



Articles 60-76: Good and Evil Series

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An exploration of Yin-Yang Dynamics
in Geopolitical and other Contexts

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Article 60: Promoting Goodness

Thoughts after viewing the Sound of Freedom and related discussions.



Stories of Hope from ourrescue.org

Recently the movie Sound of Freedom came out which dramatically re-enacts a true story involving a Drug Enforcement Agent's journey into Colombia where he rescued children stolen from their parents and then used as sex slaves; after their youth appeal is expended, many of them get chopped up and sold for body parts. The film gives us a glimpse into a veritable Realm of Hell existing parallel to our collectively perceived everyday societies. Reportedly there are millions of such children being so used in our world today but the movie doesn't do a deep dive into that, mainly sticking to its one particular story. The agent's website and foundational work can be found here: <https://ourrescue.org/>.

After viewing the movie, I had a discussion with my Mexican wife who told me about a Mexican journalist called Lydia Cacho who has heroically exposed similar activities in her home country. She has written a book published in English called "Infamy: How one woman brought an International Sex Trafficking Ring to Justice." During a Youtube interview in response to a query about how she copes with knowing all these horrible, evil things some do to others she replied that in fact she is optimistic, because even though there are indeed many bad people there are still more good people, and moreover good people have more of an effect than we tend to think. All it takes is for simple people in their own immediate situation to do simple kindnesses for others. Such kindnesses can take many forms, be it a simple word or gesture, teaching a dance class in the local neighbourhood helping middle aged ladies trim off some of their

bulges, being a volunteer at the local church or whatever. The ways in which we can make positive contributions within our own families and communities are endless and have a far greater effect than most of us think. Perhaps some sort of interconnected force field of ordinary goodness.

For example, last week we were invited to the birthday party of our house builder's four-year old son. My wife shopped around for a gift and found a set of coloring pencils – the best brand in Mexico and one she coveted as a little girl herself - along with some coloring books. The gift was a huge hit and the little boy sent her a message via his father's cell phone about how it was one of the nicest presents he had ever received in his life. So that simple act of kindness communicated something valuable to the little boy that changed, in however simple a way, his perception about the nature of people outside his immediate family and thus about the world in general, about feelings that respond to such a gift and which hopefully open the door to his being similarly kind to others in turn. A simple act of kindness is no little thing. It reverberates. As General Maximus said: 'Brothers, what we do in life echoes in eternity!' This is true even if not self-evident; indeed, such effects can never be measured, nor can goodness even be seen by those - nearly all of us these days - viewing the world through the lens of materialist science which presents as a High Priest of Global Reality these days.

In any case, have long felt, and indeed have earlier [written about](#) on this blog, that there is a vast, invisible power of goodness, depicted charmingly, for example, by Tolkein as hobbits. Although invisible, this power of goodness prevents the evil-doers in our midst from simply taking all, conquering all – though they do plunder much and do great damage, as this movie's real-life background, involving literally millions of children being prostituted and murdered, demonstrates in spades. This is because most of their power and pleasure in having it comes from tricking and/or exploiting good people. Indeed, perhaps we could go so far as to say that without such exploitation they would derive no satisfaction from the evil they perpetrate so they need the good in order to have a purpose in life. In other words eliminating us would eliminate them; so rather than brute force and mass murder usually they favour persuasion, preferring to trick and cajole us into consenting to their various perversions, enticing us away from the simple and good.

Interestingly, it seems that goodness does not depend upon evil in the same way that evil depends upon goodness. Goodness simply depends upon our being open to listening to and following the better angels of our nature and doing what we know in our hearts is right and uplifting, whereas evil exists by undermining that same instinct towards being good. It can only imitate, never truly create, which is perhaps why modern art and architecture are generally so ugly compared to that of previous ages.

In any case, after listening to my wife's recounting of what Lydia Cacho had to say about the power of doing good deeds in one's immediate family and community, it occurred to me that, even though retired and not doing all that much of anything any more, I could dedicate most of my time and efforts to writing good things which help

uplift the spirit of those reading (rather than dwelling on all the disturbing things happening in our world of late), and also to performing simple service in my local community, be it teaching English, or building basic furniture in a workshop building about to be constructed.

To which end, partly as a way of familiarizing myself more with it, I did a Toltec I Ching cast since this new sequence and commentary by William Horden emphasizes the inner journey perspective and so this sort of question should fit well with such an approach.

The result of that cast might be published shortly; for now though, here is the Summary of the Divinatory Hexagram #56 Recapturing Vision (#22 Elegance in the more familiar King Wen sequence). The query was: "Writing and Living to Promote Goodness as an over-arching Intent."

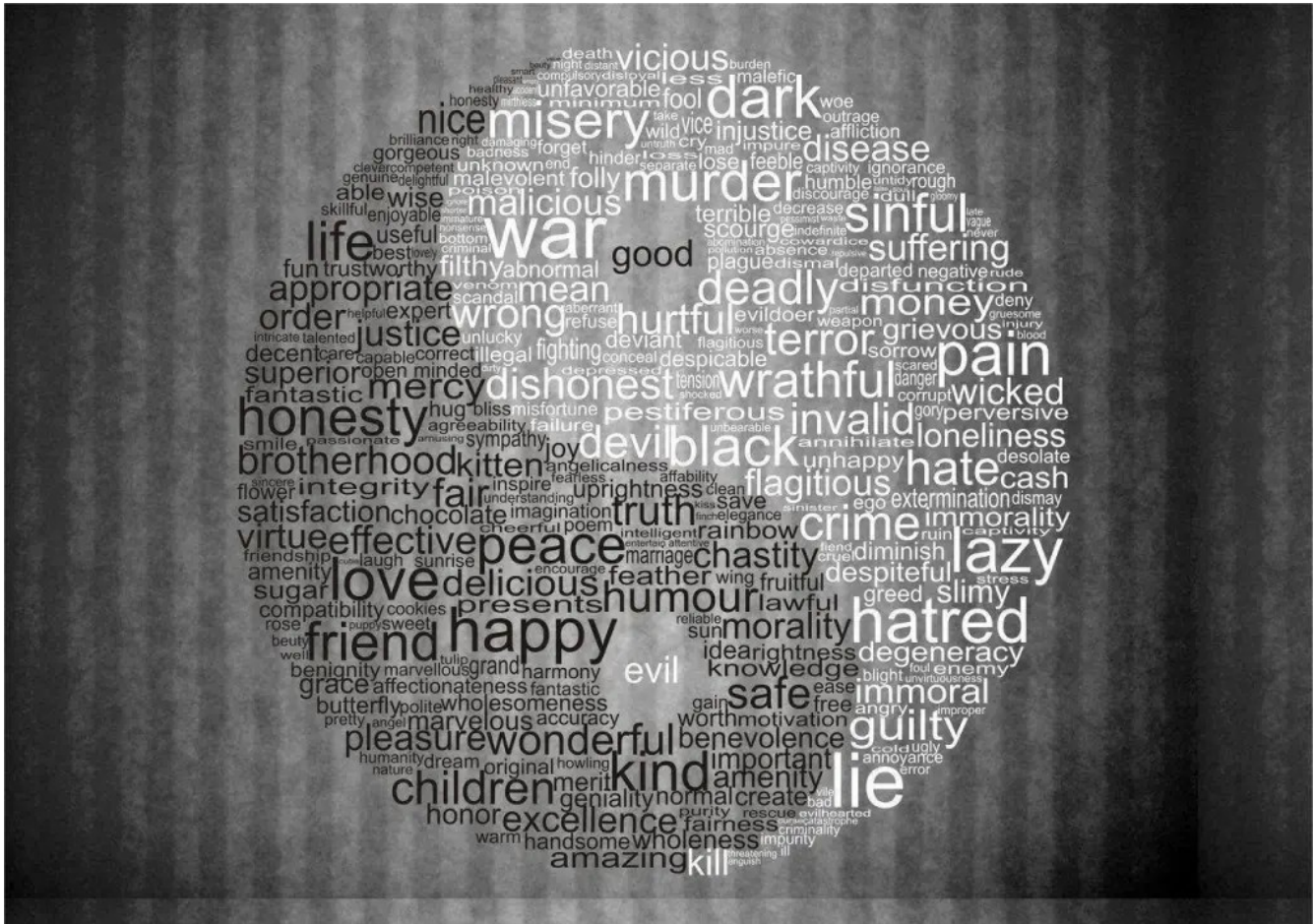
SUMMARY: You are procrastinating. Your conscience demands things be acted on and the hour is growing late. Don't find excuses to keep you from speaking and acting as you should. Now is the time to channel your righteous indignation into creative acts that touch others' hearts. Rage not against injustices done to you, but against the injustices done to others. The momentum is with you.

Given this query was prompted by the story of a brave woman who took on dangerous pedophile networks in Mexico involving interlocking layers of criminal and official government organizations, the response seems remarkably apropos.

In any case, it seems that the notion of Promoting Goodness is as good an organizing principle, or general intention, as any other I could come up with, so intend to start offering future articles on this blog with that intention in mind. Presumably this will mean a lessening of geopolitical King Wen Yi Readings, which in any case seem to have run their course for now, and a resumption of original, short pieces exploring various themes emanating from this over-arching Intent, which is extremely basic but from which we often both individually and collectively stray, sometimes only for brief periods but sometimes for far longer, lasting entire lifetimes or permeating entire societies even for centuries....

And this brings up another assumption, which indeed was behind the Yi Query: rather than dwelling on evil and its many manifestations in society today, rather we should do good deeds, write good words, cultivating what is already in the garden and improving it, honoring it, cherishing it, much as how we raise our children. The best way to overcome evil is for good people to do good things as much as possible, each and every day. It's extremely simple - corny even - but perhaps worth contemplating and acting on in everyday life.

Article 61: On the Nature of Good and Evil (and the need for warriorship)



Good-Bad-Yang-Yin

Some aspects of what can be called ‘good’ can easily be put into words, but many cannot. And the more one tries to spell such things out, the more indigestible the salad often becomes. (And all salads end up as manure anyway!) For the purposes of this and subsequent Articles, let’s just say that good is that which promotes and is virtuous and bad or evil is that which promotes or is vice; also that good in terms of feeling has something to do with being kind, gentle, generous, careful, disciplined, uplifted whereas bad, or unvirtuous, has to do with being unkind, harsh, selfish, careless, undisciplined, degraded. There are problems with using words like ‘good’ and ‘bad’ because of how they bring about judgmentalism; but the intention here is to examine

what it means experientially to be using life as a vehicle for ‘promoting good’ as discussed in the previous Article #60.

The subject for this Article arises because promoting good immediately involves either not promoting evil or encountering evil as it arises in both inner or outer mandalas.

When I first started studying and training in Buddhadharma, the way I and many of my companions in the Sangha processed the teachings, along with the way they were viewed generally as ‘noetic science’ versus faith-based religion, there was a detached, impersonal quality to the whole affair. We were working with ‘the mind,’ ‘ego,’ ‘habitual patterns’ or ‘thoughts.’ ‘Me’ or ‘I’ were regarded as abstract conceptual constructs to be seen through or transcended somehow. Just as scientists dissect frogs to study the workings of bone, musculature and fascia, so we Buddhists dissected elements of mental and physical experience to reveal their inner workings dispassionately, by somehow putting ‘I’ and ‘me’ under the microscope.

In this context, notions of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ seemed somewhat quaint, moralistic and lowbrow. Of course, when you get into the later Mahayana teachings, the notion of the Bodhisattva as a generous soul working tirelessly to save all sentient beings clearly manifests goodness and noble-heartedness par excellence but then the whole thing is so magnificent and transcendental that it becomes akin to a deity principle, somehow beyond one’s own everyday kitchen sink level, meaning that again the personal aspect is detached from the subject matter. In a way, as a student I regarded personal experience as somewhat apart from the teachings, my own journey as an individual in limbo pending the completion of the more important work being done ‘on the Path.’ Of course the teacher and the teachings never recommended such a view, indeed quite the opposite, but that is what unfolded, at least to me. (Of course, the reason it is called a ‘path’ is precisely because one goes through all sorts of passages and iterations like this over time as one perspective falls away and a new one arises and so on ad infinitum.)

The point being that notions of good and evil didn't seem apropos, and therefore neither did the notion of developing virtue, presumably because of the sense that if one developed discipline and insight – which of course are virtuous in themselves – all that other stuff would naturally fall into place. I guess I still think that way, truth be told, but I also think that considering good and evil in both oneself and society is both unavoidable and valuable as long as one doesn't get hung up too much on the terms.

With this blog, for example, I have gone back and forth with whether or not to write about current news topics or just keep it strictly internal-focused, or maybe only about Buddhism or the Yi or whatever. The past three years have been very eventful so have often just avoided writing anything for fear of 'polluting the blog' with 'samsaric' politics. Perhaps this is why there were so many 'geopolitical Yi Readings' of late: they were a kosher way of relating to The News in a manner which felt 'clean' or 'spiritual' enough to put on this blog.

Not being a pundit or specialist, I have little to offer in terms of news commentary that hundreds of others don't already do with far more depth, detail and understanding (not to mention confusion!). No doubt I can offer a different perspective coming from the 'contemplative' POV, but since generally such types eschew The News as a lowbrow distraction or some such maybe it's a false piste. That said, am not all that wise or accomplished a practitioner, despite being officially empowered as the 'Dharma Heir of the Celtic Buddhist Lineage,' so it is somewhat pretentious to believe one has all that much to offer. However, of late have begun to feel like attempting to interweave, much like we do spontaneously in daily life, the inner and outer aspects of the journey especially as regards this notion of promoting goodness, or developing virtue as a guiding principle of sorts. I don't want to attempt any sort of exhaustive study of this multi-faceted, somewhat endless topic, rather to continue the tradition of this blog by taking a particular idea or aspect and then writing something simple about it usually in no more than one to two thousand words. And leave it at that to resonate with the reader in whatever way. And then onto the next topic. This particular one is a little on the long side because of all this preambing as part of introducing a new phase. So, let's start again with the title, shall we?

Article 61: On the Nature of Good and Evil (and the need for Warriorship). Take 2:

The good is both natural and innate and also that which can be cultivated. As is its absence or opposite, so-called bad or evil. The word vice tends to involve bad habits or tendencies versus good habits. Evil tends to involve actively harming others versus helping or uplifting them. The good lead or serve whereas the bad dominate and subvert. If, say, you form the intention to generally 'be good' today, then immediately arise related aspects such as that this will entail not criticizing your spouse, child or colleague, or keeping your cool in the busy traffic with all the crazy drivers who don't use their ***ing turn signals and whose truck exhausts belch black, toxic fumes into your face; or when you go into the government office to get a license, or into a bank to do a simple transaction, you know you will have to wait in line for hours sometimes only to get slow, incompetent service once you finally have someone to work with at which point you must not lose your temper, be patient and kind and reasonable and understanding and calm and alert and so on. All of which is fine and dandy, but the point is that 'being good' immediately involves one in the practice of not being bad. The two go together like peas in a pod – or rather like yin and yang.

And it also puts one into a trap, and probably why in my Buddhist salad days we avoided dealing with this whole good-bad business: they are concepts, ideas, abstractions and by emphasizing them we end up overthinking everything, which is where judgmentalism, moralizing and finger-pointing come in, basic stuff we liked to think we had already outgrown being already oh-so wise and superior. So this is a quibble, and an important one since it keeps coming up, once again let us go further into the topic anyway. So now we can start the Article again!

Article 61: On the Nature of Good and Evil (and the need for warriorship). Take 3:

One of the principal ways we cultivate virtue is by avoiding self or other-generated vice. Self-generated vices are bad habits or things we do which harm self or others in both subtle and gross ways; other-generated vice is influences from others trying to get us into bad habits or things which harm self or others. For example, as soon as we walk out of the door we know we will encounter no end of enticements to buy into vice of all sorts, whether it's simply losing our minds to the crass banality of billboard images, being dispirited by the amount of litter swirling around the streets in a slum area, being frightened by scowling thugs you have to pass close by to get into the station entrance you need to walk through to catch your train, being tempted by the crappy commercially produced chocolate bars in the little shop there where also are displayed rows of half naked males and females on glossy magazine covers, or the mind's prompted journey to savour the imagined pleasures with nubile bodies, or not being disgusted by the noxious odor of the homeless person slumped next to you on the seat you found free on the subway complemented by the acrid tang of urine wafting into your olfactory mandala..... so many things popping up to make you lose your cool and begin to recoil from rather than open to and love, your surroundings and those whom you encounter. It's immediate, inevitable and endless.

So during the journey we call life, goodness must become not a project, goal or idea so much as an ongoing attitude or disposition, a default openness and kindness without agenda, unaffected by specifics or particulars, and so also not beholden to concept or moral code. If we keep trying to do the 'right thing' or judging ourselves or others from failing to do so all that cumbersome approach just ends up tripping us over. Rather, goodness or virtue happens before any sense of right or wrong, good or bad. It's not a head trip but a heart trip; it's feelings, posture, orientation, a basic way of being – or like my teacher used to say, 'facing East.' It's a way of being no matter what we encounter or how we are treated by others.

Of course in a good culture, we are all encouraging each other to do this by how we dress, how the buildings look, how we speak to each other, the quality of the pastries or foods we eat, and so forth. And in a bad culture, the opposite happens, we encourage each other to be dirty, dark, dangerous, hostile, ungrateful, ill-mannered and so forth.

