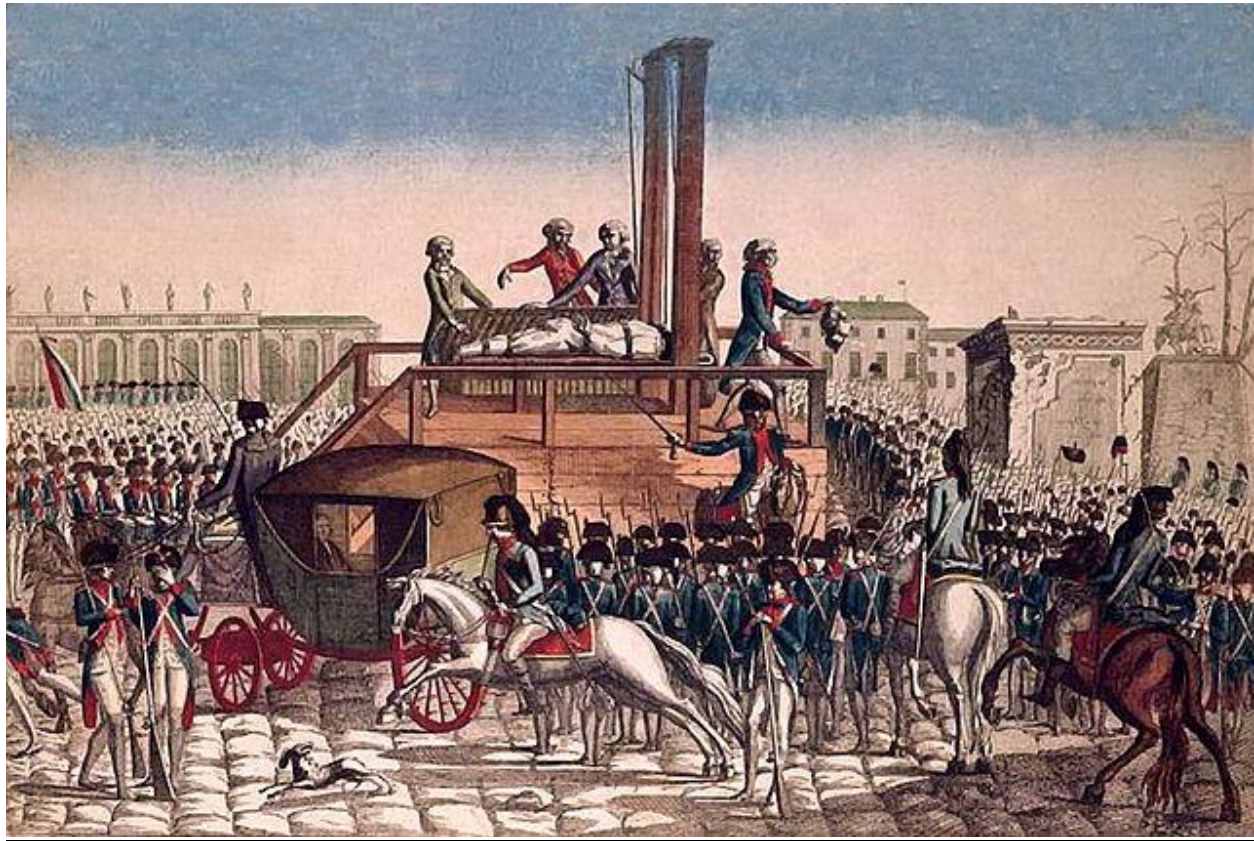


Hume's Guillotine: Science & Neuroscience of Good vs Evil: The Trolley Dilemma, Greene + Einstein, Damasio, Jung

The good man is free, even if he is a slave. The evil man is a slave, even if he is a king. — Saint Augustine, 354-430, Christian theologian & philosopher

There is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us, it doesn't behoove any to speak evil of the rest of us. Edgar Cayce (1877-1945)



Exécution_de_Louis_XVI_Carnavalet gravure anonyme du XVIIIe siècle Wikimedia

Preamble: Synopsis of the materialist problem - "Proper knowledge maps or mirrors the actualities of the real world." K Gergen When it comes to spiritual and religious beliefs, the only actualities are "people" – not artificial abstractions like the "supernatural" which is defined as outside the scope of science and so an empty and meaningless abstraction, that applies to social consciousness as well – People and society are the actualities that need be considered, not abstractions like Allport's 1927 false premise, "There is no psychology of groups." - Or the "materialist model" of consciousness as being solely and entirely a "byproduct of the neurology and biochemistry of the brain." "It is not true if the major premise is not true" – Justice Rehnquist (p.765 Logical Fallacies and the Supreme Court....)

As Kenneth Gergen, David Hay and Virgilio Enriquez emphasize that "extreme individualism" is a problem in Western Society. Gergen and Hay both agree that the Enlightenment and Age of Reason via the Social Contract and Rational Individualism which set extreme individualism in motion. Rational Individualism was developed as a political ideal to enable overcoming aristocratic and clerical authority and establishing democracy. That dovetails perfectly into Mannheim's Paradigm that the political-economic reality shapes social sciences as well as spiritual and religious beliefs. From research into "Free Will" K Vohs and J Schooler state "It seems that when people stop believing they are free agents; they stop seeing themselves as blameworthy for their actions," There are only 3 references to social consciousness in Wikipedia, the most salient being to Karl Marx - the creator of Marxism – Communism,

In contrast, there is a consensus among scientists that – first and last – human beings are "social animals", the title should have been "social gene" Roy Baumeister emphasizes, the "Need to Belong" (and connect) as the most powerful need in humanity. As Kenneth Gergen points out, "relations precede and are more fundamental than self" - "because there is no self-outside a system of meaning, it may be said that relations precede and are more fundamental than self. Without relationship there is no language with which to conceptualize the emotions, thoughts, or intentions of the self." (p.157)

Of course, there is also Iain McGilchrist who stated unequivocally, "An increasingly mechanistic, fragmented, decontextualised world... has come about, reflecting, I believe, the unopposed action of a dysfunctional left hemisphere." That dovetails into Christina Maimone who observes in her assessment of Mannheim's Paradox that "Ideology is a mode of thought that obscures the real condition of society... [groups – including academia - exclude facts] that would undermine their conception of the world." It is my argument that "purposelessness" as well as an absence of "pro-social norms-values" is exactly what materialist ideology conveys – primarily through "academic" norms and stereotypes like any other teaching or ideology.

