding of all particular things (noumena) and specific concepts (phenomena).

In Husserl's view, it is precisely this "subjective-relative lifeworld", or environment, that provides the "grounding soil" of the more objective world of science (*Husserliana*, vol. VI, p. 134). It is for this reason that Husserl can be said to adhere to a version of both "realism" and "idealism" at the same time, a

'pasodoble' that is essential to our conga line, which dances between reason and faith.

In order for me to be able to put myself into someone else's shoes and simulate his (or her) perspective upon the surrounding spatio-temporal world, I cannot but assume that this world coincides with my own, even though the other subject has his/her own egocentric viewpoint. Internal differences aside, for the sunset we are both looking at to exist, we must both believe that we are looking at the same sunset.

Hence, I must presuppose that the spatio-temporal objects forming my own world must exist independently of my subjective perspective; they must, in other words, be conceived of as part of an *objective* reality, whether or not that actually exists.

You will recall my Cartesian paraphrase: "Cogito ergo *sumus*" = I think therefore we are. Neither Husserl nor Descartes agreed in so many words to join "us" in "sumus," but both would agree that "intersubjectivity" (Husserl) makes us all part of "res cogitans" (Descartes), and so it is part of the "homeworld" which is part of our current "Lifeworld".

I'm not sure whether Husserl would call our conga line itself a 'homeworld' or a 'lifeworld,' or both.

Husserl's *Logical Investigations* contains a forceful attack against the labeling of psychologism, the 'know- it-all' ... mono- materialist science of consciousness. He agrees with Plato that this is a human belief system and as such is fallible, and that fallibility implies some absolute, ideal, unknowable truth which lies beyond.

I am enlightened and inspired by Husserl's discovery of the innate preconception power of consciousness which is key to intersubjectivity. It establishes connection as a reason for being, and more importantly, establishes communication as the foundation for the modeling ability of consciousness, which brought us all the way to civilization and maybe beyond.

Heidegger

Martin Heidegger is a German [philosopher](#) best known for contributions to [phenomenology](#), [hermeneutics](#), and [existentialism](#).

In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger addresses the meaning of "being" by considering the question, "what is common to all entities that makes them entities?" Heidegger approaches this question through an analysis of *Dasein*, his term for the specific type of being that humans possess, and which he associates closely with his concept of "being-in-the-world" (*In-der-Welt-sein*). In everyday German, "Dasein" means "existence." It is composed of "Da" (here/there) and "Sein" (being). *Dasein* leaves room for choice. However, *Dasein* cannot choose to deny the freedom to choose or the inevitability of its own mortality. It's as though we're dropped into a vast ocean, we can choose to swim in any of a number of directions or sink, but we can't choose not to be in the water. Heidegger refers to this condition as being "thrown into the world", or "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*). The need for *Dasein* to accept this state is the same as the need to be responsible for one's own existence; this is the basis of Heidegger's notions of authenticity and resoluteness.

Zuhanden, Vorhanden and *Dasein*

Heidegger thought that the realization of objects for us subject is **not in their being, but in their utility. Zuhanden -readiness-to-hand-**, in which the distinction between subject and object is blurred, is one of three modes of Being that Heidegger identified – the others being **Vorhanden -presence-at-hand-**, for things that are there but not in hand, i.e around but not being used at the moment, and **Dasein** -all of it put together- the whole idea of "being as". 'Readiness to hand' is like when a hammer is used to knock in a nail, we do not attend to the hammer in itself but are aware of it only as a "ready-to-hand" extension of ourselves to achieve a future result: the knocking in of the nail. "Presence-at-hand" would be the screw driver which is available but not useful with the nail at hand.

in Heidegger's philosophy, all **experience is grounded in Sorge**, which means the **anxiety** or worry-fulness arising out of concern **about the future**—referring to the inner state of being as well as external causality of that being. Heidegger also employs two cognates of *Sorge*: *Besorgen*, the provision of something for oneself or someone else; and *Fursorge*, the solicitude or caring for another in need of help. This thicket of meaning around care/concern is the basis of Heidegger's "existential analytic", as he develops it in *Being and Time*

Augustine's *Confessions* was particularly influential in shaping Heidegger's thought. Augustine viewed time as relative and subjective; that makes being and time bound up together. Heidegger adopted similar views, e.g. that time was the horizon of Being: '...time temporalizes itself only as long as there are human beings. (I believe this relates to the "time-blindness" described in my book *Saltafide*, Ciampa, 2020). It would seem that 'Being' would be much more apparent with the time-blindness off.

Heidegger's concepts of anxiety (*Angst*) and mortality draw on Kierkegaard and are indebted to the way in which the latter lays out the importance of our subjective relation to truth, our existence in the face of death, the temporality of existence, and the importance of passionate affirmation of one's individual *being-in-the-world*.

Heidegger sees poetry and technology as two contrasting ways of "revealing." Poetry reveals being in the way in which it commences something new. Revelation which is the result of high minded literature and/or philosophy is essential, in the sense that it is an essence of being, but is it 'useful?'

What is the difference between "being" and "being useful." Modern man would be hard put to make that distinction. Every thing is useful and even if it is useless at the moment it may come to be useful later on.

The essence of modern technology is the conversion of the whole universe of beings into an undifferentiated "standing reserve" (*Bestand*) of energy available for any use to which humans choose to put it. Heidegger described the essence of modern technology as *Gestell*, or "enframing." He does not unequivocally condemn technology: while he acknowledges that modern technology contains grave dangers, Heidegger nevertheless also argues that it may constitute **a chance for human beings to enter a new epoch in their relation to being.**

In late 1946, as France engaged in *épuration légale* in its *Occupation zone*, the French military authorities determined that Heidegger should be blocked from teaching or participating in any university activities because of his association with the Nazi Party. The *denazification* procedures against Heidegger continued until March 1949 when he was finally pronounced a *Mitläufer* (the second lowest of five categories of "incrimination" by association with the Nazi regime).

Hanna Arendt called Heidegger a "potential murderer." However, she later recanted her accusation, and more than that, actually rescued Heidegger from punishment for his Nazism. An eminent philosopher herself who happened to be Jewish, did not believe that evil existed as such, but was merely a negative level of love or "banality" as she called it. The thought that these two were ever

soulmates is hard to swallow. Alan Ryan sums up the Heidegger/ Arendt affair in a 1996 *New York Review of Books* essay:

“She was a Jew who fled Germany in August 1933, a few months after Hitler’s assumption of power. He was elected Rector of the University of Freiburg in the spring of 1933, and in a notorious inaugural address hailed the presence of the brown-shirted storm-troopers in his audience, claimed that Hitler would restore the German people to spiritual health, and ended by giving the familiar stiff-armed Nazi salute to cries of “Sieg Heil.”

Arendt went on to write *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, in which she used the phrase “banality of evil” for the Nazi functionary on trial at Nuremberg. Heidegger refused to discuss his collaboration publicly and “remained silent about the extermination of the Jews, about the terrorism of Hitler’s regime.” But as we’ve learned from his recently published journals, *the so-called Black Notebooks*, he was privately a “convinced Nazi,” as *Peter Gordon observes*, who “did not awaken from his philosophical-political fantasies. They only grew more extreme.”

But indeed, Arendt and Heidegger were in love, during an affair that began when she was an 18-year-old student of this married 36-year-old professor. Their letters show an illicit relationship developing from caution to infatuation.

But both of them knew the relationship could not last, and Heidegger suggested that moving on from him would be in her best interest as a young scholar. In 1929, Arendt met and became engaged to a German journalist and classmate in Heidegger’s seminar. She sent her professor a note on her wedding day which begins, “Do not forget me, and do not forget how much and how deeply I know that our love has become the blessing of my life.”

Before his Nazi appointment, Arendt wrote to her former lover and mentor in 1932 or 33 upon hearing rumors “about Heidegger’s sympathy with National Socialism.” (Her letter has been lost.) He replied with a number of excuses for specific acts—such as refusing to supervise Jewish students---and assured her of his feelings, but “nowhere in the letter is there any denial of Nazi sympathies,” writes Adam Kirsch at *The New Yorker*. The two met after the war in Freiburg, and *Heidegger later sent Arendt a passionate, poetic letter* in 1950, extolling the “exciting, still almost unspoken understanding” between them, “emerging from an affinity that was created so quickly, that comes from so far away, that has not been shaken by evil and confusion.”

Later, in a 1969 birthday tribute essay “*Martin Heidegger at Eighty*,” Arendt penned what has generally been taken as an exoneration of Heidegger. In it, she “compared Heidegger to Thales,” writes Gordon, “the ancient philosopher who

grew so absorbed in contemplating the heavens that he stumbled into the well at his feet.” The truth is quite a bit more complicated than that, and quite a bit less lofty. But as [Maria Popova](#) eloquently writes, their relationship “exposes the complexity and contradiction of which the human spirit is woven, its threads nowhere more ragged than in love.”

Heidegger died on 26 May 1976. A few months before his death, he met with Bernhard Welte, a Catholic priest. The exact nature of their conversation is not known, but what is known is that it included talk of Heidegger's relationship to the Catholic Church and subsequent Christian burial at which the priest officiated

Heidegger

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1889–1976)

I had trouble reading Being and Time; the book is a maze of invented terms which could have been simple everyday words. And so I turned to the audio book and listened for hours, hoping that the dynamics of the reader's voice would shed some light on the shadowy shibboleths. Shibboleth is Hebrew password designed to exclude Phillistines, who for some reason were unable to pronounce all the syllables in the word. My use of shibboleth in describing Martin Heidegger's terminology may appear extreme, but I believe it is apt. I thought it important enough to attempt a translation of his shibboleths for us phillistines, without aiming up or down.

Heidegger and many of his ilk were not trying to reach the broader audience; in fact it seems they were trying, consciously, to exclude them. Kant, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer for example seem to want to be misunderstood by the commoner. It's as though the need to be extraordinary could only be satisfied by exceeding and excluding the ordinary. I too have invented terms in this book, but I took care to explain them and make sure they delivered some meaning. I don't believe in 'writing down,' which broadens the audience at the expense of the content, but there ought to be an equal and opposite critical term 'writing

up,' or unnecessarily excluding audience. If you're still reading, maybe I've hit the middle course, writing across.