Rather than fuss about the pitfalls of good-versus-bad finger-pointing, we can relax by more rightly regarding good and bad as a classic ying-yang dynamic which exists in all sorts of ways on all sorts of levels in this our multi-dimensional experiential continuum.

In any case, this leads us to the subtitle: ‘and the need for warriorship.’ In William Horton’s work about the I Ching and related spiritual path from his initial training to become lineage holder of the Buddhist-Daoist Sudden Enlightenment School and subsequent spiritual adoption by a Tarahumara shaman in Northern Mexico, he states that ‘spirit-warriors’ are those who confront the ‘enemy within’ which I find the best simple definition out there. For in all our encounters – and of course there are many greater evils than the petty everyday ones described above – what matters is not what others are doing around or to you but how you handle yourself relative to whatever comes your way. One cannot control what others do or what the world does, but one is responsible for how one steers the ship of one’s own behaviour; so that is what a ‘spirit-warrior’ does and why William Horton has chosen to emphasize this inner aspect of the journey during these times in which we are now eight billion and counting.

So what this all means is that the path of cultivating goodness involves facing its absence or opposite all the time, especially within oneself, and which again is essentially a yin-yang affair.



Yin-Yang

The traditional, perhaps even original, description of yin and yang is that of the sunny and shaded sides of a mountain. In the morning, the Eastern side of the mountain is warmed by the sun (yang) whereas the Western side is cool being still in shade (yin). As the sun moves through the sky during the daytime, the disposition of yin and yang gradually and continuously changes until by day's end the Western side is warm and bathed in sunlight whereas the Eastern side is now cooler and in the shade. This is the change or process aspect in the title 'I Ching' (Yi = Change/process; Ching = Classic Text), because yin and yang are not things in and of themselves although they clearly are experiential qualities. And these qualities are continuously changing even as they remain in continuous relationship with each other for there is no such thing as a yin without a concurrent yang and vice versa. Perhaps we can explore this yin-yang dynamic further in another Article, but for the purposes of this one, it is helpful to regard good and evil as a yin-yang complementary dynamic not as solid, definite

things in themselves. (This too may be explored later since it involves the difference between materialist and non-materialist science.)

And that always dynamic quality goes for warriorship as well. A spirit-warrior is one who overcomes the 'enemy within' by choosing to actively manifest the yang of virtuous upliftedness rather than the yin of unvirtuous dispiritedness day by day as circumstances continually arise. The choice is always there, moment by moment and a spirit warrior is one who makes the right choice, the warrior's choice rather than the wrong choice, the coward's choice.

So here endeth the lesson. When we consider 'promoting goodness' as per Article #60, we are immediately also dealing with badness, each being a yin to the other's yang.

In a subsequent Article, we are going to look a little more into the nature of badness, where it comes from, why it's there, and why, along with its being inevitable and unavoidable, it might not always be so very bad – even though in many cases, as described in Article 60, it most definitely is...

Article 62: Meeting the Devil Within



Satan

Who or what is the Devil? It would be interesting, no doubt, to study the history and origins of this Luciferian presence in Western culture, but that will not be done here. Suffice to say that it represents a demonic principle and in this Article that demon is the Enemy-Within. Even were one to meet a fully incarnated Devil tempting one at the mountaintop, as Jesus did after fasting in the desert for forty days, the temptation so summoned manifested in Jesus as temptation on his part and thus as an Enemy-Within. The night of the Buddha's full and complete enlightenment, he encountered this same principle, first in the form of endless types of enemies threatening to hurt him with various weapons, then in the form of endless lovely maidens inviting him to enjoy every type of sumptuous sensual pleasure, then in the form of remembering all his past lives. In this way the tempting distractions of Selfhood in the form of

Aggression, Passion and Ignorance paraded in his mind's display, much like the seeming outer landscapes and situations we journey through in life, but he was unmoved by all, unswayed, not tempted; he let them go openly and willingly and thus full, complete, no longer hindered Enlightenment dawned and remained, shining, the rest of his life in this body and world, wandering and teaching for about fifty years thereafter.

If the devil-demon is fixation on Selfhood, how does it manifest in daily life? Well, I don't want to treat this in a 'let me count the ways' fashion because that would take volumes, not a page or two. Let's put it this way: there is always a choice between looking at the world through the eyes of the Self, the soul of I-Me-Mine, or looking at the Self through the eyes of the World Soul. The Self is like a yo-yo which, although it flies free and spins for a while gloriously, must always return to the hand of its master. It is attached. And indeed such attachment is the prime temptation principle. It manifests in no end of ways as some sort of sticky, self-referential and turgid quality connected with appetite and its imagined satisfaction. It's not that appetite is bad – who doesn't enjoy a good meal or great sex? - rather the stickiness, the fixation, the attachment. In the Four Dharmas of Noble Persons (usually translated as The Four Noble Truths) the second Dharma is the Cause of Suffering which is this same attachment, stickiness, fixation. We don't just look at and appreciate a flower, we want to possess it, capture it, consume it.

One classic way this happens in the human realm is the attraction between the sexes, for example in the way a man perceives a woman. The other day I was driving home in my small town proceeding up the hill towards our home and spied a young, pretty girl walking down in the opposite direction. I only glimpsed her for a few fleeting seconds between other cars in traffic but it was enough time to notice two distinct aspects of the experience: the first being instant pleasure in witnessing her beauty. The human female is proof that there is a God. (Buddhists usually don't talk this way, but maybe Celtic Buddhists do!). So first there is the raw, naked appreciation of her beauty; then came a tug, a little fixation, a little desire to have more than just the vision of beauty shining in mind, a yearning for contact. That tug, that attraction towards having more, that is the Devil, that is the hand to which the yo-yo of experience is continuously attached. No matter what experience arises, it always has to report back to the personal Central Intelligence Agency of Me that wants to know all, see all, feel all, keep track of all and, ultimately, control all. That is the Demon.

So that's it, basically, on this example. No need to stretch it out further. There is a flash of appreciation, of awareness, of direct experience and then the impulse to possess, interpret, catalogue, freeze or control it and that secondary, supplementary fixation principle is the Demon, the Devil, the Enemy-Within. Now of course there are other aspects to the Enemy-Within principle, especially cowardice and laziness, but passion,

being such a core drive in us humans, is the most easy to grok viz this twin-arising aspect. It is not the basic appreciation which is the problem but the fixation which segues into lust. I imagine all attractive young ladies quickly learn the difference between being appreciated and being treated as a prized, exclusive possession.



Consider the good-evil up-down higher-lower light-dark contrast in this depiction of Jesus meeting his Devil. They mutually both define and complement each other - a classic yin-yang dynamic.

One of the more esoteric translations of Yi (as in the Yi Jing / I Ching) is Coemergence or Coemergent Wisdom [see Daniel Hessey's: Enlightened Society Yijing]. In this context we are noting the coemergence of both open perception and attachment-fixation, usually referred to as 'wisdom and confusion.' I described them above as first one then the other, because it is hard to describe both at the same time, but really the two aspects co-arise. And the interesting twist is that the open side, so to speak, can witness the sticky side and in so doing pop its bubble. Stickiness is the yin to openness's yang; temptation is the yin to letting go's yang. If you lurch to the left onto your left foot putting all your weight into your left leg, then the next step ends up with all the weight going into the right foot and leg. If your mind is filled with sticky lust at the mere sight of an attractive member of the opposite sex, the next step can be letting go of the stickiness to go back to fresh openness. This happens naturally when we enjoy a decent sense of humour for indeed most of what we find funny is some sort of stickiness-fixation principle being exposed, called out. Our pompous self-importance parading down the street all high and mighty Oliver is called-out by the humble banana peel causing him to land ignominiously on his arse with Hardy unable to stop

snickering and then breaking out in laughter. The moment of coemergence – pomposity and its popping – happens not when he slips on the banana peel but precisely when his arse hits the pavement and his face registers surprise and embarrassment! (That's coemergence for ya!)

The difference between a Buddha and a confused sentient being is simply that the Buddha sees clearly and completely the nature of confusion. [unattributed]

There is a similar dynamic perhaps with the awareness or state of goodness versus evil in that goodness can kindly look upon the confusion and suffering involved with those victims or perpetrators of evil understanding its nature and effects whereas generally evil cannot understand the nature and effects of goodness, they have closed themselves off to it. That grip of temptation, of fixation, is a type of closing down in that it rejects any state of openness having decided on what it wants and then fixating upon it. Obviously, this is the process involved in any sort of obsession. So spaciousness can see its opposite but claustrophobic intensity cannot see spaciousness, indeed letting go of holding on and merging into spaciousness might feel threatening making one hold on tighter. (Which is how one can end up trapped forever in hell with no way out.)

Sebastiao Salgado, one of this age's most dedicated artists, spent years travelling all over the world photographing people and nature. At some point in the 1990's he went on two separate trips to Rwanda and witnessed the enormous human tragedy unfolding there, the extraordinary loss of life with appalling suffering. He was deeply affected and in the movie about him I watched recently by Wim Wenders called 'The Salt of the Earth' he states that after witnessing so much horror for so long he lost faith in human nature and became profoundly dispirited. Later, as happened so often in his life, his beloved wife helped him find a way forward. He returned to Brazil, their homeland, where his wife came up with the notion of planting trees on his 600 hectare family estate which had completely dried up and become barren after too many years of farming too many cattle, presumably following standard procedures advocated by governments and experts. Over the next few years they planted millions of trees; after the first year, most of them died but each year a higher percentage survived so that after twenty years not only were there over twenty million flourishing trees, but also the land's vitality had been restored with both rivers and wildlife having fully returned. In many ways a veritable miracle though of course we see such miracles nearly every where we go in this our marvelous world with its miraculous skies, terrains, living organisms, plants and creatures, including ourselves. His next book, Genesis, ranged all over the world to find unspoiled lands and peoples reflecting the virgin state of nature. I am eagerly expecting delivery in the next few days despite the cost of these large format photographic volumes,

What the Salgados did with their family property is admirably noble and generous. And, interestingly, it was prompted by having witnessed extreme suffering which arose principally out of extremely evil leadership which forcibly moved millions from one zone to another without any care for their survival - and of course most didn't. Not to mention outright massacres of millions chopped into pieces by machetes and machine guns. Salgado's spirit was almost broken, but thanks to his loving wife and connection with land, with plants, with people, with living creatures, he turned that extreme low arising from an encounter with extreme evil into something both glorious and natural. He restored his family's part of the world back into wholeness. This is a grand, noble example of the left foot right food dynamic of the continuous interrelationship of so-called 'good' and so-called 'evil.'

Sebastiao Salgado is a World Living Treasure, a true Noble One, a Bodhisattva in manifestation if not creed. No doubt somewhere the Buddha is very proud of him, of his demonstrated wisdom and compassion born from truly feeling suffering and the depths to which the Demon within us all can bring us if left unchecked, but also how that same Demon, when seen clearly, can bring out the best in us. Yin and yang, yin and yang...

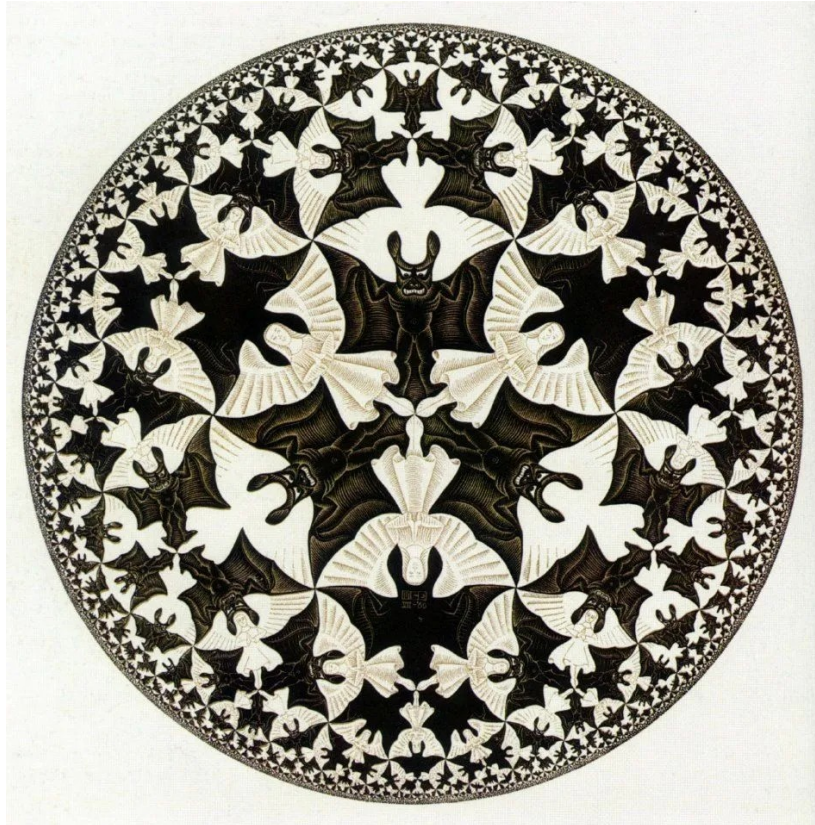
Let not any one pacify his conscience by the delusion that he can do no harm if he takes no part, and forms no opinion. Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing.

John Stuart Mill during an inaugural address at the University of St. Andrews

Or as my Irish-American Grandmother used to love saying, wagging finger and all:

TELL THE TRUTH AND SHAME THAT DEVIL!!

Article 63: the binding principle in religiosity



*Escher: Angels and Devils From Iain McGilchrist
Beshara Lecture: the Coincidence of Opposites*

Thoughts prompted by: [The religious cult of climate catastrophism](#) by Andrew Montford, July 13 2023 published in the Conservative Woman, a website which offers up good quality right-leaning political opinion pieces based in U.K.

First, the review – the whole of it since it is rather short. Trying to find one paragraph didn't cut the mustard:

“ I HAVE been working in climate and energy for nearly 15 years, and it's fair to say that it's not often I find something that makes me radically change the way I look at the domain. But a new book, by Andy A West, has done just that.

The Grip of Culture makes the case that climate catastrophism is cultural – akin to religion or one of the extreme political movements that have assailed the world from time to time. This is not an entirely new idea; lots of people have alluded to the possibility that a religion has formed around the belief that we are facing a weather wipeout. You can certainly see lots of behaviour among climate zealots that is identical to that of zealots from other, older religious systems. So opponents are demonised, and waverers are threatened with expulsion to keep them on the straight and narrow. They have a hallowed text that few have tried to read, and fewer can understand. There are prophets and prophetesses, and a dizzying and ever-changing narrative of fear and redemption which is impossible to escape.

Circumstantially then, climate catastrophism looks exactly like a religion. Intriguingly though, West argues that he can prove the point, and at the heart of the book is a set of measurements of public attitudes to global warming from around the world. At first these seem very strange – inexplicable even – with national publics apparently simultaneously greatly concerned by climate change and not at all keen to do anything about it. Bizarrely, the more religious a country is, the more worried the populace is about the issue, and the less inclined to prioritise addressing it.

West shows that these apparently schizophrenic attitudes can be explained as the interaction between traditional religion and a new faith of climate catastrophism. The measurement chapters are really rather remarkable, with extraordinarily strong statistical relationships emerging between national religiosity and climate change attitudes: correlations where questions invite virtue signalling responses ('How worried are you about climate change') and equally strong anti-correlations when hard reality gets involved ('How much are you willing to spend each week to reduce climate change'). Opinion polling on the subject will never be the same again.

It's deliciously counterintuitive, and very powerful. For example, West shows that you can use the results to predict real-world phenomena such as the spread of renewables across different nations. Remarkably, he gets a better result from using religiosity as a predictor than, say, GDP, political inclination. And if you think sunshine hours should be a great predictor of solar power usage, think again; not only is religiosity far better, but absurdly there turns out to be a much stronger commitment to solar in cloudy (European) nations than in sunny ones!

This is a lot of fun, but there is an extremely serious message to the book. **Religions – cultures, that is – are powerful influences on humanity. They bind societies together, and enable us to work towards a common goal. In this way they have been central to the rise of every great civilisation. But they also function subconsciously, and therefore without any reference to rational thought. It's as though the culture has a mind of its own. So the common goals that end up being pursued are as often self-destructive as they are beneficial. The book outlines appalling stories of societies which have been torn apart and even ruined themselves in this way.**

We are therefore warned. If we are truly in the grip of a new culture, then we need to be very worried about where it is taking us, because it could be to the brink of disaster and beyond.”

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Now first, I want to stress that although I do have an opinion about the climate change issue that is not the subject of this piece. What interests me about the above and prompted this Article are the remarks about religiosity which have been emboldened. I suppose I could have just included that paragraph but have included it all so as to illustrate how many of the somewhat esoteric ideas contemplated on this blog relate to real-world dynamics even if this is not always readily apparent.

