

# The next new world<sup>1</sup>

Christopher Holvenstot

---

Throughout history we have been obliged to reformulate fundamental beliefs whenever our curiosity exposes flaws that undermine our conception of reality. This is never an easy process, particularly now. The institutional and emotional investment in the certitude and fixity of material reality is gargantuan. The energy required to reach a critical mass for so dramatic a shift in thinking is too great to consider. And such energy must necessarily arise from the dissatisfaction of individuals who are powerless against monolithic institutional self-protection. Fortunately for those who seek change, dissatisfaction is on the rise. The recognition of being trapped between illogical, oft-times cruel religious prescriptions and an impossible, value denuded material culture is beginning to breed a discontent that can ultimately fuel significant change.

---

## 1 The problem

The center does not hold. Even the most superficial critique of our conception of reality reveals a host of anomalies, shortcomings, inadequacies and conundrums. It is delightful to see that the very scientific endeavor which delivered us to the certainty of a directly observable physical world has, through a blind and dogged persistence, completely undermined the validity of its own conception. The immutability of matter, the regulability of time, even the notions of 'self' and 'free will' dissolve under the scrutiny of 20th century physics and neuroscience. Where now is the certainty and solidity of the world so promised us in science's bid to replace religion as the more valid descriptor of our reality? Again we resort to blind faith. We actively choose to believe in a purely materialist conception (despite all contrary evidence) in order to maintain the certainty, constancy and comfort humanity requires for itself. We are obliged, beholden to and invested in the materialist conception in ways we cannot directly decipher. It may not be "true," this conception of ours, but it's "true enough" and at any rate the kinds of exchanges required in a material conception allow us little time to ponder the significance of that difference. To stop and think, in the midst of a commercial culture, is an act of unfathomable, unforgivable rebellion. It manifests as the failure of the individual in both financial and psychological terms. To do nothing is to be nothing. To stop is to die. The economic viability of the individual becomes the over-urgent and all-demanding imperative of life. If the inherent falsity of our materi-

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a condensed and edited version of a series of three articles (PHILICA.COM  articles No. 30, 31, and 32) titled "The Next New World: An Introduction to Contextual Division."

alist conception of reality isn't sufficient reason to question it, this overwhelming degradation of the experience of conscious existence surely must nag us toward reformation. We are indeed the makers of our own world, which begins with private ideas and personal beliefs. We either comply with what is given or question this and develop our own ideas. The opportunity is to question, reevaluate, reformulate and then to institute the necessary changes at whatever level of manifestation we aspire to attain. This is the loudest lesson of human history and the most significant opportunity in anyone's lifetime. Individuals are the makers of meaning, and from there, with the rise of critical mass flows the inevitable transformation of institutions and governments based on those formulations. With the awareness of this opportunity comes the awesome obligation it signifies. No one can do it for us. A reevaluation can be discussed publicly or shared in communications like this, but the commitment to a final valuation and the power of that belief are uniquely personal endeavors.

In a broader sense, the opportunities inherent in a critical reevaluation are infinite. If we agree that we are the makers of meaning then the meanings available to us are indeed without limit. We are bound only by our imagination. Yet, if our imaginations are bound by the metaphors and imperatives of a materialist conception we will not get very far. This is where it gets tricky. Our entire culture (including languages, narrative structure, metaphorical references, etc.) is in essential ways a manifestation of the outdated beliefs we are endeavoring to alter. We are surrounded by hidden assumptions and indirect sources of enforced meanings which can hamper and obstruct the attainment of a truly objective perspective. An entirely new logical structure is needed to accommodate the very thinking required for significant change. To be effective, this new structure will have to include all that remains intentionally and unintentionally excluded from the materialist conception.

Long avoided because of its immaterial, non-locatable properties, consciousness is the last remaining piece of the puzzle and, arguably, the most essential feature of our description of the natural and physical world. Science has not properly contended with the central presence of consciousness in predetermining the structure and meaning of all explanations. Science is in the business of explanations, which do not exist in-and-of themselves in the natural world. By looking at the way the hidden objectives of conscious entities determine explanatory concepts we can isolate anthropocentric, biocentric and culturally-centric explanations of our universe and begin exploring realms of reality that exist independent of purpose-biased expectations and observations.