It was not only Heidegger's idea to make philosophy and phenomenology an exclusive club. For eons there was an underlying mistrust of ordinary minds. Even Platonists are elitists and most philosophers were Platonists. But Plato also gave us Meno, where Socrates demonstrates that an ignorant slave boy has the innate ability to understand geometry. Plato would agree that the misguided are to be guided not misled. That is the distinction between "guardians" and "sophists." It took a while for Heidegger to see the difference.

In addition to his shibboleths, there is other evidence that Heidegger was an elitist. He enthusiastically embraced the top down structure of Naziism. In 1933, Heidegger joined the Nazi Party. There is evidence that Heidegger was not just a token Nazi; he gave a number of public speeches praising Hitler and the Nazi movement, which had a lot to do with his new position as Rector of Freiburg University. By then, Husserl was not even allowed to visit his university, because he was a Jew. Eventually Heidegger developed doubts about the Nazis, which does not appear to have anything to do with the persecution of the Jews.

Heidegger in addition to his praise of the Nazism also wrote *Contribution*, dethroning the Nazi leaders as false gods. According to Heidegger they became incapable of completing the historic mission of the exaltation of the German people.

In 1919, Heidegger became Husserl's assistant at Freiberg university where he had the greatest respect for his mentor while making a substantial contribution to the ideas they shared. In fact, Being and Time was dedicated to Husserl, "in friendship and admiration." I could find no evidence that Heidegger ever formerly denounced his mentor Husserl; nor could I find any evidence that he ever tried to help soften the effects of his exile.

After the war the tables turned. Heidegger's Nazi record had him banned from teaching until his former student and lover Hanna Arendt, mentioned earlier, a persecuted German Jew, made a plea on his behalf, which surprised both Semites and anti-Semites, and got Heidegger off the hook. I have spent some time looking into this strange love story, since Arendt is one of my favorite writers; there's enough there for another book, which would show in the end that her rescue of Heidegger was prompted by philosophical rather than romantic motives. She was long over her puppy love with her teacher and was a well established American intellectual, who needed to preserve what she thought was Heidegger's important contribution to Western philosophy.

Heidegger connects different modes of being in and beyond time. He creates a powerful amalgam of ideas and ideals from Aristotle, Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Husserl. In addition to Heidegger's reshaping phenomenology and existentialism, he made a substantial contribution to metaphysics. Heidegger became interested in metaphysics from its very source, namely Aristotle's quest to unify all possible modes of Being, or 'is-ness', as seen in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: 'Heidegger translated this to *dasein*, a German word which literally means "being there."

Heidegger influenced modern European thought including Sartre's existentialism. His Platonic interest in the very nature of existence and what it means to exist is a restatement of ontology, (the study of being), which reaches from his own complex critical relationship with Husserl's transcendental phenomenology all the way back to metaphysics in Aristotle and Plato.

Heidegger's simple addition of two letters to "being" is what it's all about; the two letter word is "as." *Being as*— is different from all the ontology that had gone before and different from all the phenomenology before and after, in that these two little letters, which contextualize perception, also create a reason for existence. Through Heidegger's eyes, when we look at a boat, we see a boat—"as" something in which one can sail or a god *as someone* that one should worship. All objects are tools for our subjectivity and as such always occur in context. Thus a driver does not encounter a punctured tire as a lump of rubber of measurable mass; she encounters it **as** a damaged equipment, that is, the cause of her interrupted journey.

What we 'first' hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking wagon, the motor-cycle. It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to 'hear' the wave form and frequency of a 'pure noise.' The fact that motor-cycles and wagons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence of Dasein, which Heidegger calls "Being-in-the-world."

In a blizzard of different special terms, Heidegger points out that it is in our nature to confuse, or blend, the the inside and outside realms. Common parlance miss-uses external terms for internal phenomena and vice versa. We talk of being in a mood rather than a mood being in us. This leads to the misconception that these moods are external, rather than internal, states. A mood "comes neither from 'outside' nor from 'inside', but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such being" (*Being and Time* 29: 176).

Heidegger's interior has phases like the layers of knowledge we have seen in other epistemologies. Heidegger's layers are *understanding, speech and mood*.

“Speech’ includes all social interaction not just words.

‘Mood’ is affected by what we think is happening now and by ‘angst’ about what might happen next.

‘Understanding’ our existence is fraught with difficulties especially our refusal to ‘let it be’ - as the sixties hippy anthem advised. ‘Letting it be’ refers to keeping our hands off of being and not forcing it to be useful. “Go with the flow” is another hippy bromide. The flow leads to depths of understanding that most of us turn our backs on.

Does the table that I think I see before me exist? Does God exist? Does mind exist, as an entity distinct from body? We who ask these questions take for granted that we already know what it means ‘to exist,’ but Heidegger insists that we don’t; we have to drill down beneath that presupposition and consider what it means ‘to exist’?

According to Heidegger, the question of the meaning of Being has been forgotten by Western philosophy from Plato onwards. So Heidegger sets himself the task of recovering the question of the meaning of Being, a pretty tall order.

“To Be or Not to Be” that is the ‘existential’ question. Only humans can think about what it means to be, to exist. If we look around at beings in general, from particles to planets, ants to apes, it is *human* beings *alone* who are able to question the meaning of existence.

I am trying to skip the shibboleths in the scholarly scrabble game of terms, but it would be a big mistake to skip “ontics” the route of ontology. At the risk of oversimplification, all the the different forms of being relate to interaction between objects and subjects. Heidegger makes the point that one’s being does not exist on its own; one is a son or a mother or a banker or a red sox fan or an American or a Republican, etc.. These associations are part of being, being for others. Dasein (and so human beings as such) possess this depth of understanding whether they like it or not: it is a necessary characteristic of human beings, or should we say, an a- priori structure of our existential constitution, that underlies and is beyond any exercise of the will. We can choose what we do but not what we **are**.

We can try to ignore this depth of self understanding, but that would be to construct a ‘fallen’ false self, which is very prevalent amongst humans, but not inevitable. We choose to sink or float. If we say we’re born losers, we’re kidding ourselves. Heidegger says: we cannot be authentic low lives; we cannot tell the truth about our lack of altitude to ourselves or anyone else. We can never tell the

truth about being a low life and a liar. This is a classic conundrum. The utterance belies itself. This means that you have to lie to yourself to stay stuck in your TV chair: all the while you're spinning instead of resting and you have to reach for someone or something to stop the spin, but we remain haunted and "inauthentic." In Heidegger's book we are ultimately each to blame for our own inauthenticity.

Communication, with all the pouting and doubting and shouting, is ineluctable because we are eternal seekers.

Human consciousness has an inborn a-priori metaphysical component, which includes the search for meaning. We are always, on some level, even if unconscious, wondering what does it all mean. Even if you are a skeptic, finding a dark meaning is better than no meaning, if only because it buys you another day to live and procreate the species, if that is all you are here to do. The search for meaning is like rolling a heavy rock up a steep hill, you have to keep going, or be crushed, as in Camu's Sisyphian myth. Heidegger agrees with our basic proposition that there has to be some point to life in order to keep going. Life has to mean something more than making shit out of groceries. Ascribing meaning to existence necessarily involves some concern and/or conjecture about non-existence. "To be or not to be" ends with "not to be," which brings a pointless life to a pointless end.

Even for those who manage to "Let it be," looking down the road to the end is blinding. Death is incomprehensible. It is all but impossible for us to think about death. Heidegger's insight into this blind spot is quite unique, and adds an opacity to the lens through which we view one of the nodes in our metaphysical triad: immortality. Dasein understands death only through experiencing the death of others, which is bogus, in the original meaning of the word.

We mourn the dear departed and miss their presence in the world, but that mourning does not translate to understanding what it would be like to be dead. Death does indeed reveal itself as a loss, but a loss to the living who still have no idea what loss the deceased felt. (And I would add: maybe no loss; maybe a gain.) The dying of Others is not something which we experience in a genuine sense; at most we are always just 'there alongside'. (*Being and Time* 47: 282)

While Dasein may offer no final explanation of death, Heidegger believes that an understanding of Dasein's relation to death sheds some light on both Dasein and death. Death will always be something that happens elsewhere to someone else. Nevertheless, when I contemplate my own 'not-being', it brings into focus my own 'being-able-to-be.' Hence my awareness of my own death as an omnipresent possibility discloses the authentic self. The contemplation of my

own death makes me feel glad to be alive, even though my own death is still unimaginable.

The corollary of this inborn myopia is alienation where I cannot imagine a world without me in it, and this suddenly and always makes me feel that it's not my world; I'm not at home in this world. Alienation is part of the existential anxiety. (*Being and Time* 53: 310). This is why we need each other, 'Mitsein.' This comports with and provides a much deeper foundation for communication than other philosophies in the conga line.

Sartre adds a twist to Heidegger's 'Mitsein' (being together) in that the impression of me held by the other person is purely subjective and so I can make the other's perception of me supportive or suffer it as negative; it is entirely up to me. This gives me power over others as well as power to sink myself with self doubt.

Sartre disagrees with one aspect of Heidegger's death view. Sartre points out that just as death cannot be actual for me, it cannot be one of my possibilities either, as Heidegger intends it to be. If Sartre is right, thinking about death is not what makes me feel alive. Not caring about death is what makes me feel alive and courageous enough to act. Action and will are based on not caring about death, rather than accepting it. This seems at first to be a distinction without a difference, but I will leave that for you to decide.

Sartre's belief in the importance of individual responsibility, condones freedom, one of the metaphysical nodes. It is, according to Sartre "bad faith" to try to avoid the fact that you always have a choice. For there to be "bad faith" there must be "good faith." Unfortunately there is no place for good faith in Sartre's existentialism, and that in my humble opinion is his blind spot. Existentialist like Sartre, according to Heidegger, avoid the painful viewing of the sun by burying their heads in the sand, but the sun still burns down and blisters their back sides.

You may wonder why Sartre was not invited to the conga line. John Paul Sartre is a follower of Heidegger, but he does not follow the deep layer of Heidegger's "understanding." Nevertheless he was an anti-materialist and a follower of Descartes. Sartre renamed the Cartesian duality, mind/ matter as "being for itself" (*soft place*) and "being in itself" (*rock*).