The word 'religion' comes from 'ligare' which means 'to bind.' That which binds people together. Usually, we put the cart before the horse; we tend to describe religions as deriving from their doctrine, that first there is a doctrine and then there are people who gradually coalesce around that doctrine which in turn gradually creates what can later be called a religion. This is probably true as far as the institutional chronology is concerned, but there is a step missed in this description, namely the fundamental

tendency, or need, that we humans have to bind together. It has been said that humans are social animals; many animals are socially bound – packs of wolves, flocks of birds, hives of insects, schools of fishes whose ability to move or coordinate together as one borders on the miraculous. (And which bona fide life scientists should study in more depth as a way of unravelling the mind-body problems which plague modern materialist science – but that's an issue for another day.)

This innate tendency to bind together precludes any particular religious organization or doctrine. So the doctrine per se doesn't bind us though it provides a welcome means to fulfilling our desire to share a sense of belonging, of being bound together. Organized religions take that inclination and then manipulate it skillfully and deliberately. This is not necessarily a bad thing, though no doubt as with everything else there are degrees of quality, from outright terrible to gloriously sublime. This is true of cooking; of clothing; of cultures; of religions. Yin and Yang as always. 'Nuff said.

In Chinese Medical Qigong theory there are many different Chis (or Qis). Chi is perhaps equivalent to prana in Sanskrit and is some sort of energetic quality comprising both physical and mental properties. It flows through twelve major meridians; it is exhibited in the way trees shape and manifest; it is in the breezes moving their leaves; there is the chi of sun, of moon, of the garden, of earth, of the heart, of the liver, of blood, of the eyes, of speech, of mountains, of rivers, of cities, of traffic circulation. You name it, there is a chi aspect to it as long as it is part of our shared experiential continuum. One of the chis is called 'Dzong Chi,' or 'Group Chi.' If you have ever been to a large stadium filled with over fifty thousand people then you feel the powerful 'electric' atmosphere it generates. That is Dzong Chi. Scientists may not be able to measure it but all humans can feel it. And at some point, since it is focused on the same object, be it a ball or a player or a cheer that goes up, a sense of group solidarity quickly develops and builds – and also can be steered, manipulated.

This group dynamic is also found in any religion. One doesn't necessarily have to be in the same stadium since we have other ways in urban societies, especially since the advent of long-distance communication, to feel connected. People commenting anonymously on the same internet forum can develop a sense of being bound together. It may not be as consistent and compelling as members of a church feel who get together every Sunday and learn to speak in tongues or tame snakes or simply contemplate various scriptures soberly and sincerely, but it's the same binding dynamic.

So that is the point of this Article, simply to point out that as humans we have an innate need or tendency to bind together. This is both a strength and a weakness, so here too – as with everything – there is a yin-yang dynamic. The binding can help us act together in ways which enlighten and uplift us all or it can precipitate our falling into worse states. The group energy creates heightened power and momentum but where it leads is a function of leadership principle within that group.

For that is another element. There is always some sort of leadership principle in any group and again, like anything, there are degrees of quality from very good to very bad. The cheer that goes up in a football stadium serves as a temporary leadership principle as our ears pick up on its arising, our voices join in, and then we get to the end of what is usually a familiar refrain (like Oy Yay, oy yay oy yay oy yay.....) and it's over, and with it the short-term leadership principle of that particular chant disappears back into the void from whence it came.

But let us say that same crowd gets outraged by a bad call; and then one group of fans starts bad-mouthing another; and then blows are exchanged; and then a small riot ensues; then the police step in; and some attack the police; and then the police shoot someone or bludgeon them apparently to death; and then there is a far larger riot and the whole stadium gets trashed and the army called in and many more die on all sides. In all these phases the group energy acts like a wind or wave picking up strength, purpose and collective emotion – usually a sense of wildness combined with fury-fuelled violence – and all within the group are swept up in this and find themselves impelled to participate seemingly having no choice but to be carried along by this disastrous tsunami of Group Chi.

That would be an example of poor leadership principle in action in the Group Chi context. It is not articulated, not planned, not well managed, rather spontaneous, emotional, driven by events, haphazard, dangerous, fuelled by raw emotion laced with aggression and, ultimately, harmful. The binding factor so enjoyable at first has become, absent good leadership, a one-way ticket to Hell. I guess from this we could also say that the purpose of a bona fide religion is to harness Group Chi into good and virtuous outcomes for all involved.

The piece above reviews a book which purports to demonstrate, with polls and other analysis which have not read, that they can predict much better how a society will vote to adopt certain (in this case climate-related) policies based on its religiosity quotient. If a society evidences what can be called a religious style of binding (i.e. they think more or less together which means they share the same or similar beliefs) then

accurate predictions about which policies they favor can be made. One common sense deduction from this phenomenon – and which the author was emphasizing and the reviewer finds fascinating - is that the climate issue comes down to belief much more than it does to science. Any one who has spent any time delving into the topic quickly learns that far from being a ‘97% consensus settled’ affair, in fact there are many different opinions out there well supported by science, such as it is, because the topic is so vast and with so many ever-changing variables from micro to macro cosmic, that there is not nor can there ever be any such thing as a settled scientific conclusion about it. Yes, some people are claiming that and if they have the loudest megaphone many are inclined to believe them, but that involves megaphonics not science. The fact is that most of us are left just picking what we think is the most reasonable opinion mainly based on where we get our information. But this is where the twist comes in: in a religiosity-rich group, we will tend to think with the herd more than societies who are less religiosity-prone.

Those whose work it is to manipulate public opinion are presumably well versed in this dynamic and moreover skilled in manipulating outcomes. But in order to be best able to do so, presumably they also develop ways of presenting issues such that they elicit group-binding behaviors. Once such group mentality or group identity has been established, it then becomes easy to lead people in any desired group direction. And the larger and more well-bound together the group is, the more susceptible it is to leadership - and again, some good, some bad.

A bit of a pickle.....

One last thought: again, the binding quotient in religion is not caused by the religion itself, rather our tendency to want to be bound together in some sort of societal solidarity. On the inner level, this binding principle comes from the fact that we all come from the same mother source/ and we all yearn to return to that same source, which though it may not be apparent to us as such is nevertheless ever-present. This creates kinship from shared primordial, existential resonance. Of course the notion of a One God in theistic religions relates directly with this principle in the sense that each and every one of us individuals is equally a part of the same overall One, the same continuum, the same God-ness. So we can join together in that faith, in that solidarity. There is nothing necessarily bogus about this; however, again depending upon leadership, where it will all end up in politico-social manifestation over time is anybody's guess. There are no guarantees. Perhaps we could say that the art and science of creating good societies and civilization depends upon our collective ability to manage Group Chi well.

Again, just to be clear: this article is not for or against any climate change or religious opinion or tradition. Rather, it's about the underlying binding tendency which, like all things it seems, has yin-yang aspects, meaning it can go either way.

Now with that in mind, enjoy this very short Youtube about the ASCH experiment:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=iRh5qy09nNw>

Article 64: Toltec I Ching #25 ☵☲ Radiating Intent



In an unusual dream experience, in which I heard a disembodied voice without anything visual accompanying say loudly: 'enslaved heart' followed a little whilst later by 'embattled soul' and wanting to learn more about how to create a hexagram based on an event or experience, and searching for a book on the Plum Flower method which I already have read a few short chapters on in Jou Tsung Wa's I Ching Divination book, I stumbled on the works of William Douglas Horden, one of whose many volumes is entitled 'The Mind Flower I Ching,' I then finally encountered his seminal contribution to I Ching YiJing literature and wisdom called 'The Toltec I Ching.'

One of his many I Ching techniques involves selecting a Hexagram and Commentary whose qualities or process you wish to develop over the coming year. Then each month one line of that hexagram changes. The second month the bottom line changes, the third month the second line changes and so forth. Once all six lines have changed you do it again until by the thirteenth month, after twelve changes, you end up back where you started. The idea is to contemplate each successive hexagram quality month by month.

I started three months ago (with King Wen #62 Preponderance of the Small which in Toltec is #13 Concentrating Attention because at the time I was focusing on going back to square one with meditation and working on basic mindfulness again and this Hexagram in the Toltec presentation seemed to relate. Plus the image if that of a spirit with a human face and the heart of the sun in a mountain with lightning come down from heaven onto the top of his head and one hand at the base of the mountain. I liked the picture.

Now three months later, I'm contemplating #25 Radiating Intent.

This I Ching is original in that it is designed with each Hexagram commentary and Image fashioned around a picture. They were designed with the author and painted by the author's sister-in-law who designed and co-founded the Nahuatl University pyramid campus in Ocoatepec, Morelos and is a fully trained muralist. So next I shall paste in the text, which the author has given all permission to share.

The picture above is a cell phone snapshot; it is copyrighted but hopefully it is alright to show this way. (I shall check later and if it isn't will remove!):

HEXAGRAM 25



RADIATING INTENT

IMAGE:

A male warrior inscribes symbols onto a stone for the pyramid upon which the whole community is working. On his shoulder is perched a sacred bird, whose outstretched wing directs all this activity.

INTERPRETATION: This hexagram depicts the way purposefulness moves outward from the center, manifesting itself in ever-widening spheres of activity. The male warrior symbolizes the way of testing and training human nature that increases its versatility and fortitude. Inscribing symbols onto a stone means that you find your voice and perform acts of lasting meaning and value. That the stone fits into the pyramid means that your actions are part of a greater design of harmony, symmetry, and balance. The whole community working together on the same project symbolizes people united by a common vision. The sacred bird perched on the shoulder means that your spirit guide accompanies you everywhere and is always nearby. The wing directing all this activity symbolizes the guiding spirit's creative intent, which inspires both individuals and groups to devote their energy to something greater than themselves. Taken together, these symbols mean that far-reaching accomplishments can be achieved by conscientiously attuning yourself to your spirit guide's intent.

ACTION: The masculine half of the spirit warrior joins with others in order to advance as far as possible during a time of progress. The difficulty here is deciding which group to ally yourself with, since there are many competing for members. In a time when cooperation and collaboration produce great benefit for many, there still remain groups committed to authoritarianism and the control of resources: it is essential that you avoid groups serving only their own narrow interests and consider only those serving the widest possible good. In particular, avoid those repeating familiar catchwords and phrases in an attempt to hold their members to outworn ideologies and practices. You can recognize constructive and progressive groups by the startling aspects of their speech and action, which reflect your own emerging way of looking at the new and untried alternatives to failed solutions. Work with egalitarian groups whose wider vision is demonstrated by what they accomplish locally. Incorporate everyone into the work, include everyone who wishes to contribute: together, you can make changes that bring benefit to others far beyond your sphere of activity. Above all, follow the spirit of intent: do not hesitate to change groups if yours betrays its original and fundamental principles.

INTENT: Times of progress emerge from times of stagnation, times of advance follow times of hardship: a common vision emerges from shared adversity. When people no longer seek guidance from those with all the trappings of power and authority, then they create projects that are supported by their peers because they provide a meaningful outlet for people's pent-up energies. Because such projects are conceived from the ground up, they are the collective work of the community, made up of all the lives and talents and efforts and contributions of its members. It is a time when greatness is defined by community spirit, the totality of individual expressions bound together by a common purpose and shared lives. In an atmosphere of equality and creativity, people undertake altruistic projects voluntarily because they feel responsible to contribute to the whole of which they are a part.

SUMMARY: Your influence is growing, take care what you think. Act as though your every thought was being inscribed in stone. Live as though every moment is a stone upon which you are inscribing a wish. Dedicate each of these spirit-stones of your intent to the living pyramid of creation. Cultivate good will toward all. Collaborate with those of like mind. Help organize community endeavors.

THE LINE CHANGES

1 The instincts are part of the animal nature—they are powerful allies but they must follow and not lead. Study what motivates your body to do what it does—reflect on the direction this is taking you. Decide on the direction you want to go in and train your animal nature to help you get there.

2 This is a strong, well-balanced partnership—both of you are leaders but you work

together rather than competing for recognition. Continue to go your own ways together—the destination you share benefits all. Your hard work will be rewarded—push forward.

3 The instinct to dominate others creates inferior superiors who make the lives of those under them miserable. Such people will always overstep their bounds. Give ground, pretend to be cowed, and the wrong-doer rushes into the trap—then appeal to a higher authority to enforce ethical standards.

4 The window of opportunity opens—both the inner and outer obstacles to success dissolve. All your experience gives both others and yourself confidence in your ability to take on a higher level of responsibility. Study the details of your duties—this proves key to reestablishing the balance.

5 When those who lead are good-hearted but without strong will, then people will lose focus, dissension will arise, and direction will drift aimlessly. You may hold on by not doing anything wrong, but this is not yet leadership. Move to a position more suited to your temperament.

6 Pushing ahead stubbornly brings you to a worrisome impasse. Stop here and look inside instead of outside—recognize that the real opponent is the one within and you can regain your momentum. Accept fault for going too far and work to make up for it—the conscience tames the animal nature.

The intent behind this post is to highlight the Summary at the End, albeit without seeing the entire context I think it would make far less sense. Here it is again:

SUMMARY: Your influence is growing, take care what you think. Act as though your every thought was being inscribed in stone. Live as though every moment is a stone upon which you are inscribing a wish. Dedicate each of these spirit-stones of your intent to the living pyramid of creation. Cultivate good will toward all. Collaborate with those of like mind. Help organize community endeavors.

As I have remarked elsewhere, am still somewhat uncomfortable with the flowery, New Agey feel of the language at the same time finding that it resonates deeply. I am the sort of person who has little problem holding contradictory thoughts or feelings so this is not a problem, but it does take some getting used to. That said:

Have often wondered: 'how does one form intent without it being a merely conceptual exercise?' I have found this description, not coincidentally in a Hexagram entitled 'Radiating Intent,' quite helpful. '**Act as though your every thought was being inscribed in stone.... Dedicate each of these spirit-stones of your intent to the living pyramid of creation. Cultivate good will toward all.**' I find this a clear, admirable expression with which I can immediately connect.

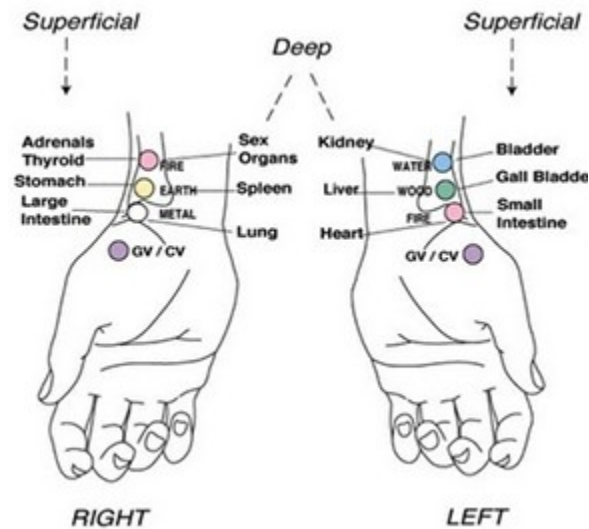
But it has also brought up challenges which have been wrestling with in the past few Articles, namely that the cultivation or awareness of good immediately involves being aware of and managing bad. (I don't really like terms like good, bad, evil, etc. because they can too easily become judgmental but anyway.) If once considers each thought as being inscribed in stone as the text recommends, it makes inner experience more substantive, meaningful, and it inspires one to avoid the banal trivialization of time, of life, that most of us tend to indulge in too much, usually without realizing. Much of our modern culture is steeped in triviality, though a good work ethic and sane family life can help counteract of course. Still, one doesn't often consider each thought as being something that 'echoes in eternity,' even though of course it does.

That said, it is not the conceptual meaning of the thought which echoes, but the intent behind it, the felt meaning. And so ideally we mean what we think rather than thinking mindlessly, that is also what this suggestion implies. And if one begins to take one's thoughts and actions more seriously, as vehicles for helping one to 'cultivate good will toward all,' then not only does one begin to encounter the enemy-within (both in oneself and others) resisting such a call but also one begins to sense how forming an intention can be something both tangible, doable and not overly dependent on abstraction or over-thinking. Because, funnily enough, taking one's thoughts more seriously as lasting 'spirit-stones' which go into the construction of a 'living pyramid of creation' helps skim away trivializing froth and chatter, revealing the nourishing bone broth beneath and within.

Food for thought!

Some wise person said: 'Time is all we have.' I am not sure if we even have that, but I get the point: we don't have our bodies or the external world, they are always changing and we don't get to either fully control or keep them. But we do have time, one moment after the next, one day after another, one year after another, until it is no more. So for a time, we have time, time in which to experience. How well do we spend or use this time? That is the question.

Article 65 Materialism as Gatekeeper



[Pulse Diagnosis, Simple](#)

Preamble: Scientific materialism, which has spawned ‘scientism,’ is accurate in many respects but has limits; more importantly, by attributing to it a scope of understanding it does not actually possess, it is unwittingly used to prevent other modes of analysis and perception outside its purview which it therefore regards as invalid. When examined carefully, reductionist materialism ultimately takes refuge in concept for the notion of any self-existing ‘objective reality’ is unverifiable since all scientific enquiry is observed by and via subjective consciousness. This trust in abstraction bleeds over into many other areas including societal governance in generally unnoticed ways. For example, this led to the belief that one could replace living, breathing monarchs with a document whose words could replace dynamic human leadership and become the highest authority and Law of the Realm.

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document whose words could replace dynamic human leadership and become the highest authority and Law of the Realm.