The responsibility of the present moment is to take an honest look at the tools we use to create explanations, especially reality concepts, and to understand ourselves as creatures that create and re-enforce reality concepts quite automatically. The opportunity thereafter is to utilize the same tools and methodology in a more conscious and intentional way to construct logical realms in a more objective manner.

Far greater in scope and significance than direct practical application are the incredible cognitive and conceptual possibilities apparent when we gain even the smallest

foothold in the new extracontextual realm — a realm defined by properties and phenomena currently denied legitimacy by application of traditional materialist standards. Creative conceptualizing of alternative narratives combined with new research standards will forge alternate worlds of focus for our experience; creating entirely new, internally validating, circularly reconfirming paradigmatic realities. It is important to remember that science forwarded humanity's interests by turning a blind eye to the overarching religiously prescribed (and enforced) reality of the Middle Ages. A new endeavor, with a host of new motivational directives, can proffer equally valid conceptions un beholden to the parameters of the current dominant discourse, unconcerned with the circularly reconfirming validations and proofs embedded in contemporary scientific practice.

## 2 The tools

Truth is a malleable tool, context specific and task oriented. We tend to think of truth as something innate or inherent about our world when in fact even a very brief look at the history of humanity (Tarnas, 1991) reveals truth as consistently changing to support ever-changing criteria, contexts, needs and uses. As a concept, truth functions best if we agree to overlook its ever-changing nature. Whatever current truth we are entertaining about our condition in the universe, that truth is always to be considered the ultimate and final version. By fully investing ourselves in this way, we can enjoy the benefits of our culture's collective impulses. "Certainty" and "control" became guiding imperatives in direct response to the unknowable and unpredictable "wisdom of god" that informed our reality concept prior to the advent of science. The culture chose what presented itself with qualities of certainty and controlability — the material properties and predictable interactions of the objects in front of us. Thereafter, truth could be determined democratically by the individual and would be imbued with the desirable qualities that were missing in the previous version.

Our choice of truth very directly informs the quality and nature of our reality. We instinctually perceive it the other way round, wrongly believing that from within our "given" reality we passively discern and recognize inherent qualities of truth. The belief that we are passive in this process allows truth to seem inherent to reality which vastly increases its psychological efficacy.

The narrative format is a tool which relies on the assumption of time unfolding in a linear, regulable one-way arrow allowing cause-and-effect scenarios to proceed from past, through the present, into the future in a reliable, replicable way. Narrative formats also rely upon the notion of the separateness of objects in a three dimensional space — cause-and-effect implies distinct objects causing effects via interaction with distinctly separate objects extended in space. Causal concepts (object-boundaries, linear time and three dimensional space) continue as integral to the production of meaning despite science's century-old exposure of the fallacy of these seemingly fundamental concepts. Despite this unmasking, the causal narrative production of meaning remains essential to animate functioning, is the foundation of linguistic

thought processes, and continues to be our primary mode of conceptualizing the truth of our world.

Unfortunately, the production of meaning via traditional narrative can only reveal a version of the world already circumscribed by the narrative format. Causal concepts are circularly reconfirmed in a process intended to describe an objective, absolute truth. Causal concepts, despite their usefulness, are not objective truths and cannot describe, either directly or metaphorically, a universe unbound by and un beholden to the perceptual/cognitive imperatives of biological existence.