Sartre separated subjects and objects, mind and matter and then connects subject to subjects in "being for others." But Sartre would not go so far as to connect consciousness to anything metaphysical, which is an obvious loose end. I think Sartre's metaphysics was truncated by the shock of World War II

and that particular theodicy paradox: how could there be a God who would do this or even let it happen; better to subscribe to Nietzsche and declare God is dead. It was Sartre's refusal to reason about faith that cost him his place in the conga line, even though he is part of my own intellectual awakening,

Heidegger does not dodge the metaphysical triad, but neither does he impose it on others. Others are free to think what they will including divine thoughts. Heidegger asked the question of what it means to "be" but he does not provide an answer. That is because Heidegger believes it's up to us to plumb the depths of Dasein; he believes the depth is there but will not tell us how deep.

Nietzsche

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (15 October 1844 – 25 August 1900) was a German [philosopher](#), [cultural critic](#), [composer](#), [poet](#), and [philologist](#) whose work has exerted a profound influence on [modern intellectual history](#). He began his career as a [classical philologist](#) before turning to philosophy.

After graduation in September 1864,^[44] Nietzsche began studying theology and classical philology at the [University of Bonn](#) in the hope of becoming a minister. After one semester (and to the anger of his mother), he stopped his theological studies and lost his faith.

In 1865, Nietzsche thoroughly studied the works of [Arthur Schopenhauer](#). He owed the awakening of his philosophical interest to reading Schopenhauer's *[The World as Will and Representation](#)*

A belief, held by many, that philosophy brings peace to the mind, if not the soul, seems misapplied to Nietzsche's tortured soul. By 1882, Nietzsche was taking huge doses of [opium](#), but he was still having trouble sleeping. In 1883, while staying in Niece, he was writing out his own prescriptions for the sedative [chloral hydrate](#), signing them "Dr. Nietzsche".

It would be an over simplification to lump Nietzsche in with the modern skeptics. His non material beliefs are actually spiritual although he would not want them nailed to the door of any cathedral. The essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson had a profound influence on Nietzsche, who "loved Emerson from first to last",^[239] he wrote "Never have I felt so much at home in a book", and called him "[the] author who has been richest in ideas in this century so far".^[240] While we see here that Emerson may not have been a typical Christian he was certainly a spiritualist.

Nietzsche "death of God" was not an anti spiritualism; it was just the opposite. The God he deposed was a false God associated with faulty perspectives that lead to the loss of any universal perspective on things, and along with it any coherent sense of [objective truth](#). Nietzsche himself rejected the idea of objective reality, arguing that knowledge is [contingent](#) and conditional, relative to various fluid perspectives or interests. This leads to constant reassessment of rules (i.e., those of philosophy, the scientific method, etc.) according to the circumstances of individual perspectives. This view has acquired the name [perspectivism](#).

For Nietzsche espousing an ideal is more important than the content of the ideal, which may be illusory, which is all right. It seems to be the fervor with which you hold your non truth which is life giving. This would comport with Kierkegaard's core belief that the freely chosen leap of faith is the essence of spiritualism. But Nietzsche would not go so far as to make that leap himself, and certainly not in the direction of Christianity. The idea that one value-system is no more worthy than the next, ascribed to Nietzsche, has become a common premise in modern social science. [Max Weber](#) and [Martin Heidegger](#) absorbed it and made it their own. This immunity of faith to refutation is also supported by the writings of Hume and Wittgenstein.

Beyond Good and Evil, contains Nietzsche's critique of [Kant](#), [Descartes](#) and [Plato](#); the critique attacks the *thing in itself* and *cogito ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am") as [unfalsifiable](#) beliefs based on naive acceptance of previous notions and [fallacies](#).

Nietzsche also attacks Jewish and Christian traditions, as slave morality born out of [ressentiment](#). It was used to overcome the slave's own sense of inferiority before their (better-off) masters. Nietzsche sees slave morality as a source of the nihilism that has overtaken Europe. Modern Europe and Christianity exist in a hypocritical state due to a tension between master and slave morality, both contradictory values determining, to varying degrees, the values of most Europeans (who are "[motley](#)"). Nietzsche calls for exceptional people to no longer be ashamed in the face of a supposed morality-for-all, which he deems to be harmful to the flourishing of exceptional people. He cautions, however, that morality, per se, is not bad; it is good for the masses, and should be left to them. Exceptional people, on the other hand, should follow their own "inner law". A favorite motto of Nietzsche, taken from [Pindar](#), reads: "Become what you are."

By dividing belief systems in two, Nietzsche becomes an unwitting dualist. There are two moralities, two belief systems and neither of them are true, because there may be no such thing as truth, just belief. This actually comports with what Plato said, only Plato offers the hope that the truth will be available at some point. For Nietzsche there is not such hope. It's all about power. The slave belief system linked the "salvation and future of the human race with the unconditional dominance" of master morality; master morality is "a higher order of values, the noble ones, those that say Yes to life, those that guarantee the future." Just as "there is an order of rank between man and man", there is also an order of rank "between morality and morality." Indeed, Nietzsche waged a philosophic war against the slave morality of Christianity in his "revaluation of all values" in order to bring about the victory of a new master morality that he called the "philosophy of the future" (*Beyond Good and Evil* is subtitled *Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*). It is easy to see how the "master morality" could

become a banner belief for Hitler's master race, and how it could sanction the killing of millions of "slave morality" jews and other inferiors.

The statement "God is dead," occurring in several of Nietzsche's works has become one of Nietzsche's best-known remarks. Most commentators regard Nietzsche as an atheist; others suggest that this statement reflects a more subtle understanding of divinity. The death of God caused by the scientific revolution is the biblical God of wrath. Heidegger interprets the death of God with what he explains as the death of metaphysics. He concludes that metaphysics has reached its potential and that the ultimate fate and downfall of metaphysics was proclaimed with the statement "God is dead," leaving man, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss ...

Nietzsche has the highest regard for Jesus and points out that his followers failed to emulate Jesus: "Christ was the last christian." Judeo/christian beliefs have become hypercritical herd nihilism and pseudo culture. According to Nietzsche, it is only when nihilism is overcome that a culture can have a true foundation. Zarathustra presents the overman as the creator of new values, and he appears as a solution to the problem of the death of God and nihilism. The overman does not follow the morality of common people since that favors mediocrity but instead rises above the notion of **good and evil** and above the "**herd**". He wants a kind of spiritual evolution of self-awareness and overcoming of traditional views on morality and justice that stem from the **superstition** beliefs still deeply rooted or related to the notion of God and Christianity.

In the "will to power" there lies a consciousness which must be connected to basic energy of the universe, but we are not told where that comes from. The energy in in this philosophy outweighs the matter.

Nietzsche does connect to quantum physics in his rejection of **atomism**—the idea that matter is composed of stable, indivisible units (atoms). Instead, he seems to have accepted the conclusions of **Ruđer Bošković**, who explained the qualities of matter as a result of an interplay of forces, which might be said to predict the Higgs field in Physics and the quest for the Unified theory of force fields. His physics includes a mysterious "eternal return" where subjects and objects keep coming back ad infinitum. This takes the conservation of energy rule of the material world out to a spooky scientific spiritualism.

Nietzsche thoroughly criticized metaphysics, and by including the will to power and "eternal return" in the material world, he would simply be setting up a new metaphysics. This writer finds, this philosophy tortured by twists and turns as was its author.

Sartre

Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre (21 June 1905 – 15 April 1980) was a French philosopher, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist, biographer, and literary critic. He was one of the key figures in the philosophy of existentialism and phenomenology, and one of the leading figures in 20th-century French philosophy and Marxism. His work has also influenced sociology, critical theory, post-colonial theory, and literary studies, and continues to influence these disciplines.

Sartre said that human beings have no essence before their existence because there is no Creator. Thus: "existence precedes essence." Atheistic existentialists cannot explain just how the "existence" comes about, and "chance" is not a satisfactory answer. [Remember my mantra: ' If you call the originator of the grand design 'Chance,' all you've done is give God a nickname.'] Despite the fact that this, or any atheistic philosophy, is a chicken with the head cut off. I do embrace the idea of the distinction between existence and essence. It is at the basis of free will and all the choices we make and the rewards and consequences we enjoy and suffer. You have the responsibility of shaping your own essence. That isn't a given. God provides the clay we have shape the pot.

Sartre chose doubt over the leap of faith, chosen by the father of existentialism Kierkegaard and by Heidegger. This was a choice nothing more, an action based on doubt rather than faith, which other existentialists would agree only leads to a life of anxiety and suffering and an after life in the black hole of the impossible "nothing."

Nevertheless, Sartre is an important thinker and the questions he raises are very important, more important than the answers he provides. Sartre's "reel" world of media and its effect on the "real" world of subjects have become more important than ever for the preservation of consciousness in the numbing storm of media. Sartre's book Nausea should be read or re-read by everyone who owns a cell phone and finds themselves spending more time on social media than social immedia. Sartre's caution that the free flux of consciousness can be hardened and free subjects can become block head objects of a tyrannical upper class is more important today than it was when he was writing.

There is no way to discover your true self through media or any one else's thoughts. You can't credit others for you do right; just as you can't blame others for you do wrong. To do so is inauthentic. To believe you have no choice is bad

faith. Sartre maintained that the concepts of authenticity and individuality have to be earned but not learned.

What about immortality? Nothing to say there. But there should be no questions about death. We need to experience "death consciousness" so as to wake up ourselves as to what is really important; the authentic in our lives which is life experience, not knowledge.

Jung

Carl Gustav Jung (26 July 1875 – 6 June 1961) was a Swiss [psychiatrist](#) and [psychoanalyst](#) who founded [analytical psychology](#). Jung's work was influential in the fields of [psychiatry](#), anthropology, archaeology, literature, philosophy, and religious studies. Jung worked as a research scientist at the famous [Burghölzli](#) hospital, under [Eugen Bleuler](#). During this time, he came to the attention of [Sigmund Freud](#), the founder of [psychoanalysis](#). The two men conducted a [lengthy correspondence](#) and collaborated, for a while, on a joint vision of human psychology. Freud saw the younger Jung as the heir he had been seeking to take forward his "new science" of psychoanalysis. However, a painful schism for both men resulted in the establishment of Jung's analytical psychology as a comprehensive system separate from psychoanalysis.

Among the central concepts of analytical psychology is [individuation](#)—the lifelong psychological process of differentiation of the self out of each individual's conscious and unconscious elements. Jung considered it to be the main task of human development. He created some of the best known psychological concepts, including [synchronicity](#), [archetypal phenomena](#), the [collective unconscious](#), the [psychological complex](#), and [extraversion and introversion](#).