Materialism as an unverifiable belief:

The reality which most modern people, East and West, believe in is probably the default view of most people throughout post stone-age history, namely that the only things which are 'real' are those which are physical. They have clearly measurable existence and dimension in space and time. They have shape, size, location, duration. A book on the night table beside us; a tree in the garden; the mountain peak we can see in the distance through the window: when we go to sleep, we know that when we awake the next morning that all will still be there. Objects of the mind such as dreams, stories, emotions or other feelings, all come and go - from whence and to where we know not - and thus cannot be said to have any 'real' existence. They are fleeting, without shape, without definable location, so they are subjective experience, yes, but not 'real' in the sense that the book, the side-table, the tree and the mountain are real. I think nearly all of us would generally agree with this proposition.

Moreover, scientific methods developed world wide have afforded us the ability to make many nifty tools and machines, construct extraordinary buildings, build modern urban-based civilizations with eight billion and counting and so on. Recent mechanical advances, such as the microscope and radiography, have allowed us to see things which our senses cannot. From advances in chemistry and engineering we have learned to make new substances and machines thus transforming our world considerably in the past couple of centuries with extraordinary population growth still underway in as yet not fully developed parts of the world. Again, none of this is controversial and I think nearly everybody reading this today would accept it as basic common sense.

But.

There's a little twist in there we slid over, probably without noticing, namely that 'subjective experiences are not 'real' in the same way that physical objects like tables, trees and mountains are real. There is an assumption that the trees and mountains exist in their own right without our experience of them. This is an entirely reasonable assumption, of course, but it is important to recognize that an assumption is all it is for we are unable to verify the existence of a mountain without experiencing it via our 'not real' subjective consciousness. Yes, a camera can take a picture of it, or a sonar can map out its outlines based on feedback provided by echoing sound waves, but these can only be evaluated, again, by our minds. None of us can prove that anything exists outside the realm of Mind because none of us can experience anything without a mind. So the notion of a self-existing external 'objective' reality absent experiencing, though

entirely reasonable, cannot be scientifically verified as being anything other than an abstract idea or theory.

So what? The theory works, you might say, because the mountain will be there in the morning when you awake day after day and will be there long after you die.

Because of this next twist:

the problem is that the scientism/materialism view doesn't know its own limitations. It has Empire tendencies, it colonizes where it does not belong and, more importantly, tries to prevent exploration into areas outside its command and control effectively incarcerating its adherents. That's quite a far-ranging progression in so short a sentence so we have to consider this a little more; to do so, let me backtrack just a little.

If you were to ask a scientist to describe the movie you are watching on a screen, the scientist could talk about radio waves or internet EMF signals and various different pixels of light with different frequencies on a screen and soundwaves emanating from a speaker diaphragm and suchlike but that same scientist would also have to admit that his science cannot perceive the story being told on that screen. Science doesn't understand stories, nor can it hear symphonies or any music as such. That means that science doesn't see feelings, emotions or meaningful experience. Science cannot see love or hate, disappointment or triumph. Science, in other words, doesn't perceive most of what matters to us as living beings leading what we call 'our lives.' So science can see and do many great things, but not everything, including many of the most important experiences involving that which is most important in our human life journeys. Put another way: science has no regard for many things which we regard as most meaningful because science doesn't 'do' experience and since we inhabit what on this blog is often called an 'experiential continuum,' science only perceives a narrow band within a far larger spectrum moreover often in ways, as per the example above about watching a movie, that are somewhat outside, or alien, to that experiential continuum.

Moreover, when we discuss 'science' we are also really discussing the mindset it comes out of and which most of us share, namely that the realm of the experientially meaningful is not, scientifically speaking, 'real.' This attitude pervades modern life in many ways, too many to recount in a short article. But, briefly, this materialist mindset has created many aspects of our modern world we take for granted without noticing. For example, how we look at societies these days is mainly through the lens of 'social science' so we measure things like economic output, life expectancy, relative income levels, none of which is harmful but all of which is somewhat limited in scope and not all that human or humane sounding. It projects an objectivity which distances the observer from the observed and attempts to separate the experiential textures and

flavours of what we generally call 'culture' from the subject matter called 'society' even though clearly what we call society is comprised of living, breathing, entirely subjective human beings. Our text books and public discourse tend to be more and more geared to this sort of mindset de-emphasizing imagination and majesty and emphasizing social programming so that students will fit into the job market and modern materialist society. In a way, we could say that objectifying and then categorizing the subject matter takes the life out of it similar to how a biologist dissects a corpse to study the workings of a living organism. Yes, you can learn much that way, but there is much that you cannot learn as well.

Our cities reflect a largely utilitarian approach dominated by roads (for moving around quickly in automobiles), telephone and electrical poles and cables, cell phone towers, cement-made high-rise apartment buildings, advertising signs to boost income and so on. It's more practical and utilitarian than stylistic. Architecture from our pre-industrial past tended to have more emphasis on style which moreover changed steadily from generation to generation with occasional big shifts. Many of these styles, like Baroque, or Georgian, or Gothic or Imperial Chinese, theocratic Tibetan, transcendently ancient Indian, Shinto-Buddhist Japanese etc. are beautiful, uplifting and elegant requiring considerable time and skill over many generations to bring into being, moreover deliberately reflecting philosophical and spiritual principals which permeated the societies of those times. But just as 'science doesn't do stories,' that sort of emphasis on style and beauty is not meaningful to the materialist mindset and so modern architecture in most places tends to be comparatively drab unless attempting to broadcast a sense of wealth and power. Let's face it: most schools, hospitals and government buildings in most modern countries are decidedly ugly.

So the problem is that we have let the limitation inherent in the scientific or materialistic approach overly determine what matters in how we construct and evaluate our modern world, including governance, financial systems and overall cultures and values, and thus also sense perceptions – how we feel, how we see, how we live. So this materialism-scientism issue is a fairly big deal though rarely acknowledged as such except by philosophers like Iain McGilchrist whose magisterial 'The Matter with Things' might just be the most important intellectual contribution in the last century or more. Perhaps the most unfortunate element in the mix is simply that, just as with left brain dominance as McGilchrist has elucidated brilliantly, materialism doesn't see its own limitations. The thrust of this Article is now done, so what now follows is simply further embellishment, a little fleshing-out as it were.

For a while I studied traditional daoist-Chinese medicine. I didn't go all the way to becoming a licensed practitioner because where I lived at the time health insurance

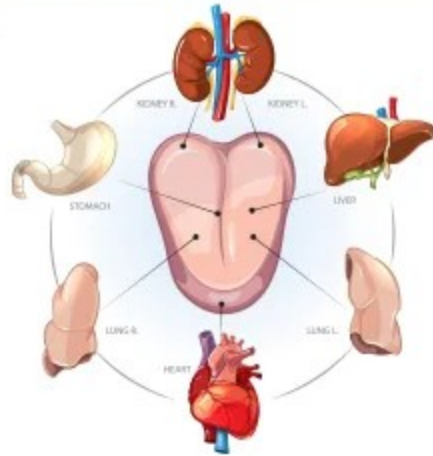
wouldn't cover such treatments so I would never have been able to earn enough to pay back the exorbitant US tuition fees, but I did get a solid introduction to the overall theory behind it – which is fascinating and I believe comprises one of the world's most sophisticated wisdom traditions. Importantly, it does not start from the scientism perspective which presupposes an external objective reality and discounts subjective reality as unreal and therefore both unreliable and irrelevant. Chinese medicine is based on subjective sense perceptions which can be consistently observed and catalogued – things like skin tone, tongue texture and colour, pulses, voice, movements and so forth. More importantly for the purposes of this article, they use a type of differential diagnosis, though in a different way from typical medical usage.

One of the definitions of differential is “Dependent on or making use of a specific difference or distinction.” That is the sense I am using here for their diagnostic method features using several different uncorrelated systems to reach an overall diagnosis. I can't go into depth here but let me give a brief example with just two or three systems. Most doctors use more.

The most popular, almost universal, system is taking the pulse. The Chinese pulse method is surprisingly sophisticated: using the index, middle and fourth finger on the patient's wrist in particular spots yields three separate readings on each wrist. Each point has three levels, surface, middle and bottom. So that makes twenty seven pulses being read by the three fingers on each wrist, so fifty four in all. A good doctor can learn a huge amount about a patient by feeling the pulse for only a minute. Of course it takes many years to master, but this is a sophisticated, precise method which can reveal pretty much any medical condition, moreover using subjective perception.

The second most popular diagnostic method, and entirely uncorrelated with the pulse reading method, involves inspecting the tongue about which volumes have been written over the millenia. Here's a three hour [Youtube](#); and here's a search [result](#). The zone of the tongue – front, middle, sides, back, surface, underneath – yields particular signals; the colours also – pink, pale, yellowish, black (yes, some people present with black tongues, I have seen this myself). All these many different things yield precise information regarding various core organs – lung, liver, spleen, heart, kidney, condition of the blood and more.

CHINESE TONGUE DIAGNOSIS



So if the pulse shows a weak heart and the tongue also, you are on the way to focusing on the heart and giving heart-related treatments with needles, massage or herbs. If the pulse shows something very different from the tongue, then either you are reading them wrong and need to reexamine more carefully, or you need another system or two's input to determine a diagnosis.

Another system involves getting a verbal history whilst listening to the patient's voice, examining their overall demeanor and body movements etc. and finding out various symptoms involving specific organs, syndromes or meridians based on the theory. For example, if you wake up regularly between 1 and 3 AM, this indicates a problem with the liver and gallbladder which are known to effect various other systems and organs.

Another system is to examine signs of excess and deficiency. This is harder to explain and quite intuitive but we all have both physical and mental-emotional areas where we are excessive or deficient. This could be the tone of voice, or zones in the tongue or pulse, or parts of the body that are hyper or hypo sensitive. The pattern revealed by what is excessive and what deficient provides more clues, for every area that exhibits excess will be linked with a corresponding area that is deficient just like a wave has a trough as well as a peak. For example, if the heart pulse is weak, the doctor looks for what is correspondingly excessive and depending upon what it is - the small intestine, the liver, the stomach - he gets an idea of what type of imbalance and dynamic is in play since the heart has a different relationship with each other organ system and the doctor, through his training and on his bookshelf, has access to over two thousand years of clinical observation of whatever pulse and other combination of symptoms the patient is presenting. And there are many other systems including nine zones of

the body going from bottom to top, yin and yang, inside and outside, outer, in-between or deep levels of dis-ease and so forth.

The above systems can be used to determine a good differential diagnosis in a few minutes, though getting a life history and verbal report of symptoms takes a little longer though is usually only done once if at all. Barring that longer initial evaluation, most good doctors can get a fairly in-depth read in less than five minutes. If two or three of these uncorrelated systems point to the same type of problem, you can be confident that you are zeroing in on what needs helping.

The point here being that by not being limited to materialist science approach alone, one can broaden the spectrum of data used to come up with an overall diagnosis even if that data is derived from methods which most 'scientists' would reject as being too unreliably subjective. By not having a single objective reality limitation, the method comfortably includes multiple ways of viewing the same thing - tongue, pulse, history, excess-deficiency, body zones etc. This inherent flexibility is more in accord with how we experience things in our lives, but is also a result of not limiting our definition of what is or is not real and relevant from the get-go.

Put another way: this sort of approach is much easier to come up with if you have a more open view which values all sorts of experience modalities rather than trying to limit everything to objective physical measurement alone. It's not that the latter is unhelpful or wrong, it's just that it is a fairly narrow spectrum of what can be used to effect thorough diagnosis; it is incomplete, overly narrow.

Similarly, in the societal realm, we should be using far more than the scientific mindset to analyse how our societies are doing and how we might improve them. Better and more imaginative story telling as a way to explain societal dynamics for example, for as we have reflected above, science doesn't do stories even though each of us leads our lives day by day within the context of individual and collective narrative cognition - perhaps the topic of a later Article. Put another way: 'objective' materialist political analysis blocks too much of the rich and vital overall spectrum of human experience and so often ends up doing more harm than good.

This goes back to something mentioned in the preamble: the notion of an objective reality which trumps subjective experience is an unverifiable abstraction. Physical materialism which posits a 'scientific' objective reality, is an idea, a concept, indeed a belief - even though they themselves believe and insist that it is everything but even though on some level, it's no more real than fairy tale. More importantly, it provides only a limited spectrum because our experiential world has so many more experienced and important dimensions all of which come into play in our daily lives as individuals in families and societies in the overall dynamics of society at large, which

in many ways is a complex living organism with heart, mind, body, feelings, neurosis, wisdom, sense of meaningful narrative and so much more.

For example, considering all this and about the thinking behind the US Constitution yesterday when reading *The Political Theory of the American Founding; Natural Rights, Public Policy, and the Moral Conditions of Freedom* by Thomas G. West, I noted that one of the over-arching principles behind it was to create a 'more perfect Union' by which they meant not only a Union of different States, but also a union of people with each other and their government, a sense of being one realm, a vibrant 'We.' And one of the main ways they proposed to do it was to eliminate tyranny in all forms including monarchy by establishing a republic, which is a state run by its citizens who by definition are sovereign themselves, not subjects of a monarch. I don't have an axe to grind about this aspiration necessarily though suspect it has yet to be thought through sufficiently, but it did occur to me that it's a little ironic that what they established as an alternative to Monarchy, which features a living, breathing human individual as Head of State, was a Document containing only lifeless abstractions, aka words. They put the Document and those conceptual abstractions as the highest Authority, and therefore Law, of the Land. The materialist mindset finds this normal because the whole notion of objective reality which they subscribe to is itself a conceptualized abstraction, moreover a belief sincerely held as being quintessentially 'real.' The irony is that they made Concept into a new King instead of a living, breathing human. I can't help but wonder if this is really the step forward they intended

Article 66: Tethered to Form



From movied Arvo Part: Da Pacem

Long ago, the Chinese noticed yin and yang, two aspects of one overall process, moreover that this dynamic plays out in all observable, experienced processes. That's a bit of a leap so let's go step by step.

Yin and Yang: the classic example is the sunny and shaded side of a mountain. In the morning the East-facing side is warm and sunny and the West-facing side is cool and shaded; this reverses in the afternoon as the sun passages from East to West. So there is no such 'thing' as yin or yang even though they are perceivable. Yes, temperatures can be taken and degrees of light or shade gauged, but those measurements don't measure 'yang' or 'yin' which are mutually relative terms. Perhaps it is more helpful to regard yin and yang as two mutually relative aspects of one overall dynamic process. It's because the process is an ever-changing dynamic that the terms were developed,

noting something that is a constant (a sunny and shady side, or two sides) but never exactly the same yet in one overall dynamic.



New Zealand Photo by Ron Rosenstock

Now - and more importantly - look at what happens to our minds when using terms like yin and yang. Our minds immediately want to make them into something definite, tangible, measurable even though in our mountain example they are changing from moment to moment and in any case aren't really measurable things at all, rather relationships.



Czek Republic Ron Rosenstock

Let's take another pairing which is similar but different: form and space or form and formless. In order for something with a clear shape to be distinguished and perceived there must be space around it. Traditionally this is described as the 'six directions' namely the four directions plus above and below. Unless there is space around an object it cannot be perceived as an independent object with measurable dimensions. The way our minds work, though, we can grock an object with measurable dimensions – height, width, weight etc. - but we cannot grock the space around it, which is seemingly non-existent, a blank.

Space is a strange thing. It has no shape, dimension or substance and yet it is limited. Space is a strange thing. It has no shape, dimension or substance and yet it is limited somehow. If you have two trees two feet apart, you cannot fit in a building that is ten feet by ten feet. But if you think further it's not the space that creates the limitation but the relative position of the two forms between which there is only two feet distance. That limitation in distance is created by the forms, not the space accommodating them - indeed we could say that the space accommodates the limitation. So we cannot measure space any more than we can 'puncture it with an arrow' as an old dzogchen analogy likes to put it, only note that there is such a thing even though it isn't a thing. This is similar to yin and yang not being forms even though they are observable phenomena. Materialists who like to claim that only the physical, only that with form, is real, essentially insist that our experience of things like colours, textures and qualities are not; for them experience is an illusion, or as one person I was discussing this with recently on a forum put it: 'the experience of redness is phantom' because redness is a cognitively generated illusion from beams of light or some such. This is like arguing that the story told on a TV screen isn't 'real' because it is only made of light pixels on a screen and vibrations in a speaker. The story isn't physical, true, but it is experienced. (Whether it is 'real' or not perhaps 'really' doesn't matter?)



Czek Republic Ron Rosenstock

The way our minds work, we see the form but not the space, which is invisible - literally 'out of sight out of mind.' Not only that, but it seems that our minds are habituated to seeking out the forms, hunting for them, grabbing them, consuming them, manipulating them, coveting them, desiring them, combating them, denying them and so forth. We live in a world of jostling forms, no end of forms which our minds are continuously involved in perceiving, evaluating and dealing with, and all this time we do not see the space in which all forms manifest.

Now an additional little twist: there are both physical and mental forms. In the above example we used trees as an example of forms but they represent any perceivable physical objects – chairs, tables, glasses, baseball bats, bodies, cars, buildings and so forth. But in the realm of our personally experienced minds, the realm of 'me' we carry around in our bodies everywhere we go (even in dreams!), there is the mental

equivalent of form and space. There are the mental forms which arise and which we perceive, usually called ‘thoughts.’ Each individual thought, usually a word or image, has a specific form and a defined set of meanings, just like objects. (A tree, for example, can be viewed from different angles and also has different associations – it is stable, or beautiful, or provides shade etc.) And just as with physical objects, there is the form itself – say a thought of a tree either in verbal or image form – and the space around that form which, just as with seeming external space, is ‘out of sight, out of mind.’