Alfred Rupert Sheldrake is an author, and biochemist at Cambridge University (1967 – 1973). Sheldrake concludes that, "The atheist ideology found a powerful ally in materialist science, which by the end of the nineteenth century, portrayed a purposeless, unconscious, mechanical universe where humans, like all life, had evolved without purpose or guidance. In this godless world [devoid of spirituality], humanity would take charge of its own evolution, bringing economic development, brotherhood, health, and prosperity to all mankind through progress." (p.157) Sheldrake goes on to say, "The rising influence of mechanistic science accelerated this process from the seventeenth century onward. God was removed from the workings of nature, now seen as inanimate, unconscious, and mechanical, functioning automatically." (p.155)

Hume "put the heads of preceding moral philosophers in his proverbial guillotine" in Book III, Part I, Section I of his A Treatise of

Human Nature. He wrote that every work of moral philosophy he had encountered proceeded from factual, non-moral observations about the world to moral conclusions – those that express what we ought or ought not do. The shift is imperceptible, but it is a significant blunder. “For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, it is necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.”¹

The blunder, according to Hume, is one of logic. Factual statements are logically different from moral statements, so no factual statements can, by themselves, entail what people morally ought to do. The “ought” statement expresses a new relation, to use Hume’s phrase, that isn’t supported by its purely factual premises. So, a moral judgment that is arrived at by way of facts alone is suspect².

New Neuroscience Moral Research: Funk & Gazzagna: Complex Interconnections & Situational Context

Funk and Gazzaniga: “Morality is a set of complex emotional and cognitive processes that is reflected across many brain domains. Some of the emotions processed are more central to morality than others, but all emotions contribute to moral judgment given specific contextual situations. ...The neural circuits of brain regions implicated in morality overlap with those that regulate other behavioral processes....”³

Long ago, Carl Jung made a similar observation: “From the psychological point of view the phenomenon of spirit, like every autonomous complex, appears as an intention of the unconscious superior to, or at least on a par with, the intentions of the ego. If we are to do justice to the essence of the thing we call spirit, we should really speak of a “higher” consciousness rather than of the unconscious.”⁴ I have found that to be a significant factor in my personal experience.

New Unconscious Research: 11 million bits of data/second

The physical complexity of the human brain, taken alone, is astounding. In the human brain, there are roughly 100 billion neurons with the astronomical number of several hundred trillion synaptic connections. The unconscious processing abilities of the human brain are estimated at roughly 11 million pieces of information per second. Compare that to the estimate for conscious processing: about 40 pieces per second.”⁵

The Unconscious is the Work Horse of the Human Mind

As Bargh observes: “Based on the accumulated evidence, the authors conclude that these various non-conscious mental systems shoulder the lion's share of the self-regulatory burden, thereby keeping the individual grounded in their current environment.”⁶

Social perception is a largely automated psychological phenomenon John Bargh states, “The idea that social perception is a largely automated psychological phenomenon is now widely accepted.”⁷ If you think of how much information is activated even in “simple” social interactions that makes sense. Of course, morals, norms, and right and wrong, would be a very significant factor in social perception-interactions.

As Confucius stated long ago, "Signs and symbols rule the world!" That being said the materialist bias in social sciences sidelined and marginalized symbolism. Rollo May, an American existential psychologist and author, observes that for a long time, “Neither term, "symbol" or "myth," even appears in the index of the standard psychology textbooks.” Similarly, Elzbieta Halas observes: “Unfortunately, they [symbols] are not generally recognized as of primary significance for the examination of social life. Too often symbolism is thought of as an epiphenomenon, a phenomenon that is derivative of what are considered to be more important factors, such as business, resources, power, organization, etc. which are allegedly ‘objective’ facts.”

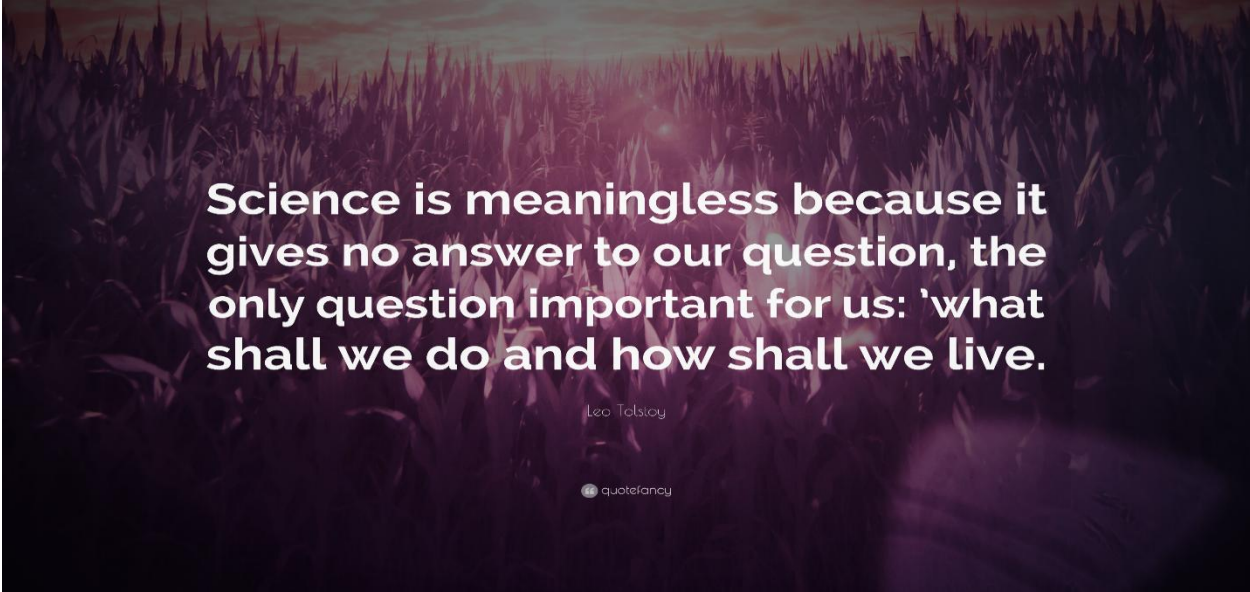
Symbols are complex and “condense numerous meanings.” Bargh highlights the fact that the human mind couldn’t function without “mental categories’ [and symbolism] to structure the huge amount of data and information processed by the human brain. There is a consensus among scholars of symbolism that symbols are complicated which “condense numerous meanings” and so makes symbolism and materialist quantification mutually exclusive.

- Elzbieta Halas states: “These [metaphors] are key representations set in a symbolic system, which condense numerous meanings and unify multiple signs, such as an ‘open society’, or a ‘rule of law’. ⁸
- Balaganapath emphasizes that “The meanings that these symbolic forms transmit are complex. Instead of standing for a single referent, they evoke a variety of meanings, some of which may be ambiguous.”⁹
- Kant and Jung both state that symbols “point” to a reality outside of the symbol.