Spirituality

Jung's work on himself and his patients convinced him that life has a spiritual purpose beyond material goals. Our main task, he believed, is to discover and fulfill our deep, innate potential. Based on his study of [Christianity](#), [Hinduism](#), [Buddhism](#), [Gnosticism](#), [Taoism](#), and other traditions, Jung believed that this journey of transformation, which he called [individuation](#), is at the mystical heart of all religions. It is a journey to meet the [self](#) and at the same time to meet the [Divine](#). Unlike Freud's objectivist worldview, Jung's [pantheism](#) may have led him to believe that spiritual experience was essential to our well-being, as he specifically identifies individual human life with the universe as a whole.

Interpretation of quantum mechanics

Jung influenced one philosophical interpretation (not the science) of quantum physics with the concept of [synchronicity](#) regarding some events as [non-causal](#). That idea influenced the physicist [Wolfgang Pauli](#).

Russell

Bertrand Arthur William Russell, (3rd Earl) (18 May 1872 – 2 February 1970) was a British [polymath](#), [philosopher](#), [logician](#), [mathematician](#), [historian](#), [writer](#), [social critic](#), [political activist](#), and [Nobel laureate](#). Throughout his life, Russell considered himself a [liberal](#), a [socialist](#) and a [pacifist](#). Russell was born in [Monmouthshire](#) into one of the most prominent [aristocratic](#) families in the United Kingdom.

Russell led the British "revolt against [idealism](#)". He is considered one of the founders of [analytic philosophy](#) along with his predecessor [Gottlob Frege](#), colleague [G. E. Moore](#) and protégé [Ludwig Wittgenstein](#). He is widely held to be one of the 20th century's premier [logicians](#). With [A. N. Whitehead](#) he wrote *Principia Mathematica*, an attempt to create a logical basis for mathematics, the quintessential work of [classical logic](#). His philosophical essay "[On Denoting](#)" has been considered a "[paradigm](#) of philosophy".

In 1950, Russell was awarded the [Nobel Prize in Literature](#) "in recognition of his varied and significant writings in which he champions humanitarian ideals and [freedom of thought](#)".

He met [Vladimir Lenin](#) and had an hour-long conversation with him. In his autobiography, he mentions that he found Lenin disappointing, sensing an "impish cruelty" in him and comparing him to "an opinionated professor". The experience altered his previous tentative support for the revolution.

Russell advocated [The Will to Doubt](#), the recognition that all human knowledge is at most a best guess, that one should always remember: None of our beliefs are quite true; all have at least a penumbra of vagueness and error. The methods of increasing the degree of truth in our beliefs are well known; they consist in hearing all sides, trying to ascertain all the relevant facts, controlling our own bias by discussion with people who have the opposite bias, and cultivating a readiness to discard any hypothesis which has proved inadequate. This is restatement of Plato's idea of human fallibility.

Every man of science whose outlook is truly scientific is ready to admit that what passes for scientific knowledge at the moment is sure to require correction with the progress of discovery; nevertheless, it is near enough to the truth to serve for most practical purposes, though not for all.

Russell described himself in 1947 as an agnostic, saying: "Therefore, in regard to the [Olympic gods](#), speaking to a purely philosophical audience, I would say

that I am an Agnostic. However he made it clear that he was an atheist as to the Olympian Greek gods and the Judaic wrathful god, and even the Christian God.

For most of his adult life, Russell maintained religion to be little more than [superstition](#) and, despite any positive effects, largely harmful to people. He believed that religion and the religious outlook serve to impede knowledge and foster fear and dependency, and to be responsible for much of our world's wars, oppression, and misery. At the age of 29, in February 1901, Russell underwent what he called a "sort of mystic illumination", after witnessing [Whitehead's](#) wife's acute suffering in an [angina](#) attack. "I found myself filled with semi-mystical feelings about beauty ... and with a desire almost as profound as that of the [Buddha](#) to find some philosophy which should make human life endurable." His colleague Whitehead, included in this digest, is one of the more important metaphysicians and his pupil Wittgenstein is responsible for de-flanging rational refutations of spiritualism. And may have turned to Catholicism at the end of his life.

Wittgenstein

Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (26 April 1889 – 29 April 1951) was an Austrian-British philosopher who worked primarily in [logic](#), the [philosophy of mathematics](#), the [philosophy of mind](#), and the [philosophy of language](#). From 1929 to 1947, Wittgenstein taught at the [University of Cambridge](#). During his lifetime he published just one slim book (the 75-page *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1921), and one article ("[Some Remarks on Logical Form](#)", 1929). He was born in [Vienna](#) into one of Europe's richest families; he inherited a fortune from his father in 1913. His father's aim was to turn his sons into captains of industry. They were not sent to school lest they acquire bad habits, but were educated at home to prepare them for work in the family industrial empire. Three of the five brothers would later commit suicide. Johannes Brahms said of the family, whom he visited regularly: "They seemed to act towards one another as if they were at court."

"Music," Wittgenstein said to his friend Drury in 1930, "came to a full stop with [Brahms](#); and even in Brahms I can begin to hear the noise of machinery." Ludwig Wittgenstein himself had [absolute pitch](#), and his devotion to music remained vitally important to him throughout his life; he made frequent use of musical examples and metaphors in his philosophical writings. He was adept enough to whistle lengthy and detailed musical passages. He also learnt to play the [clarinet](#) in his 30s.

There is much debate about the extent to which Wittgenstein and his siblings, who were of 3/4 Jewish descent, saw themselves as Jews. The issue has arisen in particular regarding Wittgenstein's schooldays, because [Adolf Hitler](#) was his classmate in a small Austrian school. Wittgenstein and Hitler were born just six days apart. Hitler had to re-sit his mathematics exam before being allowed into a higher class, while Wittgenstein was moved forward by one, so they ended up two grades apart at the *Realschule*. While he was at the *Realschule*, he lost his faith in [God](#) and became an [atheist](#). He nevertheless believed in the importance of the idea of [confession](#). This would change dramatically later in his life.

Wittgenstein frequently referred to himself as Jewish, at times as part of an apparent self-flagellation. Despite the fact that three of his grandparents were Jewish, Wittgenstein was [baptized](#) and received formal instruction in Catholic doctrine. In an interview, his sister Gretl Stonborough-Wittgenstein says that their grandfather's "strong, severe, partly ascetic [Christianity](#)" was a strong influence on all the Wittgenstein children.

Wittgenstein wanted to study with Frege, but Frege suggested he attend the [University of Cambridge](#) to study under Russell, so on 18 October 1911 Wittgenstein arrived unannounced at Russell's rooms in [Trinity College](#). Russell was having tea with [C. K. Ogden](#), when, according to Russell, "an unknown German appeared. He was soon not only attending Russell's lectures, but dominating them. In addition to Russell, Wittgenstein's Cambridge circle included famous philosophers such as John Maynard Keynes, Karl Popper. Somehow Wittgenstein set himself above these lofty thinkers, and, what is more amazing, got them to agree. The same is true later of his Vienna Circle.

His teacher, [Bertrand Russell](#), described Wittgenstein as "perhaps the most perfect example I have ever known of genius as traditionally conceived; passionate, profound, intense, and dominating". Wittgenstein referred to [Augustine of Hippo](#) in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein would become one of the century's fiercest critics of [scientism](#).

The time he spent in the ineffable, non verbal world of musical ideas must have positioned him to look beyond words, and the semantic quandaries which he quarried like no other philosopher. His philosophy is almost inaccessible due the "slip knot" on which it dangles, the slip knot put there by Wittgenstein himself. I am referring to the fact that the essence of his early work rests on the tautology and inadequacy of words used to convey concepts. Nevertheless that the very concept has to be conveyed by the same inadequate words which appears to be an oxymoron (Wittgenstein calls it "conceptual puzzlement and paradox"). But with further study the deep complexity of how meaning is shared between consciousnesses brings a whole new dimension to language.

His work is often divided into an early period, exemplified by the *Tractatus*, and a later period, articulated in the *Philosophical Investigations*. "[Early Wittgenstein](#)" was concerned with the logical relationship between "propositions" and the world and he believed that by providing an account of the logic underlying this relationship, he had solved all philosophical problems. *Tractatus* was published to considerable interest, first in German in 1921. An aim of the *Tractatus* is to reveal the relationship between language and the world: what can be said about it, and what can only be shown. Wittgenstein argues that the logical structure of language provides the **limits of meaning**. The limits of language, for Wittgenstein, are the limits of philosophy. **Much of philosophy involves attempts to say the unsayable**: "What we can say at all can be said clearly," he argues. Anything beyond that—religion, ethics, aesthetics, the mystical—cannot be discussed. **They are not in themselves nonsensical, but any statement about them must be**. This is an extreme restatement of Plato's often quoted distinction between sublime, ideal "truth" and human "belief"

systems. Wittgenstein may not have thought of himself as a Platonist but this dichotomy between ideal ineffable truth, and human statements (“belief”) about it are certainly Platonic.

Wittgenstein argues that philosophers must leave the frictionless ice and return to the "rough ground" of ordinary language in use. Much of the *Investigations* consists of examples of how the first false steps can be avoided, so that philosophical problems are dissolved, rather than solved: "the clarity we are aiming at is indeed *complete* clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear."

He wrote in the preface of his book: "The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking, or rather—not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought)."

That sentence forces words to go to a mystical, musical field of non verbal meaning. The irony of Wittgenstein is that he went out onto the very edge verbal communication to demonstrate the danger of the precipice, but by dancing on the cliff edge, he, instead demonstrated the transcendent power of verbal communication.

"[Late Wittgenstein](#)", however, rejected many of the assumptions of the *Tractatus*, arguing that the [meaning](#) of words is best understood as their use within a given context or as he called it: [language-game](#).

According to Wittgenstein, philosophical problems arise when language is forced from its proper home into a metaphysical environment, where all the familiar and necessary landmarks and contextual clues are removed. The bewitchments of philosophical problems arise from philosophers' misguided attempts to consider the meaning of words independently of their context, usage, and grammar, what he called "language gone on holiday."

Wittgenstein's religious faith and his relationship with [Christianity](#) and [religion](#), in general would change over time, much like his philosophical ideas. Russell said he returned from the war a changed man, one with a deeply [mystical](#) and [ascetic](#) attitude.