The materialist criteria science uses to establish proof, based on observable facts, cannot subdue or explain the conscious directives, awareness and interpretive skills responsible for activating and utilizing the very sensory experience on which established proof relies. Thus, science is seen now as far too narrow in its logical criteria to allow for the full spectrum of conscious aspects in nature or the human condition. Tampering with the established criteria, however, is extraordinarily difficult. The forces guarding science's materialist stance are impervious to common sense and gladly ignore the strength of their own conscious experiencing. The scientific mindset is subject to an irrational category blindness that is reminiscent of religion's inability to acknowledge the paleo-anthropological evidence disproving creation myths. The scientific endeavor is characterized by aspects of a low grade autism or Asperger's disorder — a dissociative disregard for the logic of conscious states, emotion and interrelation and a high regard for things mechanical. A purely physical/mechanical world divorced from conscious phenomena is in many respects the greatest and most useful invention of science but is ultimately a blatant artifice for the purpose of subduing material aspects of the world, and is therefore extremely limited as a measure of truth or as an accurate descriptor of the much broader reality of our condition in which consciousness plays a central role.

The right to describe reality to humanity comes with incredible perks and privileges difficult to relinquish when the paradigm loses its luster. Neither religion nor science has any interest in relinquishing territorial legitimacy to non-materialist, non-spiritual, non-exclusively-human explanations of conscious phenomena. Nor does either of these traditional systems of thought possess the flexibility to see in what way their self-reconfirming internal logic necessarily excludes broader definitions of reality that can include the quantum and the cosmological or encompass the self-evident central presence of a conscious condition throughout nature.

Western culture has found the unlikely combination of science and religion a comfortable enough fit because each seems at first glance (by the tidiness of the physical/spiritual divide) to accommodate the explanatory deficit in the other. The psychological comfort of this familiar formula will not be easily wrested from the culture. Each of us embodies the prejudices of this combined scientific/religious thought since it is embedded everywhere in our languages, cultures, public institutions and private ideas concerning the nature of reality. The most confirmed rationalist among us will call out to God in moments of great suffering just as the most faithful religious devotee in the

same circumstance will expect the best medical relief science and money can provide. It is an unlikely pairing of thought processes, the scientific and the religious, as they represent diametrically opposed explanations of our condition. Rather than eliminating one another by logical reduction they function in combination to provide comfort and expand our understanding of material properties and processes. The limits of this self-serving patchwork system, however, become increasingly evident as we witness anomalies in physics, cosmology and cognitive neuroscience pile up in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Apparently, the ideas on which our reality concepts are based need not be inherently true or completely sound in logic to be fundamentally engaging and profoundly useful. Religion continues to lend succor to human suffering, monopolize discussions of morality and provide the desired distance from an intellectual acceptance of mortality. Traditional science too, will carry on with specific and limited uses. What will follow in the wake of science's strict materialism promises to be the more vibrant enterprise reshaping our vision of reality with the same exuberance religion and science provided at the height of their respective eras.

Fortunately, humanity has a long history of revising the parameters of its own reality. Though we are collectively compelled to silence visionary thinking, the necessary adjustments to inappropriate dogma ultimately win out. The circularly self-validating logical systems we use as explanations wear down when persistent curiosity and analysis expose new information and concepts. Based on new information and revised cultural imperatives additional self-validating logical systems will eventually cement themselves into shared beliefs, policies, institutions and economies. We make our own world, fashioning it out of values and beliefs that are entirely cognitive in their construction — existing nowhere else but in the realm of information, concepts and cognitive processes. Armed with the concept of truth, the use of metaphor and the construction of narrative we project outwardly what we would have the world be. We have done this over and over throughout history and are in the process of revising it again.

### 3 Consciousness and the biological imperative

All biological organisms are required to comprehend their environment in terms of one very narrow and specific set of abstract and fictional concepts. To fail at this odd trick is to fail completely. The requirement of awareness, interpretation and intention indicates the necessity of a condition of consciousness at the moment of life's first emergence from matter. A configuration space for animate experience had to be instantly accessible. Immediate survival cannot have relied on the eventual evolutionary development of organs of perception and cognition to discern fundamental features. The entire biospecific configuration space (time as a line; extension and solidity; separateness; the concept of cause and effect; a sense of freely willed purpose and volition; and the positive valuation of continued life) needed to be fully functional and fully available from the start. While consciousness at this early level can be considered

merely mechanical/procedural awareness, these reductive metaphorical descriptors do not degrade the extraordinary fact of the presence of awareness in the universe.