Symbols are pivotal in human thought - including morals. For instance, Kant emphasizes that the idea of “freedom” is a complex symbol largely outside rational analysis and quantification.

Hume’s Guillotine: David Hume (1711 – 1776) Scottish philosopher

What is referred to as Hume's Guillotine states the premise that: “Factual statements do not necessarily lead to evaluative or statements of what “should be.” Scotty Jenkins, in his essay-blog, David Hume and Deriving an “Ought” from an “Is”, observes that “The blunder, according to Hume, is one of logic. Factual statements are logically different from moral statements, so no factual statements can, by themselves, entail what people morally ought to do.” Jenkins goes on to say that Hume “thought they [value judgments and morals] come from sentiments or feelings rather than logical deductions.”¹⁰ The pivotal role of emotions is a position in agreement with Damasio as well as the neuroscientists, Funk and Gazzaniga! I encounter college graduates from time to time who say basically that “emotions are bad” – which is incorrect. Usually circumstances or situations activate different regions of the brain.



Science is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important for us: 'what shall we do and how shall we live.

Leo Tolstoy

quotefancy

Leo Tolstoy (1828 – 1910), author of the iconic War and Peace novel, was a Russian writer. He is regarded as one of the greatest and most influential authors of all time. Tolstoy also was a spiritual and religious leader at the time¹¹.

Einstein: limits of rational analysis and knowledge

Nowhere could that be more apparent than when it comes to the question of "purpose/right and wrong" (in that purpose is largely shaped by right and wrong) as well as in the dimension of right or wrong. At an Address to the Princeton Theological Seminary on May 19, 1939, Einstein stated unequivocally, as noted in the book, Ideas and Opinions (1954, 1982): that it is "equally clear that knowledge of what is does not open the door directly to what should be. One can have the clearest and most complete knowledge of what is, and yet not be able to deduct from that what should be the goal of our human aspirations."¹²

Sixty-one years after Einstein made that speech, the neuroscientist and doctor, Antonio Damasio, stated unequivocally that "Inevitably emotions are inseparable from the idea of good and evil."¹³ – which is in line with the analysis-summary of Funk and Gazzanigna.

It is clear strict rational analysis and materialist quantification excludes right and wrong. In a more general perspective, Einstein observed, "Try and penetrate with our limited means the secrets of nature and you will find

that, behind all the discernible laws and connections, there remains something subtle, intangible and inexplicable. Veneration of this force beyond anything that we can comprehend is my religion. To that extent I am, in fact, religious.”¹⁴ This quote of Albert Einstein reveals that Einstein perceived that the scope of scientific inquiry had definite and specific limits!¹⁵

Similarly, Lev Tolstoy, the brilliant Russian novelist, great thinker, and radical Christian, in *Confessions* (1988), observed, “The problem facing speculative science is acknowledgement of the fact that life that lies beyond cause and effect.”¹⁶ In a more practical vein, Tolstoy observed that a person, who necessarily has a limited brain capacity, can’t be expected to know “the infinite complexities and mutations of an infinite number of particles in the infinity of space and time,” or to understand “the life of the whole of humanity, of which neither the beginning nor the end is known,”¹⁷ - simply to have and hold a world view, or way of looking at the world.

Einstein concluded, as did Carl Sagan, Max Planck, Carl Jung, and other scholars and scientists, that imagination is more valuable and versatile than knowledge – considering that imagination includes not only “what is” (knowledge) but also contains possibilities outside the prevailing scope of accepted knowledge and science. I should add that Immanuel Kant argues that beauty and “aesthetic” ideas require “imagination” to activate or enable “ideas” or “abstractions” of beauty.

The Trolley and Footbridge Dilemma Experiments by Joshua Greene et al& contextual situations

The neuroscientist Joshua Greene and his colleagues performed some fascinating experiments that focused on how the brain processes moral dilemmas and situations. While subjects were asked questions relating to moral dilemmas, the subjects were undergoing MRI scanning to see which parts of the brain were active. The dilemmas presented were similar to the trolley dilemma

Trolley Dilemma.

“A runaway trolley is headed for five people who will be killed if it proceeds on its present course. The only way to save these people is to hit a switch that will turn the trolley onto a side track where it will run over and kill one

person instead of five. Is it okay to turn the trolley in order to save five people at the expense of one?"¹⁸ (p. 58 neuroscience and moral book)

That definitely is an interesting question. I posed the dilemma to my friends and family. My son, Teddy, said he wouldn't because he didn't have the right to since he didn't have enough information and facts about the people involved. My son, Stephen asked if he liked any of the five people. My sister, Perry, found the question disturbing and simply didn't answer at all. In reading the dilemma my reaction was that it was okay to switch the trolley and kill the one person. It was only later that the question occurred to me, What if the one person was my mother? In the end I agreed with Teddy. In order to act appropriately one needs adequate information and facts. The consensus of philosophers and people tested experimentally is "that it is morally acceptable to save five lives at the expense of one in this case."¹⁹ (p. 58) A corollary of the trolley dilemma is the footbridge dilemma.

Footbridge dilemma

"As before, a runaway trolley threatens to kill five people, but this time you are standing next to a large stranger on a footbridge spanning the tracks, in between the oncoming trolley and the five people. The only way to save the five people is to push this stranger off the bridge and onto the tracks below. He will die as a result, but his body will stop the trolley from reaching the others. Is it okay to save the five people by pushing the stranger to his death?"

Even though, rationally, there is no objective difference between the two dilemmas in that in both cases only one person dies if you intervene, the consensus was that it is not okay to push the stranger onto the tracks. In explaining the difference Greene argued that innate prohibitions against interpersonal violence would account for the difference. The footbridge dilemma involved a situation which is "up close and personal" and people naturally shy away from overt violence.

Before the experiments were run, Greene hypothesized that the footbridge dilemma would show more activity "in the brain regions associated with emotional response and social cognition"²⁰ (p 59 – neuroscience and morals) while the more impersonal trolley dilemma would involve systems related to "higher cognition."²¹ (p 59) That was precisely what they found. "Contemplation of personal moral dilemmas produced relatively greater

activity in three emotion related area.”²² (p.59 – neuroscience and morals) (posterior cingulate cortex, the medial prefrontal cortex, amygdala) In the more impersonal trolley dilemma there was “relatively greater neural activity in two classically ‘cognitive’ brain areas.” (dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and inferior parietal lobe). ²³(p 60 – neuroscience and morals) They also found that those people who did answer yes to the footbridge dilemma took much longer in coming to an answer, which makes sense. It naturally would take the brain more time for the “higher cognition” processes to override instinctual impulses.