In 1912, Wittgenstein wrote to Russell saying that Mozart and Beethoven were the actual sons of God. However, Wittgenstein resisted formal religion, saying it was hard for him to "bend the knee", though his one Christian grandfather's beliefs continued to influence Wittgenstein—as he famously said, "I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view".

In a book called Notebooks 1914-1916, 2nd Edition, edited notes from Wittgenstein's lectures a unique undisclosed spirituality is revealed, beginning at page 72e. He asks himself what he knows about God. His answer is the most unique tether which he attaches to the spiritual balloon so that it can float around with you, just over your head, in the everyday world. Before I became aware of Wittgenstein's spiritual balloon, I "coincidentally" (there is no such thing as coincidence) used this floating on self inflation in my book *Conga Line of Consciousness*.

Wittgenstein equates the question of God with the search for 'meaning' which is the bane of every rational mind. He explains that meaning cannot be found on the inside, because it lies only on the outside. This appears, at first blush to be another paradox. How can an "inside" which is blind to the "outside" tell us what is out there? Examined more closely the paradox is an unannounced leap of faith. The inside cannot know 'meaning' but knows it exists; therefore it must be just outside consciousness and connectable. That is "faith" in action. He equates 'meaning' with God; places free will, and the good or evil which may result, within the world of facts, and puts the divine 'meaning' beyond that world of facts. This passage resonates with the Buddhist belief that doubts and fears need not to be reasoned with; they can simply be banished and the resulting contentment is God given happiness. For Wittgenstein, in this lecture, escaping the time carousel, and living in the now is contentment; contentment is God.

Even in his earlier work Wittgenstein knew this: "Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration, but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present. Our life has no end in the way in which our visual field has no limits". — Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.431

With age, a deepening personal spirituality led to several elucidations and clarifications, as he untangled language problems in religion, attacking, for example, the temptation to think of God's existence as a matter of scientific evidence. In 1947, finding it more difficult to work, he wrote, "I have had a letter from an old friend in Austria, a priest. In it he says that he hopes my work will go well, if it should be God's will. Now that is all I want: if it should be God's will."

In Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value*, he writes, "Is what I am doing [my work in philosophy] really worth the effort? Yes, but only if a light shines on it from above." His close friend [Norman Malcolm](#) would write, "Wittgenstein's mature life was strongly marked by religious thought and feeling. I am inclined to think that he was more deeply religious than are many people who correctly regard themselves as religious believers."

Wittgenstein writes, "Bach wrote on the title page of his *Orgelbüchlein*, 'To the glory of the most high God, and that my neighbor may be benefited thereby.' That is what I would have liked to say about my work."

Father [Conrad Pepler](#), a Catholic priest was at Wittgenstein's death bed Wittgenstein had asked for a "priest who was not a philosopher." Friends who sent for the priest were at first unsure what Wittgenstein would have wanted, but then remembered he had said he hoped his Catholic friends would pray for him, so they did, and he was pronounced dead shortly afterwards

Wittgenstein excerpt from

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1889- 1951)

Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein's provides us with a new spin on philosophy. His spin is a word pool which sinks into conceptual precision but rises again with a new quantum, philosophical principle of uncertainty. At least that's the way I see it, and Wittgenstein would not disagree.... could not disagree, by virtue of his principle of uncertainty. According to Wittgenstein, there is no way to prove or disprove any speculation about this or any other belief system. Of course that very proposition is taken down by its own word spin, like the famous conundrum "I am lying." If its' true it falsifies itself, and if it's false it verifies itself. Some scholars see Wittgenstein's 'wordpool' as a final spinout to the end of philosophy. I don't think Wittgenstein meant, with his philosophical jujitsu, to end the quest for truth. It is simply a restatement of an ancient and honorable belief that philosophy is a quest with no final destination; or, for our purposes, a runway with a lift off point. Wittgenstein never said anything about 'lift off,' but I think he would agree with my metaphysical ending to the reason runway. That's why he is in the conga line. I think his principle of philosophical uncertainty rules out dogma, but, at the same time, encourages speculation.

Both sides of any speculative interaction need some metaphorical bridge, some shared heuristic sensibility. Wittgenstein's philosophical jujitsu proves to us that there must be a heuristic common language by showing us that a private language could not exist. If language cannot be private it must be only public. That's tautologically true or in Kantian terms "analytic."To disprove this

proposition you would have to use the very public language you're trying to disprove.

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* §243 does not connect this shared language to any universal consciousness, but it seems to me the connection is ineluctable. To deny this is to deny the existence of communication. Communication is here to stay as a corollary of that same proposition that negates private language.

We cannot live without connection we die spiritually and/or physically by our own disconnected hand. As obvious as this seems, so many are blind to it, which is why we have one suicide victim every minute of every day, including three of Wittgenstein's four brothers, who could find no reason for continuing the search for meaning.

The game of life has to be seen as a challenge not a curse and there has to be some satisfaction in meeting that challenge, even if it's only relief in rising above the suffering. I don't know how much Wittgenstein himself enjoyed the challenge, but his self inflation must have caused an individual ascension that kept him afloat. He was never tempted by suicide when he was a heroic prisoner of war in the first world war, refusing to be ransomed unless all his fellow prisoners could also be released. At the end of his life he handled his bodily suffering with what must be considered spiritual altitude; he must have risen above it all.

Wittgenstein believed that the game was the same for everyone even though different groups use different terms. His Philosophical Investigation, (p66 et seq.) points out that games can mean many different things to different people in different places at different times and at the same time be the same in all places at the same time. The only way for "game" to have any meaning is to notice the "family resemblance" between the different uses of the word in the various contexts. For the game to continue, these hidden similarities must somehow resonate between communication partners across space and time, and that is what underlies what would otherwise be an incomprehensible generality in the word "game."

I believe this amounts to a new metaphysical communication theory. Wittgenstein could not by his own mandate object to my making him the founder of 'metaphysical communication theory.' I should, at the outset, confess to a possible bias in choosing Wittgenstein for this title; the bias, if any, would be the result of conclusions already reached in my earlier book about Wittgenstein's family.

(WARNING: my book, Resurrection , available on saltafide.com, is more of a historical fiction, sci-fi novel, based on historical fact, where we meet Wittgenstein and his family through the eyes of a modern apostle who time travels back to Vienna to interact with Wittgenstein's amazing father and explore the enigmatic suicides of his three brothers. It makes mention of Wittgenstein's philosophy, but that is not what the book is about.)

Distinguished peers such as Godel, Moore, Russell, Whitehead and others, consider Wittgenstein to be the greatest philosopher of the 20th century, and that must be because he travelled through and beyond the semantic maze of logical positivism, epistemology, psychology, linguistics and mathematics. I do feel sure that Ludwig belongs in our conga line. He knew that even if words cloud the very truth they would name, there still has to be a truth to sustain that very proposition [philosophical jujitsu]. That background truth is the sounding board that enables resonance and empowers communication. He never used those words either, but, again, I think that his word-flux resonates metaphysically.

We have to put together Wittgenstein's belief system ourselves from the hearsay of student notes and the interpretative writings of followers. There is very little from his own pen. He did write, early in his career and then again at the end. Wittgenstein's early work was interpreted by some members of the Vienna Circle as friendly to their empiricism, but they were surprised by Wittgenstein's later work. After World War II, he became much more supportive of metaphysical philosophy and even theology.

For Wittgenstein, philosophy can never answer the question "Does God exist." Wittgenstein said, in so many words, that to ask whether God exists is not as important as it is to wonder about praising and praying. More like James, Wittgenstein sought to displace traditional metaphysical debate and arguments over theism and its alternatives, and to focus, instead, on the way language about God, the soul, prayer, resurrection and the afterlife function in the minds of worshipers. This is metaphysical pragmatism.

In his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, physics becomes a metaphor. He provides us with "elements" in the form of atomic propositions which are at the basis of all our molecular propositions. In that same book Wittgenstein points out that Philosophy is not a theory but an activity, which may be seen as above science or below science but not beside science. I believe this means that philosophy and science are not on the same level. You can put it down or up, but not along side.

Putting philosophy above science makes it metaphysics. Wittgenstein talks of God as a putative creator who would not have created a world in which

elemental propositions were true and also contradicted by contrary propositions. Wittgenstein also sees beyond the cause and effect at the basis of the scientific method. In his words “only superstition could propose a causal nexus between current and future events.” No one knows what’s going to happen next, which is to say: ‘only God knows.’ In this same work, Wittgenstein also distinguishes between tautology and contradiction. At the risk of over simplifying, he says ‘tautology’ boils off into nonsense as a result of internal collisions; whereas ‘contradiction’ breaks up propositions into sur-reality as a result external collision. There are molecular propositions and atomic facts in Wittgensteins collider which generate a probable quantum energy, in spite of the uncertainty. I’m sure there are scholars who would insist that finding metaphysics in Wittgensteinian is a stretch too far. But I find no other way to explain his neoplatonic restatement of human fallibility. There can be no such thing as human fallibility without the backdrop of divine infallibility.

In Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein lifts off and looks down on philosophy including his own earlier work. He makes the point that there is no single philosophical system that is unambiguous. Ambiguity is systematic, but systematic ambiguity guarantees man’s freedom and autonomy, and becomes the precondition for faith. “Seeing as” leaves room for the transcendental in the interpretation of events.

Like Scheler, Wittgenstein was a German Jew who embraced Catholicism. For Wittgenstein it came much later in his life. According to his biographers, Wittgenstein spent his last days with a Catholic priest and chose a Catholic burial

I believe Wittgenstein would have been pleased with the direction of our conga line and the fact that it was made up of individuals thinking for themselves, who freely chose a spiritual path.

Merleau- Ponty

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSNES

(1908–1961)

Maurice Jean Jacques Merleau-Ponty is a philosopher and leading proponent of existentialism and phenomenology in post-war France; he also made important contributions to the philosophy of art, history, language, nature, and politics.

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy stew includes, chunks of phenomenology, bits of Gestalt psychology, psychoanalysis, Marxism, Saussurian linguistics, all seasoned with adaptations from other Conga Line... philosophers such as: Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Bergson, Husserl and Heidegger. Merleau-Ponty provides yet another bridge across the Kantian chasm between phenomena and noumena. The importance of Merleau-Ponty's bridge is that it has multiple lanes, allowing for two way traffic to flow simultaneously in both directions. Merleau-Ponty's "*Intertwining Chiasm*," bends and blends the two realities in keeping with Husserl (*Verflechtung*) and Heidegger.