If we allow the assumption that awareness was necessary in even the earliest, simplest creatures, then organs of perception and cognition can be said to have developed not to introduce consciousness to the natural world but as biological articulations of a conscious condition already present in the original biospecific construct. Organs of perception and cognition evolved in highly mobile, highly volitional organisms as advantageous evolutionary expediences to better confirm and express the increasingly complex conditions relevant to biological success in a dynamic environment inhabited by other equally volitional creatures.

Consciousness, in the human sense, can be viewed as an anomalous flowering of self-regulative and self-reflective cognitive activity combined with a highly developed planning-phase mechanism with which we project multiple scenarios onto a variety of future contingencies. The emergence of an inner voice, complex emotions and a vivid imagination, though large and loud in each of us, does not accurately reflect the properties of a fundamental condition of consciousness throughout nature. By defining consciousness in anthropocentric terms (and based on its loudest features) we categorically eliminate and obscure essential clues to its origin, function and location within the commonality of organic/animate existence.

The perception of biocontextual features by simpler organisms, though neither self-reflexive nor locatable, is nonetheless an indication of awareness on a fundamental level. Non-locatable, non-self-reflexive awareness is indicated in all biological life and is as necessary to differentiated cell function as it is to the communal behavior of social organisms. A cell, an individual organism and a social cluster all require a fundamental awareness of boundary and volition in a three dimensional space subject to linear time and are informed by a positive valuation of continued existence. All life forms employ narratives which utilize these features, chiefly for the purpose of procreation, nutrition and self-protection. A brain is not a necessity for this type of awareness or for the primal deployment of fundamental survival narratives.

Plant life, for example, performs complex developmental regulation of diverse tissue types and tissue functions without the benefit of a locatable center of conscious command. A plant's functioning indicates awareness on the most fundamental and useful level pertaining to conditions of time, season, temperature, humidity, location, mass, gravity, self-border, differentiation of tissues, etc. It participates in the relevant conditions of a time-line, the concept of matter extended in space, a cause and effect scenario, a positive valuation of continued existence, volitional availability, etc., but the relative simplicity and low stress of its interactions do not require the development of an objectified reality, an inner voice, or the incorporation of vital functions and perceptual organs into a central, self-reflexive feedback loop. Life-forms need neither a brain nor self-reflexivity to consciously interpret their environment and to have intentions regarding their relationship to it. We cannot expect these fundamental motivational directives to be pinned to neural correlates if they exist in organisms

lacking brains.

Very different kinds of questions arise. Rather than “how does consciousness emerge in a material universe?” we must ask “how and why does such a specific material version of the universe arise from the intentions and properties of a condition of consciousness?” The specificity of our world, given the wide range of options, is its most peculiar aspect. And there is an elusive quality of presentation to the world (via the perspective of an organic creature that takes the world’s features as real) that suggests an inherent intent to be perceived in a specific format. A distinct symbiosis presents itself, engaging observer and observed, yet which relies on a clear and materialized distinction between the two.

This possibility of a purposive presentation aspect, fully developed and available at life’s first emergence, is a concept which possesses a quality of externality vis-à-vis the unified construct that biological life perceives as an available reality. A condition of consciousness seems to have an awareness/intention aspect deeply and thoroughly embedded within the fundamental logical structure of a biospecific context and a presentation/intention aspect more accurately positioned amongst the concepts of the extracontextual realm. By defining both contextual realms with greater precision we can better ascertain the implications of a dual-natured conscious condition. By theoretically placing the awareness/intention aspect of a condition of consciousness into the biospecific we complete a more accurate and satisfying picture of the natural world. By theoretically placing the presentation/intention aspect of a condition of consciousness in the extracontextual we free the subject from the unnatural forcing of an inappropriate logic and spare it the oblivion or mysticism that befalls everything unassimilable to our limited materialist/biospecific context.