The human brain is incredibly complex. Obviously, there isn’t a specific ‘moral’ region of the brain that processes information relative to all situations that involve morals. Different situations produce different means for processing information. Different regions of the brain perform different functions and more than one region of the brain actively works on the same problem. It is noteworthy that the amygdala was involved in the footbridge dilemma. While the amygdala does process information about potential rewards, its primary function, so to speak, is that of a town watchman who sounds the alarm. The amygdala is in a region of the brain which is one of the most primitive regions. Decision making, in this case, involved not only emotional content but also involved instinctual processes.

Morals: Reflections of Jung, and Newberg

Robert Juliano, a scholar, brought up the fact that, "One of Jung's latest writings on good and evil was in 1959 in his essay titled "Good and Evil in Analytical Psychology" in CW 10. There, he speaks of good and evil as unknowable in themselves. Furthermore, he characterizes them in paragraph 859 as "principles," which he states have existed "long before us and extends far beyond us." ... The word "principle," as Jung writes in paragraph 864, comes from the Latin "prius," which means "first" or "in the beginning." Carl Jung, goes even a little further than just the issue of right versus wrong in stating that there are some aspects of human consciousness that are beyond the ordinary scope of ‘science.’"

In Volume 8 of the Collected Works, paragraph 120, when Jung states: "Since nobody can penetrate to the heart of nature, you will not expect psychology to do the impossible and offer a valid explanation of the secret of creativity." Now, Jung was talking specifically about “creativity.” In that

context, however, surely ideals such as freedom liberty, compassion, justice, and equality would also need to be included in the same category of 'expecting psychology to do the impossible. Ideals generally involve principles, values, and ethics, categories which, ordinarily, do not readily lend themselves to quantification, measurement and rational analysis. These ideals rely on incredibly abstract ideas and highly emotionally charged concepts. In any case, Damasio's statement about emotions and the unconscious being the ultimate source in decision-making in questions of good and evil is very relevant.

In fact, Andrew Newberg, the famous medical doctor and neurologist, goes even further and states in his book, *Why We Believe What We Believe: Uncovering Our Biological Need for Meaning, Spirituality, and Truth* (2006), "If a concept or experience elicits no emotional response, it probably will not reach the level of consciousness." (p. 95) This echoes what the iconic psychoanalyst Carl Jung stated decades earlier, when, in Volume 8 of the *Collected Works* paragraph 642, Jung stated "that an idea which lacks emotional force can never become a life-ruling factor..... [that is] an idea must evoke a response from the emotions, I meant an unconscious readiness which, because of its affective nature, springs from deeper levels that are quite inaccessible to consciousness."

The well-known "subjective" characteristic of emotions is very salient in understanding emotions – and thus morals. In that much of human consciousness, which would be the capacities of human beings to experience, feel, and think about the world and the All, psychology, as such would appear definitely Not to be a hard science such as chemistry or physics, since precise direct measurement and quantification of subjective emotions would appear at the moment to be beyond the capabilities of the "science" of psychology.

I find it interesting that it appears that Carl Jung had an intuitive grasp of how the human brain functioned. In general Carl Jung viewed "the psyche" not as "an indivisible unity but a divisible and more or less divided whole. Although the separate parts are connected with one another, they are relatively independent..... I have called these psychic fragments "autonomous complexes,"²⁴ (CW8 582) the bottom line is that in moral decision-making numerous processes are involved. From reading various

neuroscience studies, it appears apparent that different situations trigger different regions of the brain into action and several regions of the brain work in tandem.

In a similar sense, Alfred North Whitehead stated, "Our minds are finite, and yet even in these circumstances of finitude we are surrounded by possibilities that are infinite, and the purpose of life is to grasp as much as we can out of that infinitude."²⁵ Einstein's discovery of the theory of relativity would seem to be rooted in his "imaginative" thought experiments, such as his "elevator" thought experiment which is important enough to merit a quick review.

Tolstoy's Fallacy, Baumeister's Paradigm, Imagination and the Synthesis Function

Lev Tolstoy was a fascinating person – a brilliant novelist, as well as a radical Christian and vigorous critic of the Russian Orthodox church. Tolstoy notes that a person can't be expected to know "the infinite complexities and mutations of an infinite number of particles in the infinity of space and time," or to understand "the life of the whole of humanity, of which neither the beginning nor the end is known,"²⁶ (p. 37) just in order to form a world view.

A fundamental logical flaw – wrong thinking in Justice Rehnquist's terms - he made - in my view - was to assume that one had to discover the ultimate meaning of the universe if there was to be meaning in his own life. I come across students who still take that assumption - that there is no meaning to life because one can't define the ultimate meaning of the universe scientifically. When you think about it - Believing the meaning of one's personal life is intimately and inextricably connected to the Ultimate Purpose of the universe is not a very reasonable proposition.

My niece is a biology PhD. I asked her what the meaning of life is to her. She answered, "There is no meaning. Science has demonstrated that there is no purpose to the universe!" That was Tolstoy's fallacy-mistake. Tolstoy (whose approach mirrored the "Proof of Islam" Al Ghazali) was over the top in his rational-logical approach. He came to the conclusion - as my niece did - that rationally-logically there is no ultimate purpose to the universe - so there is no meaning to life.

Holistic Synthesis - Baumeister's Paradigm, Imagination and Synthesis

That is a fallacy - people have all sorts and types of meaning - tons and tons. In fact, the human world is a world created of meanings! Of course, long before Tolstoy, St Augustine, St Gregory of Nyssa and many other early Christian spiritual leaders stated that God (and the ultimate purpose of the universe) are beyond comprehension.

Roy Baumeister, author and social psychologist, observes that, in reality, 'There is no ultimate purpose in life!' Baumeister emphasizes that a person's meaning is a holistic synthesis of many diverse meanings – the meaning of parents, family, friends, ethnicity, education, religiosity, spirituality, earth-nature, ...and so on²⁷.

This holistic synthesis is clearly beyond strict rational analysis or propositional statements – not to mention unquantifiable. A synthesis function must necessarily “exist” and what is interesting is that Kant argued that “imagination” is pivotal in synthesizing functions. Symbolism is not compatible with materialist fixation with “rigid quantification.” Kant, Nietzsche, Ortega Gasset, the majority of philosophers, as well as most of the social scientists agree that symbolism is pivotal in understanding not to mention the mainstay in the social sciences Kant's symbolic knowledge. Yet, the dilemma is that there is a consensus that symbols and symbolism are outside the realm of the cognitive processes and rational analysis.