Merleau-Ponty's "intersubjectivity," like Heidegger's, has the receiver, (perceiver) imagining the sender. If '*chiasm*' is a crisscrossing or a bi-directional exchange between the sensing body and the "flesh" of things outside, then a potential must exist between the sensing body and sensed things; that is what makes their connection possible. What looks like a space between the toucher and the thing being touched is actually a complex, invisible, connecting synapse. Our subjectivity is never located purely in either our tangibility or in our touch-ability, but in the synapse he calls "*chiasm*" intertwining these two states.

The *chiasm* connection between touching and touched is never static; convergent and divergent energies are constantly in flux. This means the impact of the world on us may, at any point, be greater or less than our impact on the world. The interdependence of subjects and objects, inner consciousness and outer reality, permits neither fusion nor exclusion, but rather continuous '*inherence*'.

Merleau-Ponty published two major theoretical texts during his lifetime: The Structure of Behavior (1942) and Phenomenology of Perception (1945). Other important publications include two volumes of political philosophy, Humanism and Terror (1947) and Adventures of the Dialectic (1955), as well as two books of collected essays on art, philosophy, and politics: Sense and Non-Sense (1948) and Signs (1960/1964). Two unfinished manuscripts appeared posthumously: The Prose of the World (1969/1973), drafted in 1950–51; and The

Visible and the Invisible (1964), on which he was working at the time of his death. Lecture notes and student transcriptions of many of his courses at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France have also been published.

He was associated with the existentialist movement through his friendship with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Unlike some of his existentialist colleagues, Merleau-Ponty is well versed in worldly knowledge and science, as well as modern empirical research from many disciplines including, but not limited to, psychology and ethology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, linguistics, and the arts. His scientific credentials have lent credibility to his idealism for empiricists. He criticized the idealists for having too short a runway before lift off, and he criticized the empiricists for having too long a runway with no lift off point.

In *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty rejects abject materialism which he calls “physiological atomism,” as applied to sensation/ perception/conception. Pavlov’s theory of conditioned reflexes and other such primitive inductive behavioral theories rely on “gratuitous hypotheses lacking experimental justification and cannot effectively explain brain function or learning.” Other scientific experiments on brain damage and aging demonstrate that the localization hypotheses must be rejected in favor of a global process of neural organization.

This resonates with our earlier discussion of the philosophical implications of neuroplasticity and the suspected regeneration of my senior hippocampus. Merleau-Ponty knew that neurons are not purely material but rather a “field of forces”... “apportioned to modes of preferred distribution.”

In The Visible and the Invisible, Merleau-Ponty comes close to the new world anti-matter view suggesting that the world is not simply an object; there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we may say that the things pass into us, as well as, we into the things.” Merleau-Ponty is not ready to become a monist on either side of the Kantian chasm, or should we say ‘*chiasm*’; instead he offers a dynamic distinction, like Bergson’s “flux,” which then magically weaves a connection as well as a distinction.

Merleau-Ponty’s dynamism adds a unique law of self consciousness whereby the two poles (perceived and perceiver) must be reversible, or “recursive,” in order to have the flux. In other words, the experience of touching cannot be understood without reference to the reverse experience of being touched. Signal processing for all creatures with perception equipment involves a sending subject, a reflecting object, and a receiving brain and mind.

Merleau-Ponty classifies this processing in three tiers of complexity, (yet another layer cake): starting with the most basic *syncretic* and moving up to *amovable*, and topped with *symbolic*. In Merleau-Ponty, *Syncretic* processes are available to ants and toads, as a-priori instincts that come with membership in the species and are fixed and unchangeable. *Amovable* processes are oriented toward signals of varying complexity that are not a function of the organism's instinctual equipment and can lead to genuine learning. Here the organism, guided by its survival goals, responds to signals as relational structures rather than as objective properties of things. Living things are not oriented toward an objective world but toward an environment that is organized meaningfully in terms of their subjective and specific vital goals. (This resonates with Heidegger's "being as.")

This *amovable* signal processing is available to all subjects including lower life forms. But *Symbolic* behavior is limited to humans. Beyond *amovable* behavior attached to immediate functionality the '*symbolic*' layer puts you high enough to interact with virtual, expressive, and *recursive connections* across structures. This recursivity enables such human *symbolic* activities as language and expression, the creation of new structures beyond those set by vital needs, and with this comes the power of choosing (i.e. free will) and varying points of view, which make truth and 'relative objectivity' possible.

Objectivity is relative because of what we called the deception of perception in the "phenomenal" world. Perception, so often deceived, is embarrassed and has a tendency to forget its past and its limitations and even cover its own tracks in the world of 'noumena'; this results in more frequent perceptual occlusions in the "phenomenal" field. This results in a scientific obsession with precision and measurements which further occludes any deeper understanding of the process of observation. Once this scientific obsession" is applied to the body and the perceptual processes, the "faith" in perception explodes into "confused appearances" that require methodical reinterpretation, and the eventual result is unbridged dualism, solipsism, and skepticism.

Neither the natural sciences nor psychology provide an adequate clarification of this loss of perceptual faith, which undermines any understanding of intersubjectivity or the collective truth of a world shared in common.

Merleau-Ponty sees communication with others, in every form, as essential to the transformation and perpetuation of our mis-perceived lives. The resulting interactive "theory of truth" is clearly based on Husserl's notion of intersubjectivity. Expression, language, and *symbolism* are the key to this theory of truth and provide the foundation for a philosophy of "transcendental" humanism. The study of perception alone would only provide a "bad ambiguity"

which mixes “finitude and universality,” according to Merleau-Ponty, whereas the the phenomenon of communication creates a “good ambiguity,” The ‘good ambiguity,’ resulting from the phenomenology enigma, becomes the engine of communication in all its forms.

I call this ‘Communogenesis’. I learned about Merleau-Ponty long after writing my first book, so cognitive consonance was at work way back then in hatching the idea of communogenesis. My book, Communication the Living End, (ibid) was published in 1988 when the internet was still “the information super highway” connecting a handful of minds, I never imagined that in one lifetime it would make its way into shirt pockets all over the world. Merleau-Ponty’s “recursivity” saw it coming; in that sense he was a visionary.

Dewey

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1859–1952)

At the dawn of Western civilization, teachers were philosophers, and philosophers were teachers; somehow we drifted away from that “academia.” Dewey did his best to restore that communal dialectic. Dewey is famous for discovering the breach between education and philosophy and trying to reconnect it. In my book Conga Line of Consciousness, I tell the story of how I wound up in a Dewey experiment in higher education where John Dewey shaped my thinking before I knew who he was.

Unlike Wittgenstein, Dewey wrote more than 40 books and hundreds of articles, and he founded, and or headed up, significant social institutions, such as American Philosophical Association and the American Psychological Association, to name a few. Dewey is one of the clearest examples of a philosopher who wished to make a difference in the here and now. If he were to draft a bumper sticker, it would say: “God helps those who help themselves.” Like everyone else in our conga line. Dewey built bridges between faith and reason; between the real and the ideal.

Dewey was influenced by William James and what I have called the American Cambridge Circle (James, Royce, Whitehead, etc.). Remember James was a psychologist before anyone knew what that was and went beyond psychology. Dewey also followed the psychology scientific runway right up to the ‘lift off’ point and then took off. Dewey insisted that humans were different than Pavlov’s dog and that the simple minded stimulus response theory would never explain consciousness. Dewey said, “The reflex arc is not a comprehensive, or organic unity, but a patchwork of disjointed parts, a mechanical conjunction of unallied processesthe model falsifies the nature of genuine interaction; organisms do not *passively* receive stimuli and then *actively* respond; rather, organisms *continuously interact* with environments in cumulative and modifying ways.” (RAC, EW5: 97).

Like many in the Conga Line, for Dewey consciousness is a subject not an object, a verb not a noun. Dewey demonstrates how the use of the word ‘mind,’ which varies in common parlance to denote and connote states of consciousness and active behavior, for example: “I am *reminded* of” ; “I keep her in *mind*,” “I *mind* my manners; I *mind* the child; I *mind* the traffic stop.

Dewey goes on to insist that consciousness is never isolated from the world of other subjects and objects, but is always an integral part of all. (*AE*, LW10: 267–68) In this connection he takes Wittgenstein's private language objection and makes it into a communal dialectic. (*EN*, LW1: 147).

It is clear that Dewey understood that there is more to consciousness than can be demonstrated in the lab. Would he go so far as to connect it too a soul of any kind? Dewey talks about the supernatural but not in terms of any dogma established by organized religions. There has to be something religious about the human condition, but, as Dewey points out, religiosity has nothing to do with organized religion. For Dewey dogma is actually a barrier to religiosity and spiritualism in that it freezes something that is meant to flow continuously. Dewey was profoundly influenced by James's metaphor of consciousness as a constantly moving "stream of thought" (*FAE*, LW5: 157). Nevertheless, Dewey did not believe a fully adequate account of consciousness could be captured in words.

Dewey's *A Common Faith* ...; here we take a closer look at just how it fits in with our conga line. It is clear to me, and Dewey, and hopefully to you, that the logic runway will not get you to heaven without a a leap of faith at the lift off point. Any good leap has to be preceded by a rhythmic set of steps. Dewey sees that rhythm as the dynamic of spiritualism.

The "common" in Dewey's "common faith" is all about a dynamic spiritual subterranean stream of universal consciousness. It's ok with Dewey and it's ok with me that God may not be the anthropomorphic figure on a cloud hurling lightening bolts; and I'm ok with the fact that I may never be able to paint the right picture of God on the stained glass window of my inner temple; and finally it's ok with everyone in the conga line if we don't have any stained glass, at all. Now, I'm not breaking church windows or turning cathedrals into swimming pools like Stalin did. In my book, if Gothic arches works for you that's ok, too. I don't know that Dewey would be as tolerant.