But is it? Is the space of mind in which mental forms arise entirely invisible? Is an element with which we perceive itself outside the ken of perception? In Buddhist meditation parlance, we talk about first becoming aware of the movement of mind and taming it until it is more or less still, but within that stillness thoughts – or experiences is perhaps a better word – arise; they come and go much like yin and yang is continuously changing. So what is tamed and still is not the thoughts and perceptions themselves, rather the background comes more into the foreground, for the background is what remains unmoved and unmoving just like the space doesn’t change however objects move around in a garden: if the wind blows and the leaves move or the wind doesn’t blow and the leaves don’t move the space in which they all take place does not change in the slightest. Similarly in the mind no matter what thoughts, emotions, perceptions or whatever arise, the background container, the space of mind, the nature of mind, does not change in the slightest.



Ireland. Ron Rosenstock

Iain McGilchrest has written two huge books coming out of extensive study about the left and right brains. I have not read all his materials on this but my 'down and dirty' understanding is that the left brain tackles problems in the world we have to navigate through by creating a representation, essentially a map. A map is not the terrain but a re-presentation of it so that one can find one's way through the actual terrain. The problem is that if one relies too much on the left brain, one begins to mistake the representation for the reality. Meanwhile the right brain likes to see the whole picture, the entire context, and is more open, vast and intuitive, less constrained by the mapping functions of the left brain. So with our form and space contemplation it seems like the perception of forms is principally like left brain processes whereas the awareness of the space accommodating such forms is the right brain processes. Something like that.

So: back to the title: Tethered to Form. It seems that when we lose track of space awareness that we become glommed onto form and this becomes habitual given that we keep going from one form to the next without any seeming gap. We might ask: who is doing the tethering here, and we could answer, like good little Buddhist students, 'the ego, the ego is tethering our mind to forms, the ego is creating these habits.' But that is only halfway. Why not phrase it as: 'the ego is what we call the process by which mind tethers itself to only perceiving forms.' In other words, the process of glomming onto forms and only forms, not seeing the space in which they arise, is what can be called 'ego.' In other words, a bit like yin and yang, ego is not a thing but an observable process. A Welsh teacher (Nagchang Rinpoche) insists that ego is not a thing but a process - like walking. Whilst we are walking there is a phenomenon called 'walking' but when we stop walking there is no more 'walking.' Similarly, whilst we tether the mind to form without awareness there is 'egoing' but when we let go of that tether and become aware of both form and spacious awareness together, there is no more 'egoing.'

In some schools of Buddhism there are the terms 'egolessness of self' and 'egolessness of other.' The latter doesn't make much sense in English, frankly, but the former means the tethering of the mind to form regarding one's own experience and the latter means

the tethering of the mind to form regarding seemingly external experience. So the 'ego' quotient is the tethering, the glomming.

It happens in an instant. As we perceive form it consumes our entire experiential space and we tune out the background, the context, the atmosphere. Those who have developed 'egolessness' never lose awareness, which means awareness of the space around objects which perhaps we can better describe as 'particulars in the experiential field.'

There is another term: 'mindfulness of mind.' This is gradually becoming as aware of the background as the objects within it. Mind, as it turns out, is not dead, empty and lifeless. It is empty of form, yes, but it is the essence of life, it is awake, aware. (This wakefulness is what the word Buddha refers to.) We live in an ocean of awareness. And this is as true of external as internal space.

Modern materialist mentality has a very hard time understanding, let alone accepting this. If we wanted to be mean we could call them 'awareness deniers' or even 'life deniers.' Of course we won't do that even though on some level it is true. By insisting that everything can only be regarded in left-brain representational mode we ignore the living, wakeful space in which it all takes place.

So let us cast off habitual tethering and roam free....

Food for thought...



[New Zealand Ron Rosenstock](#)

Article 67 The King's Two Bodies



Recently in a discussion about democracy in America these days, a participant in an online Moon of Alabama discussion contributed a quote from an article about the messy US pull-out from Afghanistan. The article is entitled "[Farewell to Bourgeois Kings](#)" and the quote goes like this:

*In the age of monarchy, kings justified their right to rule through some form of the argument that they were simply born to do so. A king was not just an ordinary human, but in some sense a vessel for a divine principle of sorts. As such, there exists cases in medieval jurisprudence where the legal issue at stake was whether the king in his human form or his metaphysical form had signed a particular contract. If it was the former, the contract could very well be legally void by such circumstances as the king being a legal minor. But the situation would be different if it was the capital K King – the virtual, platonic essence of the realm who was located in, but not bound by, the king's physical (and in this case, underage!) body – whose hand had signed the document, as the King in this sense was not a minor and in fact could neither age nor die (there is a good book on this subject by Ernst Kantorowicz, called *The King's Two Bodies*, for those interested in reading further).*

I found the above notion about The King's Two Bodies fascinating, having never encountered it before. It both relates to Buddhist notions of the Trikaya, covered on this blog a year or so ago, and also to my pet peeve these days about the materialistic tendency to narrow our perceptual and intellectual spectrum in that to the materialist mindset the notion of a King ('how silly!') having two bodies ('ridiculous!') is beyond

imagination. Nobody today could come up with such a notion and yet I found, having downloaded a digital copy of the *The King's Two Bodies* and spending a few hours yesterday ploughing through its dense, arcane prose, that the topic had been seriously discussed for many hundreds of years going back to before the time of Christ, but especially between around 600 to 1670 AD (the historical span of the book) it was a hot topic. As a notion it contrasts materialist and non-materialist views. Now of course not all materialist thinking is the same, nor all non-materialist, but generally speaking all materialists stay within a relatively narrow band united by the belief in a continuous, extant, external 'objective reality,' aka 'the real world,' regarding scientists as the only ones in modern society qualified to tell us what 'the truth' or 'reality' is.

For example, there is a 'real world' on the one hand and then there is imagination, fantasy, delusion - our subjective notions about it - on the other hand; the 'it' is what is real and 'my' or 'our' feelings or thoughts about it are therefore not. The main problem is not so much that this is a wrong view (though it is) but that it tunes out too much experiential bandwidth. It's as if we had an FM radio with a mechanism only letting us tune into two out of the twenty available local stations; the two stations it receives might be excellent, but generally it would be better if we could have access to them all since the two on offer only play rock and roll whilst the other eighteen have classical, country, folk, ethnic, Talk and so on.

But now I've made that point, let's take a little time to examine this non-materialist notion of the 'Twin-Body King.'

There is the normal person with a body, with passions, strengths and weaknesses who progresses through childhood to maturity and at some point dies - the ordinary mortal body-mind being like you and I. But then that same mortal individual's body is consecrated and anointed with sacred oil and with Speech takes sacred vows and thereby becomes also a new being, a King or Queen. And this new 'King's Body' is not born, does not age, cannot become infirm and never dies.

Interestingly, this is like present awareness in meditation, often referred to as 'nowness.' We often describe time as a sequence of moments involving past, present and future. And yet if we try to determine what exactly a moment is we find that no matter how short the duration we can always divide it in half. We can never come up with an indivisible moment. We find that nowness has no measurable duration and therefore cannot accommodate a past or future. But even though nowness is empty of duration or substance, the experience is vivid, brilliant, powerful making the experiential space of nowness luminous with intelligence and vital energy, just as a monarch's majesty is brilliant and vivid, just as our garden is vividly present and alive.

Here is a piece from a book about the Yijing that I was reading recently written by an old friend from Dharma salad days, Daniel Hessey. The book is not yet published but hopefully will be soon:

“Firm lines represent Heaven's nature, which is non-dual and unconditional. In this context, non-duality is the counterpart of duality, understood as the absence of dualistic entities. In that narrow sense, it functions as an entity. How should the characteristics of emptiness be understood? The absence of dualistic entities, the apprehended and apprehender, and the entity that is the absence of such entities—this is what characterizes emptiness.

An example of non-duality is nowness. Nowness does not depend on the past, which no longer exists, nor on the future, which has not yet come into being. Nowness itself has no duration and can thus be thought of as "empty." It can be defined as "that which is not past or future," which is another way of saying "that which is not duality." Yet nowness, lacking any substance or characteristics in itself, is not void. The space of nowness is full of energy and intelligence. It accommodates the immediate Brilliance of what we perceive as relative experience, which can only take place in the present. Thus, nowness itself possesses tremendous power and potency and is genuine, not imagined.

Although duality does not exist, the false imagination is not something absolutely nonexistent either because the experience of duality exists. Thus a yin line expresses the energy of dualistic perception and relationship and is, at its core, the Brilliance of emptiness. The emptiness of the yang line is the true nature of dualistic knowing:

*Form is emptiness, emptiness itself is form;
Form is no other than emptiness,
emptiness is no other than form.
—The Heart Sutra”*

Now that is quite deep and complex but I emboldened the section most involved with the nowness aspect in particular which dovetails so neatly with the experiential brilliance of Majesty, or Kingship. Generally, if we look directly at our own experience we can see that a two-sided yin-yang real-imagined aspect is always present. There is the individual with a body playing the part (say of a King), and there is the part being played which is neither alive nor not alive, both real and imaginary.

This sort of thing drives materialist nuts, but on the experiential level we deal with it every day, albeit usually without noticing. We have notions flying around in our everyday minds of who we were, who we are, who we might be, how others see us as we negotiate a price for a service or purchase, how our children see us versus how our

parents see us and so on. In other words, we deal with multiple identities, realities, possibilities, actualities, aspirations, projections and so forth all the time, many of them simultaneously. Both individually and collectively we inhabit multi-faceted constantly changing realities each and every day whether or not we choose to recognize them as such. So actually it's not such a stretch to understand that a King does indeed have two bodies: his ordinary mortal body and that of The King which is both real and imagined.

For that matter our notions of country, such as England or America, are both real and imagined; or perhaps we can say they encompass a reality not bounded by only the physical, so that although there are indeed physical, territorial parameters to what we call the United States, the polity also exists on an imaginary, and thus non-material, realm for it is an Idea, a vision, a multi-faceted cultural existens similar to a corporation, which is another type of fictive existing in Law, not only a physical territory. So we are all twin-bodied.

This of course has ramifications as to how we might view our life journeys and society in general. For example, here is an (edited) [comment](#) I wrote in response to the End of Bourgeois Kings quote above.

This notion of the metaphysical King only works in a realm (a shared societal experience) wherein the metaphysical is as valued as the physical, indeed the latter is seen as existing within a metaphysical context. In this sort of worldview, the belief in a physical universe existing separate from and even without the agency of mind-consciousness is unimaginable, indeed I suspect for most of human history there are many societies in which such a notion never arose. That said, given we live in a time when the metaphysical is relegated to dusty archives wherein we store relics of by-gone days, the notion of including anything non-physical in the pantheon of mechanical corpses we call reality these days is beyond the pale.

It's all very silly. Democracy is an idea and an ideal, not an actual thing. The same for all the isms. They are all ideas and therefore all 'metaphysical.' The difference is that in the old days before we felt obliged to remain constrained within materialist straitjackets, there were also metaphysical beings captured and transmitted within cultural forms - such as living monarchs in the description above or fictional ones as in Shakespeare's plays. Hamlet exists in the minds of every member of the audience and lives on within them long after the play is over, as do other Kings in other plays, making every subject in the Kingdom in which such plays were performed - often with the monarch of the actual Realm in attendance no doubt studying how best to be one (or not) - a living lineage holder of the tradition which belonged to each and every one of them, not the monarch's person alone as we tend to project these days. The dismantling of Royalty depicted in the heart-breaking Richard II was so potent a display for contemporary onlookers that it was forbidden to be published in written form until after Queen Elizabeth's death. (There is an entire chapter on this play in the Two Bodies book which is well worth reading.) It is an extraordinary play which examines, step by step, what it takes to dismantle a Monarch who has been anointed

and consecrated, how such a thing is both unnatural and wretched and yet occurred. I cannot imagine what it must have been like to witness a performance of this play with her Majesty in attendance.

Indeed, in such a 'metaphysics-first' Realm, everyday life becomes a play within a play, something the monarch principle empowers more vividly than a concept-driven system like democracy or socialism, just like witnessing a King or Queen and her subjects watching a play about a King or Queen and their subjects, an experiential gestalt continuing long after the formal performance is over.

This play within a play dynamic echoes in daily life around the family dinner table with Father and Mother playing their parts, in school or work with Teachers and Bosses and so on. Our lives are unfolding performances lived out in public, as it were, making society the domain in which such performances are continuously unfolding. The word 'person' comes from *persuonare* meaning '(speech) sounding through a mask,' making our person, our sense of 'me,' part of a performance for others to view and the society wherein we perform it a type of play, making the 'reality' within which this play unfolds a type of game, an ongoing ever-improvised Dance of Creation in which each and every one of us are co-creators.

It is from this type of metaphysics-first cultural space that high cultures arise, including attention to manners, for manners are the way we each consciously play our parts in the unfolding drama of life from cradle to grave within an overall cultural container, or Realm, which is more metaphysical than physical, more a product of collective imagination than objective reality per se as we are nowadays trained to perceive it. Indeed, this living sense of shared culture as an ongoing collective improvisatory Creation, is what we have lost thanks to the narrow bandwidth effect of the materialist mindset. And it is this sort of vivid, wakefully imagined mutually created Realm that Kings preside over quite naturally and inevitably but since we have lost those cultures we have erased Kings from our own today. Pity!

Monarchies of yore, whether as oppressive tyranny (as some no doubt were and as current democracy in the US now seemingly is becoming) or as Golden Age utopias (as some no doubt were though perhaps never spotlessly) were always a mutual creation generated by the population's vivid sense of living, breathing – but also metaphysical - presence, thus always informed by the human faculty of Imagination, one of our most quintessentially human faculties.

Even today, notwithstanding our left-brain materialist bent, we can acknowledge that the idea of America is indeed such a metaphysical 'realm' notion. Of course one can argue about what it is as many do - 'it was evil from the get-go, slaves, plunder, violence, deceit' etc. - but whether objectively truthful or not, the Idea of America persists because fundamentally all human beings want to live in that type of State - and of course most people feel the same about their own countries in that there is the actual state as it is versus the ideal as it could or should be. Back to the twin bodies idea in other words. If we could cast off the shackles of worshipping the false Idol of Objective Scientific Truth, we would all have a better shot at realizing such states - if

you imagine it, it can be so. More importantly perhaps than whether or not such utopian ideas can be realized is whether or not we can strive, individually and collectively, to live up to such ideals and in so doing find we are on a Path, a Dao, that leads to a lifetime of continuously learning how to be a better person, husband, wife, colleague – or King. What parts we play, though partly fictive, are vitally important both for ourselves and the world they help create as they are performed.

For example, the main concern which personally gives me pause about both Putin and Xi, who are clearly way better than average leaders and certainly any in the West these days, is that each in his own way bows down to objective reality. Putin often specifically references the latter in his speeches, especially when discussing historical matters even though nearly always this involves one side attempting to impose its version of reality over an other's, making neither 'objective'. Meanwhile Xi harps on about 'modernization' which clearly regards material improvement as the principal yardstick of social progress, and thus of the current Chinese Realm over which he presides.

This doesn't make either wrong or bad, but it does make their cultural ceiling, or Heaven principle, somewhat low, engendering a tendency to cast the collective gaze more towards Earth than Heaven. Over time, this could be problematic because it will tend to stifle the imaginative (metaphysical, invisible and eternal) elements without which a good human society cannot flourish, let alone endure.

Article 68 Robbie Robertson RIP



Born in 1955 I missed most of the sixties despite growing up in swinging London. The Beatles broke up in 1970 when I was fifteen. When the Band gave their 'Last Waltz' closing concert in 1976 I was entirely unaware. Although I must have heard it many times before, the first time their classic hit 'the Weight' hit me was when watching 1983's The Big Chill which tells the story of a bunch of people who grew up in the era of Dylan and The Band but are now heading into their late thirties early forties a decade later spending a slightly awkward weekend together after one of their group had committed suicide. A 'hippies to yuppies' story some say. So just like their final concert, that song in the movie both recalls and marks the passing of an era.

I spent a few hours yesterday listening to their music and watching both the Last Waltz concert film and the Once Were Brothers documentary and learned how important other musicians of the era regarded their sound, their skill and their togetherness.