Introduction: “Social and Moral Order”

In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, first published in 1912, Emile Durkheim, a founding father of sociology, stated that "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, i.e., things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."²⁸ (*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*)

Durkheim argued that religion was the most fundamental social institution of humankind, and further, that religion gave birth to social-religious beliefs that later became integrated into the social structure. Durkheim felt that social interaction was the pivotal factor of forming society and that religious beliefs are a major influence on social interactions - and thus essential to the formation of 'society.' The fact that religions have consistently

advocated ideals such as compassion, justice, righteousness, as well as truth, would seem to lend strong support to Durkheim's arguments. That is, the synergies between social factors and religious influences, which emerged simultaneously in primitive societies, produced a collective consciousness - a social-religious community as it were.

Emile Durkheim's concept of the collective consciousness predated Jung's concept of a collective unconscious by several decades, and Durkheim forcefully argued that it was an essential characteristic of society, without which society could not properly function. Durkheim argued that the norms, beliefs, and values of the group - and of society - effectively formed a collective consciousness - a system mutually agreed to values which would seem to have a minimal autonomous functioning - which then produced the "social integration" that is a prerequisite of any social integrity.²⁹

Social-Moral Order

Ramon Reyes, a Filipino scholar, mirrors Durkheim's views that spiritual and religious beliefs create(s) society when he points out that precolonial religions in the Philippines were a "social and moral order": "In sum, one social and moral order encompasses the living, the dead, the deities and the spirits, and the total environment."³⁰ (Religious Experience in the Philippines: From Mythos Through Logos to Kairos RAMON C. REYES)

Correlation between spirituality and compassion - and morals "Compassion for others and social support have survival value and health benefits.... (p. 171)

"Compassion for others and social support have survival value and health benefits...."³¹ (Oxford Handbook on Compassion p. 171) The powerful consequences of the presence or absence of others are seen as shaping forces in the evolution. Social interactions and within species interdependence are universal components of life on earth. Even bacteria are more reproductively successful in the presence of others of their own species. The sophisticated expression of or full expression of compassion depends on cognitive processes and cortical capacities that are unique to humans....."³² (Oxford Handbook on Compassion p.174) The desire to help others can be elicited by stimuli such as witnessing pain in others. For

some, but not all, individuals, these kinds of stimuli have an inherent capacity to induce an autonomic and sense of distress...³³ (Oxford Handbook on Compassion p. 184) (Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science – edited by Emma M. Seppala, Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Stephanie L. Brown, Monica C Worline, C. Daryl Cameron, James R. Dory)

The Social Significance of Compassion

“Several lines of evidence suggest that more religious individuals are more prosocial, tend to feel more compassion, and, therefore, should behave more altruistically. In her survey of different religious traditions, historian Karen Armstrong (2006) contends that empathy and compassion are cornerstones of the world’s religions. Central to the Judeo-Christian tradition is the teaching to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18) and to “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12). The Jewish value of tikkun olam (repairing the world) is often interpreted to encompass the repairing of social bonds and the building of community. Mohammed is quoted as saying, “None of you really has faith unless he desires for his neighbor what he desires for himself” (Lutfiyya & Churchill, 1970, p. 58).”³⁴(p. 202, Saslow et al The Social Significance of Spirituality: New Perspectives on the Compassion–Altruism Relationship)

Susan Sprecher & Beverly Fehr: Compassionate love for close others and humanity

Excerpts from Sprecher and Fehr article: “Those who were more religious or spiritual experienced more compassionate love than those who were less religious or spiritual. Evidence was found that compassionate love is distinct from empathy”³⁵ (p.629)

As hypothesized, religiosity and spirituality were associated positively with compassionate love both for close others (friends, family) and for humanity (strangers). However, religiosity and spirituality were uncorrelated with compassionate love for a specific close other (Study 3). Thus, although we can conclude that those who are more religious and spiritual report experiencing greater compassionate love, our data point to a more finely grained conclusion. To the extent that spirituality motivates compassionate love (and we recognize that the causal direction may be otherwise), it is strangers and humanity who are likely to be the recipients.”³⁶ (p.646)

(Compassionate love for close others and humanity Susan Sprecher Illinois State University Beverley Fehr University of Winnipeg Journal of Social and Personal Relationships 22(5))

Conclusions:

As the Trolley-Footbridge MRI experiment showed, different situations engage or trigger different regions of the brain, and that different regions of the brain work in tandem with other regions of the brain. That would be very relevant to any correct understanding of how the brain processes information or social signals not only about moral issues, but where spirituality or religious beliefs are concerned. I have come across many people who reject spirituality because of how religions behave or act. In the case of Evangelical leaders who support Trump, it would seem readily apparent that processes involved with group related ideological behaviors would be involved, while the brain processes involved in the spiritual-religious ideal of compassion would most likely be the anterior cingulate (which the psychologist Tania Singer has shown are implicated in empathy).

In the footbridge dilemma, the conclusions of Joshua Green and his colleagues was that the more emotional (and 'primitive') processes were a major influence in the decision of many people in the experiment to avoid up close interpersonal conflict. So, the conclusion is that some of the more 'primitive' and emotional processes are involved - positively, in fact - in making moral decisions. Of course, this contradicts many peoples' views including the philosopher Spinoza, who believe that morals are entirely a rational or cognitive activity.

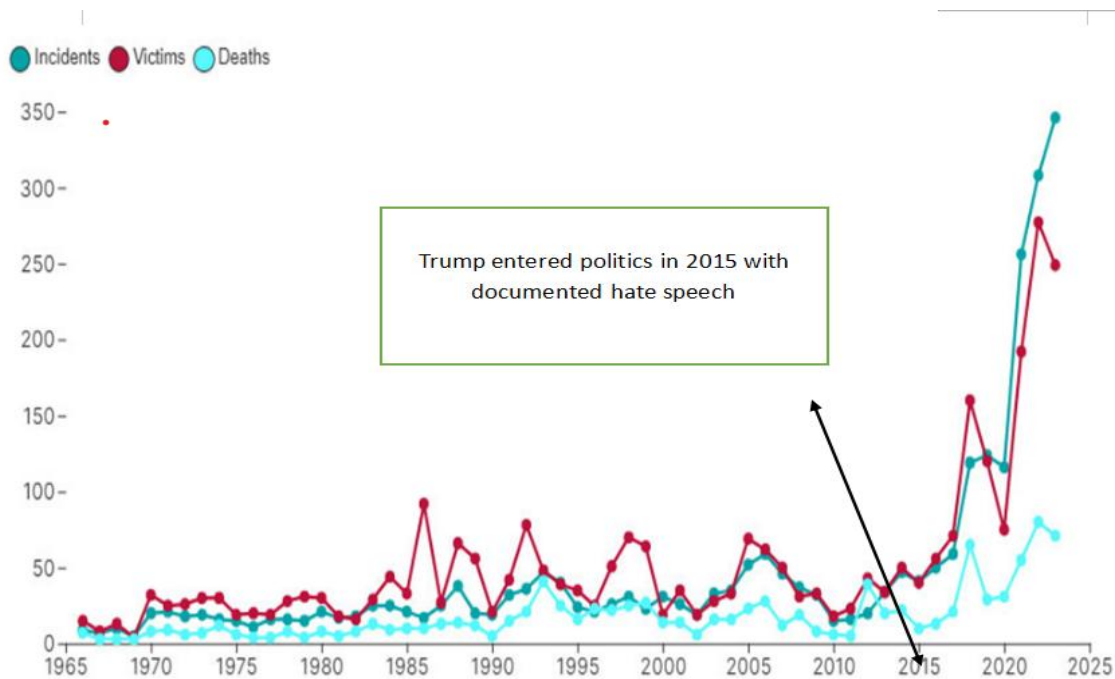
CONTEMPORARY MORAL DILEMMAS:

Do We Need to Reinvent the Wheel? Why are prosocial values and norms – and social consciousness - important? Recently a number of major dangerous antisocial behaviors have emerged since roughly 2000.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Galatians 6:7-9

American Society has Serious Problems: In the USA were over 73 school shootings a year for three consecutive years in a row. There have been over 610 mass shootings in the last four consecutive years. The surge appears to have begun very roughly around 2015 - roughly the time when Trump with his racist rhetoric and hate speech entered politics in the USA. While not as clear, mass shootings have roughly the same pattern as school shootings with a surge to 332 in 2015 Mass shootings in the United States are on the rise, according to data from the Gun Violence Archive.



Source: David Riedman, K-12 School Shooting Database Article: "804 People Have Been Killed by Guns at U.S Schools" The chart is shocking

Seven More Major Anti-Social Behaviors Emerged roughly since 2000 (besides school shootings over 73 each year for the past 4 consecutive years)

1. CDC: Suicide rates increased approximately 36% between 2000–2021.
2. All time high in mass shootings 2023 - 559 Mass shootings in 2023 so far
3. according to the Washington Post, hate crimes are at an all-time high in 2021 with 826 Filipinos reporting themselves as victims of hate crimes.

4. Assaults on teachers dramatically increased - not only in the US but worldwide.
5. Assaults on healthcare workers increased exponentially - also world-wide
6. epidemic (25% increase) in narcissism in western countries (Twenge, etc.).
7. The Christian led 'Antisocial No Mask Madness'

While the focus is on American based antisocial behaviors, I should highlight the Chinese knife slayings of children because it is so extreme – and unfortunately consistent since 2010

“A series of uncoordinated mass stabbings, hammer attacks, and cleaver attacks in the People's Republic of China began in March 2010. The spate of attacks left at least 90 dead and some 473 injured.” (Wikipedia)

This particular behavior is unheard of – unknown! Killing – murdering – with a knife is up close and personal – very different from killing at a distance, with a gun. Killing a 5 or 6-year-old child with a knife is horrifically brutally violent. Any way you look at the situation – it is Abnormal – with a capital A.

Attacks on Teachers worldwide deserves special attention: 1. “14% of US school educators feel humiliated by the assaults so much that they don't share the information with their colleagues. 12% of educators have been traumatized by serious verbal threats and/or physical assaults in the past year. (CaseGuard) 2. 13% of UK teachers have been physical assaulted by a pupil in the last year. 28% of teachers said they have been subjected to verbal abuse. (Evening Standards, UK) 3. 77% of Canadian public elementary teachers in Ontario say they have personally experienced or witnessed violence against a staff member in schools. 42 % of members have suffered a physical injury, illness, or psychological injury/illness as a result of workplace violence against them this school year.”³⁷ (Durham Radio News, USA) (Violence Against Teachers: 17 Alarming Statistics and Headlines <https://www.bite-pro.com/blog/post/violence-against-teachers-17-alarming-statistics-and-headlines>)

The Importance of pro-social social consciousness

MY argument is that understanding and educating people into social consciousness is very important for providing a stable social structure. The problem is materialist ideology has created several methodology problems that inhibits the development of a proper theory of human consciousness.

Intro: Make America Great Again -Trump and Republicans Model Antisocial Behavior

Early on I realized – as many people did – when Trump entered politics, that America had a problem. I began with a post on FB in September 2016 - which I followed up with a letter to Congressman Ruppersberger explaining that Trump's racist rhetoric and hate speech would incite extremists into action and cause a rise in hate crimes and right-wing white supremacist terrorist shooting sprees. In fact, that did come about. In both 2017 and 2018 there was a 17% increase in hate crimes – as recorded by the FBI as well as a severe spike in white supremacist mass shootings in both 2017 and 2018.

I. Might Makes Right March 2017 Letters to allies' embassies

In letters that I mailed to the embassies of our allies in Mid-March 2017, I stated:

"I read an article which said that Trump's envoy to the United Nations was going to "take names" and dictate terms to the nations of the world. That is an utter disgrace. When it comes down to it, at times, Americans can be downright arrogant. Some Americans think they have all the power and all the answers. The truth of it is Americans don't even have the right question. History repeats itself and has definite cycles. I believe America is in the cycle of might-makes-right. After the Athenians defeated the Persians, they rose to the undisputed and unchallenged leadership of the Greek world. They used their power to bully and dictate terms to their allies. The Athenians ended up massacring all the inhabitants of Lesbos on the argument that might-makes-right. Their policies ended up backfiring."

Intelligence Leaks July 30, 2020: The title of an article in the Indy 100, Independent, stated that "Trump accused of 'near-sadistic' bullying of Angela Merkel for 'vicious attacks' in private phone call" The article went on to say How Bernstein of CNN observed that Although Trump "regularly

bullied and disparaged" other leaders like Emmanuel Macron (France), Justin Trudeau (Canada) and Scott Morrison (Australia) However, his most "vicious attacks" were reserved for women, the report claims. Bernstein quoted one of his sources as calling Trump's phone calls with Merkel and May "near-sadistic". Some of the things he said to Angela Merkel are just unbelievable: he called her 'stupid,' and accused her of being in the pocket of the Russians. He's toughest with those he looks at as weaklings and weakest with the ones he ought to be tough with. The intelligence leak from foreign intelligence sources led to further revelations such as how Trump called May a "fool" on a phone call which was later verified by former National Security advisor Bolton in his book.

As an additional point of information, I have written five essays on racism³⁸ since then and advocated additional training for police to decrease the high disproportional killings of blacks in the USA (facts are there but you have to dig for them). Title of article in the Washington Post that was published on 6-9-22: "Poll: Black Americans fear more racist attacks after Buffalo shooting. Two years after George Floyd's murder, nearly 8 in 10 Black Americans say there has been little or no improvement in how police treat Black people",³⁹ according to a Washington Post-Ipsos poll (see footnote).