Theories which bind consciousness to quantum behavior have been suggested and developed by Hameroff (1998), Penrose (1994) and others. These are usually tied, however, to expectations that quantum processes ultimately describe actual physical processes within the brain. This is a good example of instinctual biospecific reconfirmation in action. In addition to being a misuse of technologically inspired metaphors (using new technology to describe our bodies) this expectation is blind to the very qualities the quantum realm suggests, overlooks the implication that physical location and causal narratives are biospecific prejudices which hamper our view of quantum phenomena. The assumption of quantum processes ordering the brain and constructing consciousness categorically obliterates the presence of the unbrained conscious condition which seems implicit throughout nature. It is only by inappropriate application of biospecific expectations that a condition of consciousness requires a physical or causal explanation.

The current materialist criteria require the pinning down of neural correlates before we can be said to understand anything about conscious phenomena. In the light of the very different logic that contextual division reveals, this pinning down of neural correlates is a fool’s errand — one that conveniently and indefinitely postpones a validating acceptance of the widespread and fundamental condition of consciousness in all

living things. By delaying acceptance of this fact we continue to deny coequality with a natural world we're on the brink of extinguishing for lack of respect. By intentionally prolonging our communal ignorance, exploitation remains guiltlessly sanctioned allowing us to continue pursuing a form of wealth that is explicitly decided by materialist criteria. Our destructive economy is directly linked to our false beliefs about our world and about consciousness. Our outdated world-model misconstrues the truth of our condition and oddly, leads us to destroy the very material realm to which we've confined our beliefs. By stripping the world of consciousness and reducing it to a material resource, we strip the world of consciousness and reduce it to a material resource. Surprise, surprise.

#### 4 Moving forward

With the constraints of biocontextual logic removed, the next new world appears frighteningly vast and unmanageable — a much broader realm than anyone would rationally wish for. But as with all new exploration one begins by discerning local features and drawing lines to delineate distinct territories of manageability. Because the quantum realm (for one example) permeates all physical/spatial realms, we know we cannot use territorial distinctions derived from traditional Copernican inspired materialist methodology. The distinctions in the next new world will necessarily be conceptual/logical constructs. These new conceptions will eventually flesh out to assume as familiar a validating mechanism as our dependable Copernican conception, as new uses and experiences are revealed. Even a very perfunctory look at the construction of our biocontext proves our reality concepts need neither be universal nor fundamentally true to be effective and useful. This frees us, as we formulate new conceptions, from the naïve assertion of having finally pinned down the fundamental/universal truth of our condition. Just as biological life can be seen as having self-authored a specific logical realm for a specific use, we can, as explorers, consciously conceive of logical structures which engage new extracontextual features and ingather them at will to entirely new uses. This exploration is a truly creative act with potential to spawn additional universes of experience and learning from within the fabric of each new conception.

With even the slightest and flimsiest of footholds in this next new realm one can turn back to view the familiar biospecific realm entire. One can't help but admire the queer and abstract nature of our provincial, biospecific reality. It is a unique and bizarre creation entirely determined by conscious processes and the imperatives of a biological format. Its logic, despite all, holds together with such tenacity and vigor. We will forever be physically, emotionally and psychologically tethered to the biospecific realm. However, viewing its logic and construction from the remote exterior perspective of the extracontextual allows us to use the same conceptual technology and methodology to construct additional extracontextual realms of equal strength and beauty.

We have, throughout our biological evolution, been unwitting co-creators of our world and experience. This co-creation can now be done with a newly realized conscious

intention, utilizing a potentially unlimited supply of creative approaches in the exploration, interpretation and re-creation of our condition.

### References

- Hameroff, S (1998). Quantum computation in brain microtubules? The Penrose-Hameroff “Orch OR” model of consciousness. *Philos. Trans. R. Soc. London Ser. A* 356, 1869–1896.
- Penrose, R (1994). Mechanisms, Microtubules and the Mind. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 1 (2), 241–149.
- Tarnas, R (1991). *The Passion of the Western Mind*. New York: Ballantine.