A few months ago I spent a day or so going through some reaction videos on Youtube, watching young people today reacting to music from my era, including songs I found stirring at the time, especially Genesis, Yes and various other songs (like Whiter Shade of Pale) and bands (like Jethro Tull, Traffic, the Beatles), though the artist who looms by

far the largest from that era over all others is – for me at least - Bob Dylan, as much poet as musician. Like any true master of poesis¹, he created not just his own songs, but in so doing the spirit of the era in which they arose. First he interlaced folk music with the magic spells of inspired poetry (and marijuana from the black community who had been taking it since the days of Louis Armstrong). The song [Tangerine Man](#) is a masterpiece of this genre; its authentic purity of artistic expression cuts far deeper than any surface psychedelic influences. But later Dylan wanted to move into the more gutsy, electric, urban and restlessly provocative realm of rock. He ended up touring America and Europe with The Band, then known as The Hawks, doing split sets: the first half featured only the solo troubadour's standard guitar, harpsichord and voice but the second electric amplified set featured less familiar songs played at high volume with The Band. For months on end everywhere they went they were booed during those second sets, but Dylan insisted they keep going. Enduring this universal rejection, indeed hatred, the Band formed an unusually tight bond that kept them together making quintessentially American rock music until Robbie broke away in 1976, though I gather the remaining band members [continued playing](#) together as The Band thereafter. The ostensible reason for the break according to Robbie, the leader and composer, is that since the mid-60's he had a wife and children whereas none of the other guys did and he simply couldn't hack the sybaritic partying 'on the road' lifestyle any more. He had been more or less on the road since the late 50's, a long time. Unfortunately, despite their deep mutual friendship, after the Last Waltz concert there was bitterness involving money and credits which is a pity, but that is not the subject of this Article.

What I found interesting reviewing his life and their work was revisiting that era which I belatedly and so only somewhat lived through myself. When they broke up I was only twenty one and had just moved to America a year or so earlier, ending up by chance in Syracuse, a junior league college in upstate New York, where I felt completely out of place both academically and culturally, then dropping out almost choicelessly in confusion, spending a few lost months in a Hindu ashram recommended by a friendly faculty member who saw I couldn't hack it there, albeit finally a only few months later in early 1976 ending up at a brand new Buddhist and Liberal Arts College called Naropa Institute in Boulder Colorado. Presumably I heard the Band on the radio many times during all this, but they never figured in my mind like many other bands or artists; they must have blended in with so much other music I heard all over all the time, though mainly all I remember from that mid to late 70's period is Kool and the Gang and other funk music which I liked best of all for both driving and dancing, which I loved to do. The white-man stuff always felt weaker and

1 In continental philosophy and semiotics, poiesis (/pɔɪˈiːsɪs/; from Ancient Greek: ποιησις) is the process of emergence of something that did not previously exist.

more cerebral to me. I am listening now to the 1985 concert linked above and it feels that way.

Listening to the songs and watching the documentaries yesterday I tried to recall my experience of that era and also understand why the music felt so seminal, so powerful, so rich, so dangerous, so quintessential. I know it to be so, I felt it at the time, we all did, but now I cannot for the life of me bring it back - it just doesn't come. Indeed, when I listen to some of the songs, for example the progressive rock ('prog rock') of Genesis and Yes which I listened to before moving to America around 1971 to 1974 it sounds both brilliantly original and also infantile, silly and structurally disjointed; in contrast, the Band's compositions are more gritty, less airy-fairy - but also more kitchen sink ordinary in a good down to earth way despite their being highly innovative and different at the time. Combining country, blues and rock in way with such depth and bite was a creatively generous cultural expression, plus since the Band spent a year or more with Dylan in Woodstock recovering from their long ordeal on the road, Robbie ended up learning from the Master how to summon lyrics reaching deep into the personal and national psyche resulting in iconic masterpieces - not as many as Dylan perhaps, but still: no small thing.

And they are indeed masterpieces not so much because of how well the lyrics and music were blended together in creative new ways, but because of how they both fit and shaped their generation's culture. The iconic performance of [The Weight](#) during the 1976 concert with guest black singers the Staples is a marvellous snapshot of America at that time, with black people being both decidedly different and also part of a joyful, forward-moving adventure into the collective unknown, yet rooted in shared past skeins coming through in various chords, twangs and rhythms grounded in bedrock rural and urban American culture. The song is a veritable feast.

What the documentaries made clear is that these young men spent thousands of hours honing their talent as ensemble musicians, hard work which comes through in their music. Listening to a seventy-something Robbie Robertson reminisce about those times and reflect on various lessons learned and suchlike it is clear that he had a rich, full life and developed substantive wisdom. But still: nothing really grabs me; and I briefly listened to some of his recent compositions: the same.

Perhaps the times indeed have 'a-changed' and you have to be in them in the moment to feel them. In which case we are talking about a cultural gestalt, aka 'realm' or 'mandala.' The songs provide a medium for people sharing a sense of time and being, encapsulating whilst transmitting that feeling, that time, that sharing. Songs create community, just as they have done since time out of mind long before the civilizations we now dwell within mushroomed forth.



When I arrived in Boulder Colorado in early January 1976 to undertake studies in improvisational theater at Naropa Institute it was around 9 o'clock at night with a few inches of snow on the pavements. Not only was I entirely unprepared for the snow, I also didn't have a plan for where to sleep that night, having just made a transatlantic flight from a family get-together near Killarney, Ireland. I was attired as an artsy-hippy type with a top hat, a tie-dyed shirt, baggy pants and Indian sandals without socks. I had a backpack and a beat-up guitar which I didn't know how to play, but I looked the part – or so I guess I thought. Anyway, there I was out of the airport bus in the middle of a strange town in a strange new State with no notion of where next to go - and with naked toes rapidly freezing. Reality was starting to bite – hard.

Out of the harsh alternating darkness and glare of passing traffic on an unfamiliar hilltop crossroads, a small car swerved over, its lights washing over me soon followed by a friendly young woman's welcoming smile through a rolled-down window. With few words, we quickly determined that I was lost with nowhere to go so she invited me to her home. Turned out she lived in Denver from where I'd just come so back we went to her place and soon thereafter slept together – though I was extremely inexperienced still finding all females and their bodies extremely foreign, mysterious and powerful. We didn't talk much; we didn't need to. She saw my outfit and decided I was a brother-of-the-times or some such (though she was dressed like an ordinary citizen, no doubt because she had to work for a living) and so spontaneously pulled over to invite me home. In those times in America and Europe, two young people together of a certain age slept together as a matter of course if they were of the youth culture tribe - or something. I believe she would have felt uncomfortable if she hadn't offered me her bed and body just as I would have felt uncomfortable refusing them, though the

thought had never crossed my still English public schoolboy mind that we would end up in bed together.

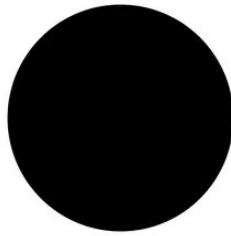
The next morning, she helped me find another bus to Boulder where I found the school whose receptionist told me where to find my rented room. Soon thereafter I stopped pretending to learn how to play the guitar, cut my hair and left the hippy costume days behind – for I was never one, just dressed in a psychedelic style for a few months. But I very much lived in 1970's America and so very much encountered the music of those times.

And yet now when I listen, I cannot hear it as powerful and iconic; and the same goes for the Beatles or any other song from those times. I can listen, even enjoy, but I find the compositional structures lightweight and most of the lyrics frivolous. Or something. Frankly, I prefer the Brandenburg Concertos. Right now, after the Band concert from 1985 finished, and on the recommendation of Iain McGilchrist, am enjoying a little [Tallis](#).

So is it me? Or was it the times back then which are no more?

Maybe some questions are best left unanswered...

Article 69 Of Brains & Location



In response to a [Youtube](#) entitled *An Exercise to Balance the Brain's Two Hemispheres* on the Iain McGilchrest channel I offered a comment whose edited and slightly expanded version now follows. (The comment is addressed to Iain McGilchrest.)

In *dzogchen* awareness one can exercise attention without intention or object resting in the nature of mind itself. Or so they say! Of course one has to develop the intention to rest the mind that way which takes training and time. In traditional Buddhist doctrine there are said to be 'two wings of enlightenment' which are shamatha/mindfulness and vipashyana/awareness. Mindfulness involves placing attention on a particular and learning to rest there; and awareness is about becoming aware of the space-atmosphere-mind around mindfulness until one finds the 'object' of attention becoming in fact the nature of mind itself. So it seems that in this tradition a two-brain approach is in play.

I have been thinking about this as I slowly go through your videos and the Matter with Things (on the desk but not yet read except for the last chapter) and it seems to me that the reason we have this two-brain approach involves an existential prerogative for creatures coming out of the realm of Idea or Mind, as it were, and into Embodied Form as living creatures who in turn create fields in which other seemingly solid phenomena like planets and rocks etc. also form and coalesce. In our dimension, and as individual beings, we experience place/location, meaning there is a particular 'here' and an 'everywhere else.' This is the spatial equivalent of the One (everywhere) and Many (particulars). Once we have a realm with particulars, including dimensions in which particular locations can be experienced, we have two zones, the particularity place and everywhere else all around that place. Given this binary existential setup as a sine qua non for any type of individualized experience (which is what each living organism is) I find it hard to believe that the left brain (particularity) and right brain (context-space) dynamic is random happenstance, rather it reflects something fundamental about the nature of embodied reality and moreover the dimensions in

which it is experienced. In other words, the twin brain is a symptom or result of the underlying situation not the cause. Because of course the brain does not create mind or space, rather it is the other way around.

In practical terms: no doubt the left brain can be trained to pay attention to particulars versus leaching off into habitual conceptual-discursive-abstract 'monkey mind' false pistes. Forming concept is a type of particularity in that it brings all of mind to one point; this is a helpful form of mental magic but is not without pitfalls. The notion of a tree is very helpful, for example, but it is not the tree itself rather an abstract representation of a tree; the problem is that once generated we tend to regard this concept of 'tree' as equivalent to the tree itself and rarely even see actual trees any more even when directly looking at them. In your terms, I believe we could say that we are seeing the tree only with the left brain and not also the right brain. Moreover we usually think of trees (or whatever) in combination with other similar abstractions in complex thought constructions, akin to or actually part of stories. Once catalogued as 'tree' (or any other such concept) they get somehow ignored as no longer living processes but fixed corpses.

That said, there can be valid, helpful left brain attention such as the old-school Anapanasati sutra style mindfulness, equivalents of which exists in other traditions of course. Once the mind's attention is placed (left brain) then the right brain spacious awareness can open. Something like that. **A teaching called 'the nine ways of resting the mind in shamatha' goes through nine levels of doing this....

[And now more for this Article:]

Also: this particular place versus overall space dynamic is essentially the same as the self-other dynamic, self being me and other being everything outside me. Now there is an added layer of complexity for us humans in that there are other living humans as compared to other living things (like trees) or dynamic living presences (like rocks, sky, rain and suchlike). In terms of our awareness, and thus presumably also brain function, we therefore have an inner as well as an outer experience. Always. Our experience always has this binary aspect. There is me experiencing and there is not me outside I am witnessing, though it is also part of my inner experience. We can never fully separate inner and outer even though clearly there is some sort of difference between self and other. Again, this seems an unavoidable sine qua non in our 'experiential continuum' and thus it is hardly surprising that our brain has two main parts.

Now I'm not saying that one part of the brain relates to inner and the other to outer. I wouldn't know. I will never become an expert in brain studies. But structurally, organizationally speaking, just as there is particularity of place versus overall general space, so also there is particularity of the self as part of an independent, particular

being (aka 'me') versus all the other beings and everything outside which is still part of what is being experienced but it appears to be distinguishable from 'me' (who of course has a particular body shape and thus also location.)

It might look like I'm trying to make a hard argument in some way and perhaps I am, namely that the twin-brain structure, not unlike the Two Body King paradigm, is a reflection and function of the fundamental nature of reality rather than being the prime cause of that reality. In order for a living organism and consciousness such as ourselves to have the experience of being individual and different from the space around we need an experiential dimension in which space can be perceived as having particular locations, one of which is that of our own body-mind matrix. So there is a 'here' which is different from 'there' giving reality a fundamentally binary nature.

Who'd have thunk it? Yin-Yang all over again! No getting away from it!

For example: confusion is focusing the mind so intently on the individuated mindstream that one entirely loses awareness of overall reality whereas wisdom is seeing clearly the nature of confusion which only happens when one steps out of the overly self-centered process and sees the bigger picture in which that particular process is occurring, at which point its nature is perceived. Clearly seeing that nature IS wisdom.

In shamatha and vipashyana first one stills the mind, usually by resting its focus on a particular. This is likened to allowing the surface of the pond to become still at which point clear reflections can be seen. Once movement occurs the surface can no longer provide such clear reflections. And awareness is like paying deep attention to those clear reflections provided by the still, tranquil mind. And not just reflections: once the surface is still, we can now see down to the bottom of the pool whereas before we couldn't, so now we can see the full extent and feel the nature of the entire pool down into its depths and bottom, not just the agitated, fragmented shimmerings on a moving surface.

So here shamatha is likened to stilling the left brain functions so that they are still there but steady, not like little dogs compulsively following whatever next scent arises in their path and swerving off accordingly. And vipashyana is exploring the depths of the pool now revealed by shamatha's tranquility by using the right brain function. Once we understand this dynamic, we really don't need to talk about left and right brains anymore. They are abstractions. We cannot see or witness our brains; but we can experience the simultaneous nature of focused stillness and general awareness.

For example the exercise McGilchrist mentions but does not demonstrate in this 4 minute video as a way to train both brains, namely 'to focus intently on a particular whilst at the same time being aware of the wider space.' In other words, use both. What he is recommending, therefore, is to develop the two wings of enlightenment.

Both are needed though one cannot develop steady vipashyana without first establishing shamatha; that said one can develop shamatha without necessarily mastering vipashyana. This is similar, funnily enough, to how the right brain can be aware of the space within which the left brain is functioning (well or poorly) whereas generally the left brain mentality can never perceive the right brain's wider perspective because it is too busy focusing or narrowing.

So I look forward to slowly working through McGilchrist's left-right brain material because it is thorough and well presented - he used to teach the romantic poets at Oxford before moving into clinical psychiatry and neurology. But at the same time, we already have all we need in that all of us have a simultaneous sense of here and everywhere else as well as the sense of self and other. That direct experience is our personal immediate contact with the twin brain phenomenon which is always there, moment by moment, in this our collective experiential continuum.

Exercise:

McGilchrist didn't demonstrate it but here is a simple suggestion.

1. For 10-15 seconds focus only on the black dot below. Put 100% of your attention on it. (Read #2 first)
2. For the next 10-15 seconds keep that attention on the black dot but also now include awareness of the space around, both inner mental awareness and outer physical space.



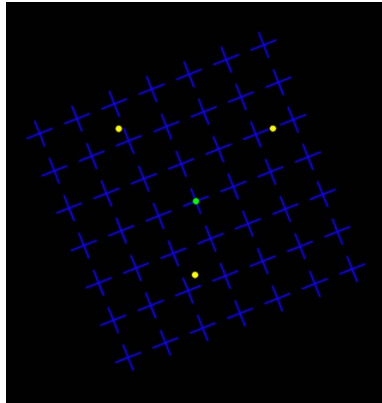
By doing this you can quickly grasp how to do both at once, though doing the first (mindfulness) opens the way to doing the second (awareness). If you lose track, you start again with first the focus, then opening out.

** Some of the results from searching for 'The Nine Ways of Shamatha.'

Article on Shamatha by B. Allan Wallace whose book 'Attention Revolution' book is terrific and deserves a review on this blog: <https://tricycle.org/magazine/within-you-without-you/> He doesn't go into the nine ways but he does go into shamatha/attention quite thoroughly and why it is such an important skill to develop.

Picture Article on Nine Ways: <https://enlightenmentthangka.com/blogs/thangka/nine-stages-of-samatha-meditation>. A lighter treatment of the topic.

Article 70 Materialism & The Invisible Gorilla



[Click on link to see picture properly displaying](#)

Recently I published a one-minute left-brain right-brain attention exercise to feel the different hemisphere attention styles, then two visual demonstrations, the gorilla video and the more simple and effective yellow dot .gif, both of which show how our brains can shut off incoming visual signals even those clearly there and clearly right in front of us.

Though the exercises were both in the visual field, the same dynamic happens with all the senses including the thinking mind. One can first focus intently on a mental image or word and then also become aware of the space around that object of focus. Same with a note played by an instrument, or a guitar chord; or you can listen to a complex symphony, first zooming in to focus intently on the raw sounds, then stepping back, whilst also maintaining the focus, to include the atmosphere around those sounds and thus also the feeling space, or inner landscape, the composition depicts. The particularity is mainly left brain function and the context is mainly right brain function.

In truth, am not personally all that interested in whether or not the brain is involved with this any more than I want to know what each part is doing in my car or computer since whether or not I know what those parts are doing the experience of driving or watching the screen is unaffected. However, the focus-field dynamic IS interesting: just as every yin involves a corresponding yang, so all forms exist in space, so all particulars exist within a larger whole. Sometimes with our minds we tune out the context and get caught up in particular thoughts, or caught up in an especially intense emotion, at which point we forget where we are and drive off the side of the road into

a drainage ditch. More importantly, by ignoring the space, or context, around the emotion – which in this case is inner, not physical, space – we become trapped in a dungeon of our own making, feeling there is no way out, that there is not even an outside at all; whereas in fact we have made our own prison simply by blanking out the larger context in which such thoughts or feelings are playing out, just as we blanked out the gorilla or the yellow dots. And of course this individual dynamic can play out in wider society: an entire population can develop blind areas trapping itself in a societal prison of its own collective making.

