

The Infinite Unknowing

Why should we balk at the contradiction of the laws of science in a universe created by a careless God who knew neither necessity nor convention? Why so? Is science just a shorthand appellation for our provisional ideas of what we surmise at this time? We smile at telepathy, but accept radio as commonplace.

In a universe of infinite temporal and spatial extent coeval with an infinity of infinite spaces even the least probable thing must be a certainty: Somewhere today a troupe of monkeys shall collaboratively compose the entire oeuvre of Shakespeare, just as surely as the scattered bones shall rise and walk. Why did The Holy Office find this idea so repugnant that they would burn a man for it?

That man taught us that ideas are only the shadows of truth. And yet in an infinite world among numberless worlds all is true, and where all is true time and space loses its meaning. A very devout man he asserted the essential irrationality of his Christian religion. We might put it like this: Reason is the great discriminator, and where all is true there is no fallacy, and reason gains no purchase.

Reason is a derivative product of intelligence, an instinct that continuously optimises the probability of its possessor's survival.

Perverted reason affords the delights of speculation, whether in science love or exchange.

But reason has these limits and no relevancy beyond the animal.

A mathematician or scientist has to accept an argument for Divine Existence when the evidence for rational intentionality in the progress of our world is more probable than its negation, even whilst aware that the very concept of probability is meaningless in the presence of infinity, and that thought itself is fallible.

And a geologist is trained to doubt the integrity of the very ground on which he stands, knowing that evolution and decay are artefacts of chance.

If there was a Big Bang it must have had a volitional agent of antecedence who stood somewhere to select his place and time? If there is Steady State then infinite time and space is a here-present reality and God exists because all must.

If the World is voluntary it is Good or Evil, or are these virtues mere chimeras that die with us, or are survival stratagems?

It will not do to attempt proof of the autonomy of systems by reference to the Dawkins Weasel or some other paradigm of selection. As has been pointed-out by others such experiments require a finite end-point, and therefore a pre-specified perfection. For such simplified and purely symbolic schema, Gödel proved eighty years ago that no language could be sufficiently complete to express all possible messages, and we have been invited to extend this finding to material structures coded in quarks and photons or something.

We are forced to confront the evil hour at which a mature appraisal is required. And yet find ourselves on the horns of another quandary, knowing that all human decision is error, including Euclid's Parallel Postulate and all judicial verdicts ever. We are unqualified due to the finite extent of intellect, and its own finite existence, which ensures that human thought can never have the last word.

So all proof is error.

I am a Mercian, a native of central England. In my country people have big problems with Creation and with any concept that touches upon creativity. These things are confounded by both the intellectuals and the laity with manufacturing, the arts, labor and handicraft, all of which are considered dishonorable. To associate any

such activity with The Godhead is considered almost blasphemous. This anti-labor view has powerfully promoted the ascendancy of atheism in my culture.

You will probably take the contrary view that all these material skills or productions are very laudable, and that in any case The Work of God is ontologically distinct.

We cannot of course delineate the Program of God, and we barely discern it. Indeed it is very difficult to analyse our own creative acts in anything but outline.

I will have a go at a very superficial description of a general creative program:-

(a) Selection

The first and most primitive desideratum of a creative act is to survey the promiscuous chaos of all visible things and pick out the items needed.

A philatelist might content himself with the search and selection of only the Europa designs for the many thousands of postage stamp designs printed. He recognises that whilst this is a finite set of a finite universe he cannot arrogate each extant example and must content himself with a specimen of each type, and even then resigns himself to knowing that some varieties will ever elude him.

(b) Arrangement

A selection of requisite things having been gathered it remains to arrange them. There are usually many, or often many milliards, of possible arrangements, some of which may be useful or handsome.

The busy bowerbird selects his treasures from the forest floor, choosing only the most lustrous jewels and the most curious exotica to garnish his grotto. Never content with mere possession he forever re-arranges his gains the more affectingly to beguile any lady who may visit. A discerning, discrete and industrious bird who has luck on his side will at last bed his bride amidst the sparkling splendor of his resplendent materials. No antiquary of The Rococo ever lavished more love or labor upon his cabinet, or gained such satisfaction therefrom.

Consider also the carpenter. He wishes to make a table and has already selected from the infinite array of available things four legs and a wooden board. He spurned all the legs of antelope, of journeys, and of pylons that hove to mind as well as the various boards of directors, of lodgings, and of intercalated ignimbrites, for he adjudged these and other things ill-fitted to his intent.

He now needs to arrange these components, and is presented with many, perhaps infinite, possibilities.

Perhaps he might fit a leg to three of the board's corners, and the fourth as a reinforcing truss across a selected pair. You may think that eccentric, but it makes right good sense if the tabletop board is triangular. Or if the board is rectangular he may fit legs to adjacent corners, and the other two as supportive strakes on the board face. Methinks it is like an easel.

The possible permutations of even the most judiciously selected components exceed the wit of both birds and men.

(c) Optimisation

We now come to the most problematic of our perplexing scheme of creation, the part that has most stressed the followers of Malthus and Darwin (believers both) as well as the proponents of Divine Design: The making of our assembled product as good as it can be.

Good for which purpose, and good for how long?

If fitness has no purpose and is only fleeting then by what measure is it fit?

There are certain mathematical artefacts that are of an approximate character, that approximate the same thing, and yet are in some sense mutually incompatible and mutually incapable of perfection. Examples are the Ptolomaic, the Newtonian and the Einsteinian conceptions of cosmic reality.

Yet what is perfection and where is the common criterion that enables us to judge the aptitude of systems?