Dewey thinks the church dogma gets in the way of the dynamic communal dialectic. However, in my reading of *A Common Faith*, it appeared to me that it would be alright to have churches if they help rather than hinder this communal dialectic. Dewey also wants to leave room for our notion of God to be a dynamic process, like Hegel's three step development, where our original thesis of the punishing, nasty God spawns its own antithesis, a wise, good and eventually loving God. Dewey says "It is this active relation between ideal and actual to which I would give the name God". (*ACF*, LW9: 34; see also 29–30)

Popper

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1902- 1994)

Sir Karl Raimund Popper was born in Vienna, and, like Wittgenstein, was influenced by both the Vienna Circle, and the British Cambridge circle; like Wittgenstein, he was lauded by Bertrand Russell. Popper was knighted in 1965. Popper may not have willingly joined the conga line; in fact he is here only as an example of those philosophers who would be forced to join the conga line, whether or not they uttered a word about metaphysics.

For Popper, the growth of human knowledge proceeds from our problems and our attempted solutions. These attempts involve the formulation of theories which must go beyond existing knowledge and therefore require a leap of the imagination. I have used the words speculation and guess for this same leap. According to Popper's "evolutionary epistemology," like Bergson's "creative evolution," the growth of human knowledge is an objective evolutionary process which involves the creation and promulgation of new problem-solving theories, which are then subjected to challenge and change. Popper, is a historical *indeterminist*, insofar as he holds that history does not evolve in accordance with intrinsic laws or principles, and that there is no such thing as historical necessity. Popper would not buy into Fichte/Hegel's three step tango, because he is against historical determinism. We can and do make theoretical progress in science by subjecting our theories to critical scrutiny, and abandoning those which have been falsified, but that progress was not pre-ordained.

I wonder how we gauge the progress to be progress, if there is no pre-ordained bar to set. Popper's answer is that the testing of the solution must involve a real world with pure facts, pure facts which by definition must be both within and beyond our knowledge. A knowledge that includes the unknown is unimaginable. What we know is the result of the dynamic flux of experience; neither the observed nor the observer is static; both are always changing. For there to be a constant change there has to be a constant unchanging back drop. Popper never deals with this paradox.

Popper does not directly acknowledge a priori truth. Popper's idealism is sub rosa; his metaphysics is unintentional, at best, but I will show that his theories depend on it.

Popper confronts Hume's traditional empiricism, which is trying to prove a constant with a variable. Popper points out that the long standing traditional

idea that universal scientific laws are in some way finally confirmable by experiences folds in on itself, because those experiences are infinitely variable and completely unpredictable. For Popper, traditional empiricism was posing a false constant as backdrop for variable proof. For a “constant” to be “false” there must be a true constant. Plato calls that supernatural; Popper won't go there.

He replaces the notion of proof with falsification and utility tests, which, by the same logic, invokes a Platonic ‘ultimate truth. After the falsification test, according to Popper, the surviving theory should be the most useful one, in the sense of possessing the highest level of predictive power. Popper also says the more theories to choose from the better. Popper demonstrates that the more *improbable* a theory is, the better it is scientifically, because probability and utility are inversely proportionate. In other words, the more far out the theory the more likely it is to be the most useful.

What's the difference between falsification and verification? There is a difference that we never thought about before Popper. Falsification is simply a process of elimination; you throw out all the obviously bent and broken sticks and stones and you keep the ones that work for you in the task at hand. Judging suitability must be built into human consciousness.

Instead of heading full throttle to the lift off point, Popper backs down the logic runway in reverse. Once Popper gets to the wheels up point, in reverse, it is not clear whether he is able perform a backward lift off:

“all knowledge is provisional, conjectural, hypothetical—no universal theories of science can ever be conclusively established.”

Popper is right at the same Platonic wheels up point, where all human fallibility must reach up into the the known/ unknown supernatural perfection. But instead of looking up like Plato, Popper looks around, for a pragmatic consensus of perfection. Popper's perfection is defined as that which is most useful. Everyone would have to agree on what is “useful,” and for that to happen there must be a universal consciousness.

What's the difference between useful and perfect? Wittgenstein would say it's just word pool spin. Verification implies some underlying, unknown but knowable ad hoc standards. But standards are abstractions; I must point out that in both cases, the solutions are fruits of the imagination, not only yours but also from other minds which happen to be around at the time. All these consciousnesses are sharing something, not making it up out of nothing. Nothing is unimaginable as a source for standards. So Poppers mysticism lies in the magic of connection; so does mine.

If you're still not convinced that Popper fits in our conga line, I can assure you he is not on the 'other team'; he is not a materialist. Popper believes that the development of human knowledge cannot be explained by physicalism, which seeks to reduce all mental processes and states to material ones. Popper decries the traditional dualism, but not as a materialistic monist; he goes it one better than dualism; instead of two realms, Popper proposes three realms which he calls "Three Worlds," namely: ontology, with physical states and processes (world 1) ; the mental world (world 2), and objective; and a higher knowledge (world 3). Popper's third world contains languages, tales and stories, religious myths, scientific theories, mathematical constructions, songs and symphonies, art and architecture and other conceptual abstractions.

Whether Popper would admit it or not, I believe World 3 makes Popper a Platonist, and a subscriber to the metaphysics of our conga line. World 3 must be connected to some otherworldly perfection because it must have some standard by which it distinguishes the works of Mike the barber's haircuts and the marble curls on Michelangelo's *The Dying Slave*. Popper takes Michelangelo's sculpture *The Dying Slave* as an illustrative example of a world 3 concept, embodied in a block of marble which had to be quarried by lesser thinkers, world 2 engineers, and shipped to the studio by 'world 1' truckers, but could never have happened without the inspiration of the world 3 Michelangelo.

Popper's world 3 spawned, the American Constitution, Shakespeare's tragedies, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Newton's theory of gravitation. Each one of these, he contends, is a world 3 subjective object that transcends both its physical, world 1 embodiments and its world 2 cognitive origins. Without a Platonic verticality, I don't see how else Popper's three worlds stack up. If there is a higher and lower level there must be an up and if there is an up there must be a zenith. We call it God; Popper won't call it anything. I'm not sure why.

For Popper, the borders of these levels are ambiguous and, for him, that is important. This ambiguity is a dynamic that provides the energy to go back and forth and up and down between the mundane and the sublime. That coming and going makes life something more than a struggle for survival; there is joy attached to every ascension. Self inflation is key to self ascension in Popper's vertically layered words.

One weird twist in Popper's altitude is that this ability to ascend is inborn in all the species, not just humans. We saw this trans species sublimity earlier in Fechner. It is not clear whether Popper and Fechner had any surface connection, or whether it was underground cognitive consonance.

Popper's examples of these divinely inspired constructions by non humans include reefs built by corals, hives built by bees, dams built by beavers and the atmospheric effects yielded by plants. This, Popper contends, is the same 'world 3' inspired modeling ability that is found in human beings.

Popper uses the word 'holism' to describe human social groupings that are greater than the sum of their members. These groups are subject to their own independent laws of development; they act on their human members and shape their destinies, like the communities of James, Royce, Scheler and Merleau Ponty.

Popper guesses that imaginative theorizing and knowledge might improve over time but insists that there is no guarantee.

Nevertheless I must point out that for their to be improvement, however it comes about, there has to be an absolute perfection somewhere. For there to be a good, better, there has to be a best. Popper never acknowledges that directly, but how could he possibly deny it.

The same is true for Popper's prediction that the totalitarian regimes will ultimately fall prey to our innate rationality and be proven to be based on false assumptions. There has to be a truth for there to be false assumptions, and where does that truth come from? Popper's belief that only right not might will survive the falsification test, I think, implies a divine truth and therefore a God. He may never have used those words but he does not dispute the existence of upward trends or deny their value.

Popper argues against the propriety of long term, large-scale planning of social structures (like Nazism and Communism and maybe even Democracy) based on the fact that the underlying progress is not guaranteed. Progress is based on future knowledge which we cannot possess now and may not have in the future. So dogma which tells us the right thing to do is also subject to falsification. The positive task of increasing social and personal happiness should then be left to individual citizens, who may, of course, act collectively to that end. The anti-dogma insures the rights of the individual to step out and criticize leaders and falsify religious intolerance and scientific determinism and political tyranny.

Popper acknowledges that human history has been advanced by *the growth of human knowledge*, and it is extremely likely that this will continue to be the case —all the empirical evidence suggests that the link between the two is progressively consolidating. However, if the future holds any new discoveries or any new developments in the growth of our knowledge, they are not guaranteed and therefore it is impossible for us to predict the future development of human

history. Expecting new scientific knowledge to occur at the same rate, based on the history of current knowledge, assumes a deterministic forward moving thrust in human consciousness.

Popper would agree that there has to be freedom for us to choose the right path, and I don't see how he could disagree that there must be someone, or something supernatural that made it "right." The right path for Popper leads to the open society.

The open society, as conceived of by Popper, may be defined as an association of free individuals respecting each other's rights within the framework of mutual protection supplied by the state, and achieving, through the making of responsible, rational decisions, a growing measure of humane and enlightened life. I say we can't play that game without the coaching of inner teachers and the anticipation of a divine judge. Popper doesn't say that in so many words, but he would be forced to agree by his own falsification test and that puts Popper in the conga line, where he can wiggle or dance with the rest of the metaphysicians.

JOHN HICKS

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

(1922-2012)

One of the thrills of philosophy for me is the logical jujitsu, like we saw with Plato, and Descartes and Wittgenstein. John Hicks has a masterful jujitsu move for the logical positive objections to the metaphysical belief in immortality, which is precisely what brought him to the tail end of the conga line, that and a few more inexplicable “coincidences.”

For the record I am out there way beyond ‘unexplained coincidences’ almost to mysticism, but just short of witchcraft and astrology: Maslow died on my birthday, stuff like that. Did you ever wonder why coincidences fire up such a glow in conversations. “I was just thinking about you.....”; “I’m from Boston too.....” etc. etc.

Both Hicks and I were trained as lawyers, both at Cornell, both of us are named John, both of us owe a great debt to Wittgenstein, who was at Cornell and left behind a ‘Center for Wittgensteinian thought,’ which neither of us knew anything about, consciously, while we were at Cornell.

Whether you call it coincidence or cognitive consonance, it was my good fortune to stumble into Hicks’s work. Hicks’s eschatological verification accepts the logical positive falsification test, for argument’s sake, and then turns it on itself.

He asks us to imagine a theist and an atheist walking toward the end of the road of life; one believes there is an after life and the other believes that there is nothing. Only one can be correct. If the believer is correct, his faith is rewarded; if the atheist is correct, there is no afterlife, everything falls off the cliff at the end of the road into “nothing”; there is no end of the road to take a stand, to make the falsification case. “Nothing” is an impossible ending. And so, the rationalism at the heart of atheism is irrational.