These blind spots inherent in left brain dominant approaches are dangerous in society-wide dynamics especially since the very nature of such blindness means that most of us remain unaware of these dangers, again just as we blanked out that gorilla pounding its chest right in front of us. Perhaps this explains why societies on the brink of collapse rarely seem aware of how critical things have become until it is too late; witness France in the late 1780's or Russia shortly before 1917.

This whole business boils down to attention, in this case attending through the lens of reductionist materialism embedded in the modern world view and especially promulgated by our expert and ruling classes. This way of attending has profoundly imbalanced modern societies and threatens to lead them all into dark ends wherein similarly blinded followers will willingly consent to remain forever tethered without expecting or demanding eventual freedom. Many would argue we are already in such bad places; maybe, but we can still say: a) things could still get far worse and b) it's not too late to change course. Just as intense left-brain visual focus can make us miss gorillas pounding their chests right in front of us, so also left-brain dominant mindsets can make us miss core aspects of our individual and collective makeups such that we are no longer able to lead sane, fulfilling human lives. It's that simple.

And if you like me are still not comfortable talking about all this in terms of left and right brain function, just think of it this way: if we get stuck in overly narrow and usually habitual ways of thinking, feeling and experiencing, we become numb, or blind, to many other textures and dynamics of experience. So we need to become both focused and open, not only focused or habitually staying in the same behavioral lanes. I will continue using the left brain – right brain language because it's as good an analog as any viz this focus-and-field dynamic which I believe is that of Creation itself – an ever-ongoing process – and why even extremely primitive creatures present with two-hemisphere brain systems. That brain structure reflects a form-in-space reality which in turn we process as such in brains fashioned by and further creating that primordial twin-but-not-two existential paradigm.

So: what are those missing gorillas? Well, before answering this, let us further explore the left-brain tendency to abstract things, because in order to appreciate the other side, as it were, we must first recognize how it is that we blank it out. (If you like shorter Articles, you can now skip to the last few paragraphs beginning with ‘So once again, what are those missing gorillas?’.)

To build a house you need a plan; to drive to the dentist you need a map. Both things are helpful; however, what happens in life over time is that do the same things regularly so each time we are following a now familiar plan or map. After a while we start to think of the process in terms of the plan or map and it is no longer a vivid, lived experience – even whilst we do it. The mental abstraction becomes the journey. Or put another way: when we think of doing X or Y we imagine in terms of our memory according to the representation in our left-brain ‘map-mind’, the idea being that the right brain feels the whole situation and its presence, whereas the left brain tends to conceptualize it as an abstract cognitive construct.

(By the way, this is very different from the hemispheric theories of only a few decades ago, wherein the left brain was regarded as logic and reason, and the right brain as mainly emotional. Research has come a long ways since then in this neurological field although the general public is largely unaware, just as the general public is also largely unaware of how the reductionist materialist paradigm has been definitively disproven after decades of quantum physics theory and experimental demonstration.)

This is essentially the same as how our minds see a tree and then fit it into our conceptual and language processing modalities by naming it ‘tree.’ The first time we see a tree this is a wide-open, fresh experience but the second and subsequent times we see any tree of any type in any location, we instantly label it ‘tree’ without paying much attention to it, fitting it into our map / scheme / idea of whatever it is we are doing and pass on by. We don’t really look at or feel the presence of the tree. It’s just a tree like all other trees; we ignore it, we don’t really see it because we have identified it and now pass on by to the next labelled thing we are going to ignore as well.

There is nothing inherently bad about this process, far from it. If we paid attention to every tree and person we pass on a busy city street, for example, we would have a nervous breakdown. (A certain amount of autism is a necessary thing! Perhaps this is why we humans have the highest percentage of filtering and negating processes in our brains.) However, if only mapping becomes the dominant mode of journeying through life, it is problematic because we end up missing out on too much that is getting blocked out by our over-reliance on abstract re-presentation versus being present and aware. It becomes an habitual, collective way of absenting versus presenting.

If we extend this process into personal relationships, family dynamics, workplaces and society in general, we find ourselves most of the time moving from one overly abstracted preconception to another because we immediately translate no matter what happens into previously learned representations, mainly via language reciting endless internal discursive commentary and tape loops. We may say 'Good Morning!' to our spouse, mother, brother, friend as we see them for the first time that day, but we don't really see or feel them, so caught up are we in our internal monologue which, once we have them placed into, passes them by as taken care of and no longer of interest.

This dynamic manifests in no end of ways, for example in the field of Science which, bizarrely, last century we elevated to define reality for us, making it the contemporary equivalent of both Monarch and Church. There have been substantive arguments for about a century now following discoveries in physics, which is the study of matter and energy, specifically quantum physics, which drills down to the smallest of smallest of particles initially in the materialist belief that by so doing we could find the fundamental building blocks of reality. First an aside:

This sort of approach, by the way, was analyzed by both Buddhist and Hindu meditator-philosophers, aka 'sages', before 500 BC; they called it 'atomism' and debunked it by pointing out that every particle, no matter how small, still has six directions around it: above, below, front, back, left and right. In other words, the particle does not exist in a void, there is space around it. You cannot anywhere find a particle without such space since otherwise it would stretch out forever in which case it would not be a part but the Whole Enchilada. Last century, thanks to new technology, quantum physicists went further exploring the micro world on the physical level than humans had previously been able to do; and what they found, to their surprise, was that their own minds influence the properties of the space in which are found the particles within such space, so much so that experiments to see if particles can go from one place to another instantaneously found they can indeed do so once the situation was set up to track such behavior. Put simply, they proved that particles and space are symbiots in that one always exists with the other which is why one cannot claim that the universe is made only of physical matter starting with the building blocks of particles or 'atoms'. It's an arcane subject too dense for this blog and its author, but basically they found that particles exist in space and space cannot be separated from the human mind. As it turns out, this is what the old meditator manuals in several traditions have maintained for millennia. Quantum physics has used advanced physical technology and examination to verify what was already known, and thoroughly argued, back in 500 BC.

So let's look at this from another angle: one of the assumed tenets of the reductionist 'only physical matter is real' view is that it posits an external, self-existing 'objective reality' separate from our own being and mind. The physical components of reality exist on an assumed physical plane, the only plane regarded as 'real' making any mental or other 'experiential' plane no more than illusory tricks conjured up by brain chemistry and synaptic flashes. It means that trees, which exhibit sensitivity, resilience, creativity, generosity, beauty and life force, are merely collections of mindless subatomic particles mechanically following genetically programmed scripts – at least scientifically speaking.

'Mind' here doesn't only mean our internal 'monkey mind' or general human mind, rather any sort of awareness including that of plants which clearly exhibit some sort of feeling and response to stimuli and surroundings. All living creatures clearly also exhibit some sort of intelligence and awareness – they are aware of their surroundings through which they navigate, find sources of food, manage their domestic arrangements, defend against predators and so forth. In other words, that which we identify as 'sentient' or 'living' – or again 'experiencing' as I prefer to call it – has some sort of mind or awareness function in the mix.

Be that as it may, here we are with scientists and most philosophers stuck now for decades dealing with 'the hard problem' of mind or consciousness. What is hard about it? Determining whether or not something which cannot be physically measured even exists let alone, since it cannot be measured, whether or not it can even be subject to analysis using the scientific method. They have actually been arguing about this; interminably; for about a century. Why? Because the reductionist premise is deeply flawed but they refuse to jettison it because belief in it is virtually hard-wired in most scientist's bones at this point. Such thorny issues notwithstanding it's all very, very simple and staring us all in the face all along, just like the gorilla: we have all sorts of mental, sensory and emotional experiences none of which can be physically measured including therefore our minds, which we all experience every second of every day. So whether or not it lends itself to scientific measurement, nevertheless we experience it. So although it is not physical per se, yet it is there, it exists, we experience it. It's that simple, but for some reason reductionists want to blank it out. (Though simple as it is, it is a Big Deal with Enormous Repercussions throughout our Modern World!)

Aside: personally speaking, have come to the conclusion that we can go one step further than simply saying that we live in an awareness field experienced and created by all living creatures (indeed, I suspect that one of the primary functions of all of our brains is both to transmit as well as receive awareness, or creation, fields). Rather, what we describe and label as the 'space' around all living creatures IS itself the

awareness field. It isn't one belonging to an individual with particular location and shape, such as you or I or a squirrel, mosquito, flower or tree; rather the entire space in which anything and everything arises is a type of living, breathing, continuous awareness (though lung-less breathing!). The whole universe is a vividly present cathedral of wakefulness, without fixed structure, in which various living forms and beings arise, strut their stuff for a while, and then shuffle off.

Meanwhile any notion of 'objective reality' is something we have inferred or imagined using our conceptual facility, mainly with language. We cannot actually experience it, we know nobody who ever has or ever can, and therefore it is forever and only an article of faith among materialist scientists who insist that they and only they are studying and determining 'truth' or 'fact'. What is being insisted upon is that the same space which has been proven to be inseparable from Mind by quantum science simply doesn't exist, so form exists only in a dead void, a blank. Which essentially makes all life forms, all beings, essentially dead and blank too: we are all machines, soulless, mindless, unaware, un sentient machines. This is neither a healthy nor a realistic mindset; we can and must do better.

So we are confronting a veritable gorilla of an hypocrisy here because Science's very notion of 'objective reality', being entirely unverifiable, is of course no more than a belief, an article of faith. It's a reasonable belief, to be sure, one most of us have little problem going along with it; but then so is the belief in God reasonable, the One Mind creating and embracing the All. There is some dynamic over-arching presence permeating all reality, past present and future, just as the sky presides above all that happens below, just as there is an overall Whole in which and of which we are individual and distinctive parts. That Whole can be called God or many other names. Different cultures describe this in different ways but that there is something greater than our individual selves is something everyone instinctively and knowingly feels. In a way, 'objective reality' is another such term, but since it is so abstract and devoid of any living characteristics, it falls far short of doing our collective reality justice. In any case, we must all realize that 'objective reality' as a self-existing phenomenon is as much an article of faith as the notion of God, making Science's insistence that it and it alone knows the nature of Reality a clear and present fallacy, one we should stop buying into.

So one important point here is that much of what materialist scientists say about the nature of reality is based on a concept-derived fallacy that discounts no end of dynamic processes they fail to treat as relevant because they don't fit into their 'only the physical is real and the physical has no mind' fallacy. Put another way: there seems to be a huge divide between Science's 'objective reality' and our lived experience, or

what we could also call 'actual reality'. Put in the context of the left-brain right-brain analog: the notion of objective reality is a left-brain construct. That doesn't make it entirely wrong or entirely unhelpful but it does make it both inaccurate and incomplete, moreover way too narrow to encompass all of 'reality'. Yes, we can study the physical in depth and learn no end of truly marvellous things, but the world we live in is not only the physical, especially the physical divorced of its many expressive, imaginative, creative, mysterious even transcendental aspects. We simply have to stop excising them from our worldviews. The movie Titanic is more than just pixels of light on a screen; it simply is; but not to Science. To Science, the story does not exist because it has no physical dimension to be measured. To Science a tree or flower have no beauty; they are just various cells following genetic programming.

Simply put: science can be extremely helpful, but it is not a proper vehicle for determining the nature of Reality nor, therefore, how to lead our individual or collective lives.

So once again, what are those missing gorillas?:

This divide between objective and experienced reality pervades nearly every aspect of society these days which is why it is such an important, though generally overlooked, topic. Because just as left-brain dominant focus misses the gorilla, so also does our reliance on a left-brain dominant materialist view makes us devalue – or miss altogether – a huge swathe of human experience; and by constraining our political and social theory to fit within this artificially narrow bandwidth we are creating unhealthy and increasingly dysfunctional societies with increasingly less ability to perceive, let alone remedy, any mistakes being made, thus allowing them to fester as they compound each and every day. We cannot fix what we cannot see.

According to McGilchrist, about 90% of our experience is outside the purview of left brain attention which focuses on particulars, whereas the right brain sees wholes and overall contexts. So by emphasizing only left brain mapping perspectives, we are ignoring that 90% which is where comprehension and meaning is found. No doubt this will be explored further in future Articles, but let me end this one with a short list of the sort of things this materialist myopia misses whilst worshiping the false god of 'objective reality'.

Feelings, relationships, family, love
Morality, developing Virtue, courage, nobility
Worshipping the Divine, spirituality, meditation, prayer, aspiration, faith, souls,
Dreams, symbol, metaphor, meaning
Sensuality, beauty, grace, manners
Childhood, aging and dying, healing
Making and listening to beautiful music, Dance
Building elegant buildings, high culture,
Smelling the flowers, cooking, wine
Imagination, stories, the unseen, the undiscovered
Our One and Many Experiential Universe

OUTSIDE THE CONFINES OF OBJECTIVE REALITY

The above are regarded as unimportant, even somewhat silly, by the high priests of the 'objective reality' mindset, especially those given elevated status in our leadership and managerial classes. They give us scientific, objective-sounding things like social studies, hard sciences, communism, capitalism, fascism, socialism, liberalism – no end of -isms -, economics, finance, banking systems, weapons manufacturing, chemical fertilizers, commercial law, high-rise buildings, automobiles, air-conditioning, factory farms, industrial pollution, cancer-causing foods and medicines, corrupt political Parties mouthing vapid, insincere slogans and so on ad infinitum, all without ever acknowledging the harm such mindsets cause, all the while insisting that they are the only ones in touch with 'reality' and know what is best for all of us.

The pull to discuss Reality in pseudo scientific ways, speaking in terms of forms, structures, physical objects and dimension instead of poetic, cultural, imaginative and qualitative is insidious and deep-rooted. Indeed, because of that pull I have spent the bulk of this perhaps overly long Article still tethered to that which am debunking.

And so it goes...

Article 71 New World: A different take on Diversity



Emerging New World Order (2022)

At a recent BRICS+ conference last week, Xi gave a [keynote address](#). It is well worth reading the whole speech, but the following section is what provoked today's Article:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

China stays committed to an independent foreign policy of peace and the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. As a developing country and a member of the Global South, China breathes the same breath with other developing countries and pursues a shared future with them. China has resolutely upheld the common interests of developing countries and worked to increase the representation and voice of EMDCs in global affairs. Hegemonism is not in China's DNA; nor does China have any motivation to engage in major-power competition. China stands firmly on the right side of history, and believes that a just cause should be pursued for the common good.

At present, we Chinese, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, are advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts by pursuing Chinese modernization. Chinese modernization aims to achieve common prosperity, material and cultural-ethical advancement, harmony between humanity and nature, and peaceful development for a huge population. Chinese modernization has created a new form of human advancement and presented a new future of modernization. We hope that other developing countries can draw on the outstanding achievements of human civilization and find their own paths to modernization in keeping with their national conditions.

Achieving high-quality development is a top priority in China's goal of fully building itself into a modernized country. We are committed to applying a new development philosophy and creating a new development paradigm. In the past decade, China has contributed more than 30 percent of annual global growth. This year, the Chinese economy has maintained the momentum of recovery and growth. China enjoys several distinct advantages: a socialist market economy in systemic terms, a supersize market in terms of demand, a full-fledged industrial system in terms of supply, and abundant, high-caliber labor force

and entrepreneurs in terms of human resources. The Chinese economy has strong resilience, tremendous potential and great vitality. The fundamentals sustaining China's long-term growth will remain unchanged. The giant ship of the Chinese economy will continue to cleave waves and sail ahead.

In those three paragraphs, the word modernization was used five times and development four times. The 2022 Special Military Operation involving Russia, Ukraine and NATO (aka 'the West') has flushed out a dynamic long hidden in the brush but now in the open for all to see, namely the replacement of a 'Hegemonic' World Order with a 'Multipolar' World Order. Now, we cannot precisely know how the New World Order will look since we are still mainly in the Old one, but we can say that the days of the Hegemon are numbered and it remains to be seen what our world will look like once it has been dethroned. Xi's speech gives an outline of the vision animating this New Order.

This Article is a rumination raising a few questions and tentatively offering an outline of a suggestion. The points are made simply to avoid an overly complex presentation.

1. Modernization:

China came late to the Industrial Revolution, waiting until the 1970's to get going whereas Japan's Meiji Restoration had begun in 1868, a century earlier. The Industrial Revolution itself was a natural development emerging from the overthrow of old Monarchic, Feudal and Theocratic polities ushering in what we think of as 'the Modern Era' which is idealistically regarded as pragmatic, rational and secular, raising all citizens out of poverty, unfair class systems and widespread injustice - very much along the lines outlined in President Xi's speech. One of the principle features of modernization is significant material progress resulting in markedly improved living conditions featuring more efficient infrastructure, electricity, plumbing, communications, manufacturing, transportation and more, the core thrust being to take people out of premodern undeveloped into modernized developed conditions.

Two related issues with Modernization:

A. Quality: Not all modernization is equal. Bad practices damage the immediate environment by spreading toxins which compromise health and longevity. Some countries address this better than others.

B. Values: Especially where Quality issues have not been resolved, it is an open question whether or not shifting people from undeveloped tribal or agrarian communities into modernized urban situations constitutes genuine progress. Yes, they are now in apartments with electricity and can take buses or trains to work and earn a weekly wage, but is this truly substantive improvement? What is the purpose in life and what therein do we find meaningful? Material improvements alone may not provide all the answers.

2. Materialism: This topic has been covered regularly on this blog, especially [of late](#), so will not say much more here except to point out that it is an important consideration. Put simply: if modernization is pursued primarily as a materialist endeavour then it often does more harm than good.