Besides school shootings, there are six more Major Anti-Social Behaviors Emerged (very) roughly at the same time – the year 2000

1. CDC: Suicide rates increased approximately 36% between 2000–2021.
2. All time high in mass shootings 2023 - 559 Mass shootings in 2023 so far
3. according to the Washington Post, hate crimes are at an all-time high in 2021 with 826 Filipinos reporting themselves as victims of hate crimes.
4. Assaults on teachers dramatically increased - not only in the US but worldwide.
5. Assaults on healthcare workers increased exponentially - also world-wide
6. epidemic (25% increase) in narcissism in western countries (Twenge, etc.).

Most studies of spirituality reveal a distinct difference in attitude and action between spirituality and religiosity.

For the record, I am a follower of Jesus Christ. My guiding lights are "spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24 – and for that precise reason I vigorously oppose

the politicization of Christ which produced the right wing Christian support of Trump who, besides being a racist and pathological liar, is just stupid as s**t. Trump – with the right wing Christian support of several Evangelical leaders has divided America like never before – as in the January 6th assault on the United States Capital.

Trump's official policy on immigration - which he pursued while in office - was to separate children as young as 5 or 6 from their mothers to punish them for immigrating. Immigration is a problem -> a big problem – ignorance and hatred will not solve anything. That is just sick and sadistic. As a result of Trump modeling racist views hate crimes - according to the Washington Post – hate crimes reached an all-time high in 2021. 896 Filipinos filed complaints about being victims of hate crimes in the USA.

How materialist methods affect psychology theories

Kay Deaux, a prominent social psychologist, highlights the fact that social psychology has historically had an “emphasis on experimenter-created social groups” which “precluded most affective displays.” Experiments conducted in a laboratory would necessarily have a contrived and arbitrary aspect to them, and cognitive concepts, structures and paradigms tend to be nice, neat, and precise constructs that are measurable in some sense. As the philosopher Solomon and others frequently emphasize, emotions tend to have a "subjective" characteristic and are difficult to quantify and measure. Deaux, in her critical analysis of social psychology, goes on to say, “In contrast, natural groups, whether family, fraternity, or nation, are often the arena for intense displays of emotion and strong affective ties.”⁴⁰ (p. 794 Handbook of principles social psychology)

It should be noted that the almost universally accepted theory of group related behavior is entirely cognitive, originating largely in Tajfel and Turner's "minimal group paradigm, so named because "minimal" refers to the fact that a trigger to group related behavior, in their theory is entirely cognitive. The final result, however, as Kay Deaux emphasizes is that the social identity as a model or theory of group-related behavior utterly fails to explain the group related behaviors for instance of Trump rallies during which Trump followers chant about the quad, four minority

Congresswomen, vilified and demonized by Trump, "Send them Back." So, the "Science of Psychology" has limits.

Addendum II: "When logic and proportion Have fallen sloppy dead and the White Knight is talking backwards!" Fallacies are "Wrong Thinking" in Justice Rehnquists terms, but more important Fallacies are delusional thinking!

The Materialist Problem: Peer Reviewed 2018 Critique of Materialist Methods Endorsed by Dr Harold Koenig, Dr Paul Wong, Dr Stephen Farra, Stefan Schindler

1. Dr. Paul Wong, Professor Emeritus of Trent University edited two large volumes of The Human Quest for Meaning
2. Dr. Harold Koenig, a medical doctor-psychiatrist, a well published and very well-known author and researcher stated about this article: "Charlie – makes perfect sense to me,
3. Dr. Stephen Farra: Columbia International University Emeritus "Definist Fallacy (leading to a closed Materialism) is spiritual poison, and has hurt us all
4. Stefan Schindler, an award-winning author, and retired psychology-philosophy professor

Materialist Maxim: spirituality is intangible and beyond the senses."

William R. Miller and Carl E. Thoresen state, "A philosophical basis for this perspective is materialism, the belief that there is nothing to study because spirituality is intangible and beyond the senses." "Definist Fallacies" occur when someone unfairly defines a term so that a controversial position is made easier to defend - like defining spirituality as "intangible" – which is a "loaded term." The Definist Falalcy is the same as the same as the "Persuasive Definition." (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

When Death becomes a Figment of Your Imagination

Narrative Illustration: Not all that long ago, I happened to be talking with a Filipina college student at a street restaurant in General Santos, Philippines. I went over the materialist argument as explained by Miller & Thompson in the NIH article as "the belief that there is nothing to study

because spirituality is intangible and beyond the senses.” Since Filipinas have a reputation for being spiritual, I was a bit surprised when the Filipina college student/graduate agreed with the argument that spirituality is unreal because it is “intangible’.

So, I asked her to consider – for a moment - the concept of “death!” I emphasized that out that - of all things - “death” is “intangible and beyond the senses” and way beyond quantification. Then I pointed out that if you then follow the logic and reasoning of the materialist argument, “Death – then - becomes a “figment of her imagination and superstitious nonsense.” She paused for a second, then agreed with my reasoning – which was a major success for me.

Of course, the idea of death being a “figment of your imagination and unreal” is totally absurd. But then again, the statement that “all spirituality is unreal” is equally absurd and wrong on several levels. First it is a fallacy – a “delusion”! Secondly there are a number of very “tangible” types of spirituality: Spirituality of Compassion, Musical Spirituality, Spiritual Experiences and Healing in Grieving, Children's Spirituality, Artistic Spirituality, Poetry and Prophecy, Dream Weaving/Creative Transcendence, Spirituality in nature as a living force, and Autistic spirituality

Spiritual Poison: Academic Maladaptive Stereotype:

On the subject of the materialist Definist - maladaptive stereotype “All spirituality is unreal”! Dr Stephen Farra, wrote: "Charles, I strongly agree that the Definist Fallacy (leading to a closed Materialism) is spiritual poison, and has hurt us all! Frankl writes about how a closed Naturalism leads to a suffocating Reductionism, which leads to a mental and emotional Nihilism and the kind of Moral Corruption he experienced in Auschwitz and Dachau.....”

“Materialist Spirituality” is Based on a Fiction

Functional Spirituality vs the Supernatural Maladaptive Stereotype

Brian D Josephson, a Nobel-prize winning quantum physicist – the only Welshman to earn the Nobel peace prize - observes, “With religion, focusing on the factuality or otherwise of religious belief similarly misses the point: the significant questions in this context relate to the functions and

fruitfulness of religious beliefs.” That is, scientists are fixated on the “supernatural.” Briefly I would add that the “supernatural”, by definition, is ‘beyond the scope of scientific inquiry’ makes the “supernatural concept” a “loaded” term and thus a Definist fallacy.