Apologists

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

You know by now that faith and reason have been uncomfortable bed fellows for millennia. This tension generated centuries of philosophical squabble up until the time the Catholic Church attempted a hostile takeover of philosophy. At which point they laid down the law, and any beliefs held without the stamp imprimatur would be stomped out of the holder or burned away over an open flame. When this barbarism was challenged by the age of reason, the Church had to find other ways to rationalize its dogma. Church scholars refer to this return to rational persuasion as ‘apologetics,’ which makes the thinkers ‘Apologists.’ The emboldened heretics on the other end of the debate have several names, skeptics, cynics, rationalists, atheists, agnostics, etc..

The major bone of contention between the two camps is ‘evidentialism.’ Evidentialism is the view that for a person to be justified in some belief, there must be some observable evidence for the belief. Moreover, evidentialists often contend that the degree of confidence in a belief should be proportional to the evidence. The evidentialist argument applied to the existence of God is often referred to as the “hiddenness of God” argument; it goes something like this: the fact that a good God does not make its ‘Godself’ available to good and earnest seekers is evidence that such a God does not exist; if the God of Christianity exists, he would be far more evident than he is.

...the maxim: “the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence” [does not come from any philosopher but from the a detective on a TV cop show]. Imagine that level of wisdom on a TV cop show. That serendipitous, accidental, coincidental communication slipped into an action script by some TV writer in another place and time reached my ears just in time for me to frame my rejoinder the evidentialist paradox. Ideas have their own agenda, and secret passage ways.

I didn’t include all the formal argument here because I think the words of my, oft quoted, sixth grade teacher, Sister Mary Carlotta say it all: “The lord works in strange ways his wonders to perform.” This is a homespun restatement of Plato who showed us that it would be beyond human understanding to define God. For a definition of God to be encompassed in a human mind, that mind would have to be greater than the God it encompasses.

In my book the escalator between the mundane and the sublime needs no apology, and so, I will say no more about apologists. Should you have some need to learn more, the index below should help.

APOLOGISTS

NAME	CATEGORY
Butler, Joseph	Cambridge Platonists
Paley, William	Cambridge Platonists
Taylor, A.E	20TH century British
Tennant, F. R	20TH century British
Temple, William	20TH century British
Lewis, H.D.	20TH century British
Ewing, A.C.	20TH century British
Hepburn, Ronald	20TH century British
Mackie, J.L	20TH century British
Flew, Antony	20TH century British
Gale, Richard	20TH century British
Rowe, William	20TH century British
Martin, Michael	20TH century British
Oppy, Graham	20TH century British
Schellenberg, J.	20TH century British
Draper, Paul	20TH century British
Swinburne, Ri	evidentialism.
Schellenberg, J	evidentialism.
Menssen, S	Bare theism
Sullivan, Thomas	Bare theism
Plantinga, Alvin	Reformed epistemology

Gurus

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

East and West agree that thought matters, even though thought isn't matter. Western philosophy ranges everywhere from having consciousness contain matter and matter contain consciousness and all the different size chasms and "chiasms" (Merleau Ponty) in between. Eastern wisdom acknowledges both realms but keeps them separate. I am not a scholar of Eastern philosophy and this is not ... about Eastern metaphysics, but I thought some mention was warranted if only by way of comparative analysis.

One notable Hindu thinker, who would have been included in the conga line if I could have found a bit more information, was Sankar (788- 820 AD). His interpretation of Atman and Brahman and his insistence that they are not separate but are one and the same, is quite revolutionary in Eastern thought, and resonates with many in our conga line. For him, multiplicity is part of the illusion or Maya which, if not penetrated by spiritual knowledge, causes a life of suffering. 'Nescience' or ignorance is the result of Maya which causes 'upadhis,' a refraction of reality and the illusion of multiplicity. Spiritual knowledge brings it all together again. His philosophy of the confluence of consciousnesses and the melding of the inner and outer universe resonates completely with our conga line.

Not all Sankar's fellow Hindu's saw the flow from complexity to unity. Hindu reverence continued to distinguish and deify each of the horrific forces of nature and pray to each separately, which may well have been the reason for Buddha stepping out of the suffering to find a high road.

The Buddha, in the second half of the pre-Christian millennium, did not set out to define the supernatural or even suggest or deny its existence. His was a do-it-yourself philosophy/psychology for making things more tolerable on the *rock*, which is not to say that it was mono-materialism. It was not; his teachings suggest that consciousness is beyond the material world; in that sense, it must have its own metaphysics.

Buddhist teachings are preserved in texts known as the *Nikāyas* or *Āgamas*, and, as I said, they concern the quest for liberation from suffering. While the ultimate aim of the Buddha's teachings is to help individuals attain the good life,

his analysis of the source of suffering leads to philosophical speculation on how we acquire knowledge about the world and our place in it.

Like Judaism, Eastern spiritualism precedes Christ. Vedas date back to 1500 BC and Upanishads to 800 BC and Buddha's teachings to 550 BC. It was a long time before Christ came along smack dab in the middle of East and West, geographically and philosophically.

In the first half of the pre-Christian millennium, in the East and the West, pantheons of all kinds of gods reigned and rained down suffering.

In the middle of the millennium Parmenides and others including Plato for some 'reason' found it necessary to unify the multiples. I say for some 'reason', it may have been beyond reason, some indigenous aspect of consciousness that houses the instinct for unity and universality as well as divinity.

The Hebrews were not actually monotheistic to begin with. They were the chosen children of one particular God, but the opposing Gods of their enemies were real contestants in the battle of the super powers.

For whatever reason, the divine division was more splintered in the East and the middle east and had to be brought together by Western philosophy and Christianity. The monotheism, the 'singularity,' seems to be a Western vision that eventually travelled East. The idea of the one God didn't get around to the East until St. Paul met the risen Christ who told him to go forth and teach all nations, or maybe, the whole thing was Paul's hallucination. Either way, we can only marvel at the fact that, whoever and however, Christianity swept over the civilized world, like a flash flood and all but drowned Eastern metaphysics until much later when it re-emerged.

Hippy high and self ascension

The sudden fascination of the hippy era with Eastern mysticism can be explained as the historical Fichte/Hegel 'antithesis' to the reigning materialism 'thesis.' There is no question we were starving for sublimity in the mundane desert of consumerism. Whatever it was, the 'antithesis' didn't change anything. Consumerism is now untrammled and leading us to the brink of planetary extinction.

... I followed the ringing bells and shaved heads to ashrams off the beaten path, just for a visit and just long enough to know that I needed to stay on the beaten path, unbeaten. I knew I had to stay in the game until it was time to leave naturally.

The idea that life is God's game show, is crazy, but I have shown, that it's even crazier to think that there is no point to the struggle. So I guess you could say I have chosen to be less crazy. I guess that makes me a theopath, not to be confused with a theosoph or a theodic.

'Theopathy' is my made up word for the milder form of insanity, where one is obsessed with super connection beyond reason, and beyond the lack of evidence. Instead of being sucked into the black hole of theodicy where divine love and mundane travails cannot co-exist, theopathy keeps me hopping and hoping on the 'event horizon.' Delusion or illusion, a theopath believes that consciousness includes empathy and divine sympathy. "Choose theopathy over theodicy" is my new bumper sticker, not meant to bump anyone, but to connect with others still in the game, on the road to lift off.

Yoga spread like yogurt, in the sixties. But as I said, for some reason, I had to stay on the reason runway where and karma and rebirth didn't add up. I know we're not supposed to bring such mundane conceptual tools to spiritual propositions, but this mismatch between demography and theology raised great doubts, which was eventually solved by Emerson's oversoul.

There are more mundane people than eternal souls in each generation which means some of us don't have a soul; either that, or we share souls. We have all known people who seem to have no soul, but it makes more spiritual sense to select the shared soul option as the solution to the soul math dilemma.

Theosophy and Theopathy

EXCERPTED FROM CONGA LINE OF CONSCIOUSSES

I thought for a while that Theosophy, (not to be confused with ‘theodicy’ or ‘theopathy’) may just include all that I needed in a belief system, which would make my ‘theopathy’ and ‘hypersubjectivity’ superfluous conceptual baggage. The theosophical emphasis on intuition and meditation resonates with all my beliefs and the idea that more is revealed to those who ascend or transcend the mundane seems to resonate with our notion of ‘altitude.’ I find the social objectives of the Theosophical Society also quite acceptable; they seek to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color; to encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy and science; and to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humanity. Who wouldn’t want to do all that? But how?

Theosophy already had a community with a long history and all I would have to do is join. But joining anything always raises a caution with me, and so, I did a bit more digging.

Perhaps the most intriguing theosophist is madame Blavatsky. I learned from Wikipedia that by the time of her death in 1891 she was the acknowledged head of a community numbering nearly 100,000, with journalistic organs in London, Paris, New York and Madras. Her writings have been translated and published in a wide range of European and Asian languages. For some she is a muse; for others a witch and still others think of her as the biggest fraud of century. Blavatsky's Theosophy ignited a major revival of esotericism in Eastern and Western belief system. A Russian aristocrat, Blavatsky immigrated to the United States in 1873 where she met Olcott, an American lawyer, newspaperman, who believed that the living can contact the dead.

The word theosophy is derived from the Greek theos (“god”) and sophia (“wisdom”). This path to divine wisdom has its roots in Neoplatonism and Gnosticism (an early Christian heresy) as well as the Manichaeian belief in two Gods, a good one and a bad one. You will recall this was Saint Augustine’s belief system before his conversion to the one God of Catholicism. Theosophy’s dualism was embraced by Iranians, Bulgarians, Byzantines Christians, French Cathari heretics, Freemasons, and Rosicrucians from the middle ages all the way up to the new age theosophical movements in the UK, throughout the 70’s and 80’s.

Theosophy adds mysticism to spiritualism, particularly in the magic forces which underly the sacred texts. You know by now that I have trouble with sacred icons

and sacred texts, which keeps me from carrying a rabbit's foot or worshipping magic books including the Bible. Eventually I saw how theosophy's mysticism was powered, in part, by the same impatient delusions, that power superstition. There is a thin line between wishful thinking and willful thinking, between faith and delusion. In the end I decided my personal spiritualism was the better path to connection. So I won't be burning incense or heretics or consulting Taro cards for answers. I'll just keep wondering