When I asked my partner, who is a Filipina Catholic, if “God is supernatural?” She replied, “Yes.” I pointed out that from my research Jesus Christ never once used the word “supernatural” in the gospels and the concept of the holy Spirit in no way matches the materialist concept of the “Supernatural” - for example, Spirit and Truth – John 4:23-24; Spirit is Truth - John 5:6; or guidance – Luke 1:27. Then there are gifts of the Holy Spirit. In Catholic tradition, the seven gifts are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. Lastly, the fruits of the Holy Spirit are nine virtues that are believed to be the result of the Holy Spirit's presence in a believer's life, as described in Galatians 5:22-23. These fruits are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Even worst, the supernatural comes with baggage – such as powers, superstitious nonsense, magic, mental illness. Dr Koenig highlights the fact that historically psychiatry at times views transcendental spiritual experiences as “psychosis!” I felt good that my partner strongly agrees with my point – plus several of my other spiritual and Christian connections definitely agree that is a valid point.

Real World Context-Evidence - There is a Consensus that Real-World context-evidence is an absolute requirement for a valid scientific theory.

- Immanuel Kant: “If a concept lacks reference to any object of possible experience, Kant argues, it “has no meaning and is completely lacking in content”
- Iain McGilchrist: “Thinking is always thinking, but philosophical thinking is, upon the whole, at the extreme end of the scale of distance from the active urgency of concrete situations. It is because of this fact that neglect of context is the besetting fallacy of philosophical thought ... I should venture to assert that the most pervasive fallacy of philosophic thinking goes back to neglect of context ... neglect of context is the greatest single disaster which philosophic thinking can incur.”

- Muzafer Sherif: “Sherif emphasizes that real world contexts are important, even if regarded as “messy” compared to controlled lab experiments.” “A psychological construct—if it is to prove valid and adequate—must be as valid and adequate in handling the stuff of ordinary human affairs as in handling the controlled variables of the laboratory experiment.”

The Materialist Maxim and the Supernatural Concept have ZERO Real-World Context.

Kant, Iain McGilchrist and Muzafer Sherif agree that “real-world context-evidence” is a prerequisite for any valid scientific theory! By definition, the “supernatural” concept has ZERO real world context-evidence – NONE! Yet, that is how materialists successfully managed to peg and equate all spirituality as unreal and superstitious nonsense! I have always said that Spiritual people are people!” and that spirituality has gotten entangled abstractions. From a scientific perspective, “people” are the only possible source of “real-world context-evidence” The “supernatural” is an abstraction – an empty distorted abstraction at that.

Selective Attention Factor

David DiSalvo states, “Selective attention,” also called “selectivity bias”—the tendency to orient oneself toward and process information from only one part of our environment to the exclusion of other parts, no matter how obvious those parts may be.” There is a consensus that “selective attention” is absolutely pivotal in human consciousness. Without doubt the supernatural maladaptive stereotype has distorted the thinking of millions of people. That maladaptive stereotype is prevalent in Western culture and academia and is found in many definitions of prophecy and myths – despite being meaningless and unscientific. It is readily apparent that the materialist maladaptive stereotype has successfully redirected the “attention” of millions of people and focused their attention to a meaningless, empty abstraction – a major and very destructive maladaptive stereotype!

Commentary

The “supernatural concept” is just a derivative of the underlying materialist argument that “spirituality is intangible and beyond the senses” – which

besides being a fallacy is also untrue because there are a number of tangible types of spirituality

Addendum I: New Approach-Categorization of spirituality with real world context vs the “supernatural” – Materialist Spirituality is based on a fiction

1. Spirituality of Compassion: “Compassion for others and social support have survival value and health benefits....”⁴¹ (The Oxford Handbook on Compassion: p. 171) “Our findings argue that spirituality—above and beyond religiosity—is uniquely associated with greater compassion and enhanced altruism toward strangers.”⁴² (The Social Significance of Spirituality Laura R. Saslow et al), “religiosity and spirituality were associated positively with compassionate love both for close others (friends, family) and for humanity (strangers).” (Compassionate love....., S. Sprecher

2. Musical Spirituality Shulkin and Raglan “Our evolution is tightly bound to music and to the body as an instrument (e.g., clapping). Music, amongst other things, helps to facilitate social cooperative and coordinated behaviors.”⁴³ “Music is a fundamental part of our evolution – and functional because it facilitates “human contact” and out “social self” “Cross-culturally, at a first approximation, ‘musical’ behaviours involve not just patterned sound, but also overt action; ‘musicality’ is a property of communities rather than of individuals; and music is mutable in its specific significances or meanings⁴⁴ (p.1) (Ian Cross)

3. Poetic Spirituality & Prophecy-Creativity & Transcendence: “The prophet is a poet. His experience is one known to poets. What poets know as poetic inspiration; the prophets call divine revelation”⁴⁵ - Heschel

4. Kapwa-loob pro-social norms/spirituality Kapwa & Relational Spirituality: K Lagdameo-Santillan “Kapwa is a recognition of a shared identity, an inner self, shared with others” (i.e. Reynaldo Ileto, Jeremiah Reyes, Mercado, etc.) + Ubuntu (African - Anglican Tutu) Anam Cara - soul friend (Celtic - soul friend, O'Donohue - Irish theologian)⁴⁶

5. Children’s Spirituality Donna Thomas: “anomalous experiences can catalyze self-healing for children and young people.”⁴⁷

6. Artistic Spirituality: Robert K. Johnston - 20 percent of Americans turn to “media, arts and culture” as their primary means of spiritual experience and expression....”⁴⁸

7. Healing Spiritual-Psychic Experiences in Grieving “Conversely, experience has shown pastoral caregivers that individuals do seem to cope better if they can “actualize” their spiritual experiences in times of crisis.”⁴⁹

8. T'boli Dream Weaving/T'nalak – Dreams as a source of divine inspiration – i.e. Be Lang Dulay, a national artist, popularized T'nalak weaving with her over 100 different T'nalak designs."⁵⁰

9. Arctic Hunter Gatherer beliefs in animal spirits as "Human relationships with the natural world..." in context of William James Practical Use Principle⁵¹

10. Dr. Ingela Visuri: Spirituality and "The Case of High functioning Autism"⁵²

11. Medical studies-research & meta-analyses - That is important because as J. E Kennedy points out - "very little research has been done" [about people]⁵³

12. Synthesis-Consensus of William James, Viktor Frankl, & Carl Jung - "to be or not to be"

1), Spiritual experiences & spirituality shape peoples' "sense of reality" & helps (for better or worse) people "make sense of the world"

2) Tolerance - different experiences (+ culture, upbringing) create different and diverse worldviews - particularly in spiritual experiences.

3) Consistently people report that spirituality is a powerful influence and motivation in their lives.

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