3. Progress-Modernization: For example: in both China and India about half the population lives in pre-developed conditions with little or no electricity and minimalist plumbing. This means that roughly 1.5 billion people in these large leading and still-modernizing nations live in pre-modern conditions demonstrating that a modern State does not necessarily mean that everyone therein lives in modern conditions. This begs the question: is it always a necessary, let alone good, thing to insist that all should enjoy up to date modernized conditions, and if so at what point does it stop? By the time one has finished modernizing one is out of date only a few decades later, which is why Tokyo and now Shanghai eclipse previously developed cities London, Paris, New York and Rome. Should these latter now tear everything down in order to be cutting edge modern again forever re-modernizing for the rest of time? When is development enough? Or is it never enough? And is development always mainly about physical infrastructure ‘modernization’?

4. Diversity, a different definition: How about a new way of considering diversity? Let us agree that, as is so often stated, ‘diversity is strength’. But diversity according to what criteria? Ethnic? Religious? Racial? Geographic? Cuisine? Language? Let us just say that ideally we can find an optimal mix of differences and commonalities. Which brings us to the central question which prompted this Article: is not a diverse spectrum of development a good thing in itself? For example, probably the main thing I love about Mexico is its diverse range of living standards and related rural, small town and urban cultures. A fifteen minute drive from where I now live are villages of only a few hundred people wherein many live without electricity or automobiles – though admittedly that is steadily changing at this point; many live off raising sheep, cattle and basic agriculture; their tortillas are superior, and in demand in local markets, because they use traditional, not modernized, strains and make them by hand.

5. Unity: If we are considering a New ‘Multipolar’ World Order, then just as within each individual nation, so also must there be Unity as well as Diversity world wide. To me this is the same as the philosophical principle animating our entire Reality, namely One-and-Many. All particulars, along with being unique, are part of an overall Whole just as any Whole comprises many particular parts. It’s some sort of axiomatic Truth about the nature of the situation we all share as living beings which I call an ‘Experiential Continuum’, Experiential being the particular and living – or Part - aspects and Continuum being the universal – or Whole – aspects. So along with the diversity of having no end of individual particulars, there must also be things held in

common. Millions live in Mexico leading uniquely different lives but all share a sense of being in one overall realm called Mexico which, like all other nations, is like no other on Earth. Within each nation there is limitless Diversity along with overall Unity or Wholeness. Which begs the question: what are the most valuable principles to foster in order to develop and maintain the best sort of Unity?

I won't try to answer such a deep topic in depth, only suggest that the materialist mindset alone will fall far short in providing all the elements needed for a vibrant, thriving society enjoying both Diversity and Unity.

6. Values Again: Which brings us back to values again, some sort of shared spiritual sense of Values which involves how we derive meaningfulness in our life journey, individually and together. Xi mentions it in his speech above: *"Chinese modernization aims to achieve common prosperity, material and cultural-ethical advancement, harmony between humanity and nature, and peaceful development for a huge population."* Note how he combines material and cultural advancement in the same phrase. I don't mean to be bashing China here, but it seems the overall emphasis is on material development founded on materialist criteria. Now, China has enjoyed continuous existence as an advanced civilization for over two thousand years, with roots going back deep into antiquity, so considerable value-system skeins are embedded within their bedrock culture and generally transmitted through the family; so even if the leadership is mainly concerned with material progress, this doesn't mean that other values, including spiritual, are not held and transmitted in the hearts of most modern Chinese. But still: how a society thinks and talks about itself does have an influence over time and if the materialist view dominates official expression for generations, less materialist attitudes and customs almost certainly decrease over time.

Which raises another question I again won't answer: is primarily material progress truly the best progress for human beings?

7. Hegemonics: What has the Hegemonic approach been doing that is so bad? Hasn't it been attempting to create Unity on a global level, a natural development of the industrial revolution whose progress shrank the world thanks to extraordinary developments in transportation and communication? Doubtless in the minds of many this hegemonic progress was indeed regarded as fundamentally benevolent, a way of providing prosperity for All. However, perhaps because it is based on an over-reliance on materialism which by definition emphasizes the secular over the sacred, the material over the non-material (including things such as Imagination, Feeling, Fun, Beauty and so forth), it has ended up in increasingly narrow cul-de-sacs. There are two main fronts on which such hegemony is pushed:

A. Cultural: For example of late the secular, liberal West has been pushing homosexual marriages, adolescent hormone blockers and life-changing 'gender reassignment' surgeries. Not every culture in the world feels comfortable with such mores.

B. Financial: And yet the Hegemon wishes to enforce them on various nations, predicating crucial national infrastructure development loans on whether or not such things are taught in the schools, not to mention also anti-racist and anti-patriarchy teachings which do not always align well with the local culture. Many of these cultural mores are recent societal fashions, but all share the underlying thrust emanating from an essentially materialist, secular worldview which insists that other more traditional religious, spiritual or tribal worldviews must be sacrificed on the alter of 'Modernization', 'Development' and 'Progress.'

8. Suggestion: Even if we tried, we couldn't turn back the clock to recreate ancient Chinese, Egyptian civilizations or Byzantine civilizations, each of which lasted over a thousand years in relative stability and glory. Many of the old ways of structuring societies have gone by the wayside: monarchical, tribal, militaristic, theocratic, though most countries today still retain various elements. One of the overarching characteristics of the Modern Era is the push towards secularization, no doubt because it goes hand in glove with scientific materialism. Leaving aside what I believe is the valid criticism that it constitutes a new type of religious fundamentalism, as expressed by the term 'scientism', in any new World Order we will need to share the same fundamental values, so even if not formulated in specific religious doctrine, there has to be something we all hold in common, moreover not only or merely based in the materialist mindset.

So my suggestion is that the Oriental polities now assuming a leading role in this next phase of world development consider taking their cultural synthesis of Daoist, Confucian and Buddhist mores as a foundation for modern societies to foster experience of sacred reverence for life and Nature free from sectarianism so that spiritual meaningfulness and related cultural forms (in the Arts, architecture and so forth) can flourish along with material development. Daoism fosters relaxation, physical health and adaptability; Confucianism transmits stable family structures and societal morality; and Buddhism provides excellent mindfulness and awareness meditation methods which can easily be presented and learned with minimal religious dogma.

Of course many cultures will want to maintain their traditional religions, but if they can do so along with this bedrock Oriental approach then they can enjoy their own particular flavors whilst also feeling a part of, and not too much apart from, the same wider World Order. Maybe such an approach is impractical – and why the Chinese government is so anti-religious; but one way or another we have to come up with

something that isn't so heavily weighted towards the reductionist materialist mindset which simply doesn't do Unity or Wholes very well, and rather tends to fragment things into parts, often divisively so. (Yet another left-brain/right-brain dynamic.)

Somehow this has to happen, otherwise the New World Order will only involve reshuffling of the main players, and once every village has electricity and every individual a computer screen, we will end up not having made very much true civilizational progress, which will become clear over time on the Values front and most likely manifest with, yet again, a whole load of Kleptocrats at the top controlling everything, except now instead of having to do so one separate nation at a time, they can lord it over the entire world.

This will not be a good thing!

Article 72 – New World: Values over Ideology

Ongoing Issues of Concern in the New Multipolar World Order



The Buddha sits. Awake. Alone.
Hearing indistinct echo of rustling thoughts
Long after their passing...

The silent cactus knows;
The chattering birds tell all
Without revealing any secrets

This Article continues from yesterday's 'Article 71 – New World: A Different Take on Diversity.' It will also take the form of a numbered list and attempt to keep things simple. I don't believe yesterday's Article quite succeeded on that front, but these are somewhat complex topics which the author is not entirely familiar with to start with, on top which we are all dealing with emerging and not yet fully terraformed, geopolitical landscapes.

First, I highly recommend Matthew Ehret's: "[BRICS+: Cure for Intellectual Toxicity of Cultural Relativism](#)." He claims that we are entering a new period of cross-cultural ferment which will engender a global, civilizational Renaissance, and goes back in history to show how this sort of dynamic has unfolded in the past. It's shorter and more clear than most of his pieces; highly recommended.

Second, I also recommend karlof1's: "[Xi and China at the BRICS Summit](#)." It provides both analysis, overview and many good excerpts from recent speeches.

1. The New World Order is already here:

Yes, we have a long way to go, but since that is the rest of History, we might as well say that we have already passed the starting line. From now on, any future Articles about geopolitics will take this as a given. Consider: the current state of Geopolitical Multipolarity features an emerging BRICS+ bloc and the Western 'Hegemonic' bloc. As such it is already Multipolar in that there are at least two poles. More realistically, we could say there are many poles, such as: The Hegemonic Bloc, Brazil, South Africa+, Iran+, Russia+, India and China. (Perhaps later we shall see Latin America, Africa, Malaysia-Indonesia, and even later if the West joins in, then Australia-New Zealand, Canada, US and UK, each as separate, sovereign nations or blocs.)

2. Meanwhile, the Old Hegemonic Order isn't dead yet:

There is not yet one unified Multipolar Order, but rather a global, multipolar struggle to establish what sort of New Order, if any, there will be. Quite possibly the Hegemon will succeed in ensuring there isn't a single, agreed-upon Way; in which case we will simply have a bifurcated Order which will still, whether the Hegemon admits or not, indeed be Multipolar. (So Point 1 holds!)

3. Shared Values not Concept-based Ideologies:

My Article yesterday floated the notion that the Multipolar World needs some sort of Unity principle so that all members feel parts of the same Whole. This is how reality works on an ontological level so any new Order should reflect that else find itself unbalanced by ideology, which have [written about long ago](#) on this blog. However, the Article's suggestion to use traditional China's fusion of Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism as a unifying Value System naturally would not appeal to individuals and nations with strong alternative traditions, such as Christianity and Islam; so clearly that suggestion falls short, though the reason behind making it has merit.

4. Xi's Values speech:

On that topic, here is a paragraph from Xi's seminal [Global Civilizational Initiative speech](#) in March 2023:

Shared human values are the basis of inter-civilization exchanges and development

Human civilizations have different development trajectories, but they have the same core values, which are the spiritual bonds that connect civilizations, countries, and nations, as well as the underlying force behind the progress of humankind. President Xi called for the promotion of shared human values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom in 2015. They are the consensus of various civilizations and reflect universally recognized values, and they provide the impetus for building a global community of shared future.

While championing these common values, we also need to appreciate their connotations for other civilizations and respect the approaches that other countries and peoples adopt to realize them. With this in mind, we should seek common ground while putting aside differences, oppose uniting only with like-minded people while alienating those with different views, and refrain from imposing our own values and models on others and from ideological aggression. These points embody the meaning and the fundamental requirements of our shared human values. Only by upholding openness, inclusiveness, and mutual respect can these values be truly upheld and an even closer global community of shared future be built.

These are good points and well made. And yet – at least to me – they have an amorphous quality, like trying to hold water in a sieve. More on that later.

5. The need for a Multipolar Fourth Estate:

in a comment in response to karlof1's substack linked above:

It occurred to me as I got to the end of your piece whilst reflecting yet again on my reluctance to jump on board enthusiastically, that what is missing is the Fourth Branch principle, namely high quality critique. I only see Xi's version of China and Chinese political philosophy; it is extremely one-sided; I never read informed criticism. I don't know if this is because it is discouraged in China or because I simply don't know where to look, but so it is. All individuals and nations have a Dark Side. We may wish to present only the virtuous aspects of our character to others but we all, without exception, have dark sides within. The wise have come to terms with them, not by denial or suppression, but by holding to deeper wisdom which includes, but does not indulge, such tendencies and perspectives. China has a dark side; XI Jinping Thought has a dark side. Naturally, he is not going to reveal what it is, but that doesn't mean it isn't there. That is the job of a Fourth Estate which I am not so sure will exist in our new Multipolar World Order. I am not saying everything should be the same as in the West, but along with some truly terrible elements, the Western way is still the fundamental model of development being followed in many regards because it is not all bad. (Chinese police uniforms, for example, look the same as pretty much all others world wide. Modern dress in China comes from the Western style of last century - pants, shirts, suits, ties etc., not mandarin-style robes which are far more elegant and comfortable.) China has taken the Western ball and is running with it, arguably doing a better job (we could never run countries with over a billion people in them!!), but that doesn't mean that they are getting everything right. The lack of well-informed critique is, I think, a shortcoming. It allows problems to be seen and dealt with rather than being hidden or allowed to fester for long periods of time before emerging as Stage Four illnesses bringing down the entire State.

6. Shared Values, Yin and Yang:

That which is shared perhaps should remain unspoken, somewhat formless except in vague, finger-painted ways such as Xi expresses. Values are not material substances. We can use words to point towards them but never entirely contain them either. Furthermore, values are always transmitted and experienced through the medium of culture which varies from civilization to civilization, nation to nation, even family to family; as such they are highly subjective and thus invisible to the materialist perspective. They are seminal skeins in the essential but non-material tartan of the living tapestry of our individual and collective life journeys.

If Yang comprises the outer visible forms of any given society, such as its human being members, governance systems, architecture, agriculture, financial systems and so forth, perhaps the Yin is the Value systems animating all that from within, but which is essentially formless in the same way that although for us as individuals the outer world appears as solid, real and self-existing but the inner world of thoughts, feelings and perceptions lacks any materiality such as that measured by definable place or shape since our experience, such as it is, lacks both even though it has no end of particularities, textures, layers, levels, subtlety, artistry and so forth.

So maybe my desire to see a shared Value System, expressed as a Suggestion in Article 71, is begging for ideological corruption and should be discarded. Let them be formless!

7. Material progress alone falls short as a unifying principle or Value:

This is the theme of late animating this series of Articles. If coming from a materialist mindset, the drive for 'modernization' as an end in itself, though worthy in many obvious regards, yet could be another systemic corruption trap, especially once relative prosperity has been achieved, like in the West once the traumas of the Great War from 1913 – 1948 was processed. Yes, Western nations exploited the Rest of the World in selfish, 'colonialist' ways, and yes in so doing they started immoral, cruel wars, but within Europe and the US itself, peace and plenty abounded and almost all citizens were lifted out of poverty and ended up living in considerable comfort. But look where we are today: blighted with systemic corruption from a leadership class an overly dumbed-down, complacent population has allowed to take parasitical root in its midst and now threatens to turn all that prosperity – most of which of course earned by the labour of their own working classes who are now being thrown to the wolves – into some sort of ghastly, and perhaps unavoidable, totalitarian dystopia.

If I am right that much of this is due to an over-reliance on the soul-deadening mentality that is reductionist materialism, that secular view of 'objective reality' which reduces all life to soulless mechanical meaninglessness, then we must do what we can to guard against this bright new Multipolar World Order falling into the same political and ontological abyss.

Later addition: have pasted in a pdf file of an article about some of the Value principles China is pushing. It shows, among other things, how Confucian precepts were used in the composition of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

https://baronbrasdor.files.wordpress.com/2023/08/china-zhang-wei-is-e3808a-this-is-chinas-e3808b-issue-196_-chinese-wisdom-for-human-rights-zhang-wei-yi-zheng-ruolin.pdf

Article 73: Truth as Value Adding



[Ron Rosenstock](#)

To kick things off, let us consider the following from Iain McGilchrist's *The Matter with Things*, Chapter 26 Value:

Not a few readers for example, may be surprised by my including value alongside time, space, motion, consciousness and matter as a constitutive element of reality. Yet I believe it is as foundational as consciousness. ...

Next, let us read a few more excerpts from the same author and Chapter:

I see value as intrinsic to the universe; and the possibility of appreciating and responding to value – therefore fulfilling its potential – as one reason for the cosmos having evolved life. Indeed, life could be seen as the very process of the cosmic consciousness continually both discovering and furthering its beauty, truth, and goodness; both contemplating and (not separately but in the same indivisible act) bringing them further into being: a process.

This is not surprising if awareness is foundational to the universe, rather than arising from it late in the day. ... As Theise and Kafatos put it, **‘the universe is non-material, self-organizing throughout, comprised of a holarchy² of complementary, process-driven, recursive phenomena. The universe is both its own first observer and subject.’** ...

What are values? ‘There is something in common between truth, beauty, and goodness’, writes Andrew Steane, Professor of Physics at Oxford: ‘they each make demands on us, and also fulfil us, and also leave us thirsty for more.’ **Values evoke a response in us and call us to some end. They are what give meaning to life: such things as beauty, goodness, truth – and purpose. Science can tell us what their brain correlates may be, but cannot help us understand their nature. It can, though, help us misunderstand them.**

... when science turns its gaze directly on values, it immediately begins to account for them in terms of something else assumed to be more fundamental. But for ultimate values there can be no such thing, much as there can be no such thing in the case of consciousness. **In an age when it is widely thought that science alone can answer our questions, values may therefore become overlooked – and even devalued.** Not a few readers for example, may be surprised by my including value alongside time, space, motion, consciousness and matter as a constitutive element of reality. Yet I believe it is as foundational as consciousness. ...

Truth carries within it the whole purpose of science, and gives meaning to its activities. However, science will not admit anything that is not empirically verifiable – yet the value of truth, like all value, is incapable of empirical proof. ...

Not all values are fundamental in this way. In particular utilitarian values are not: they are derived from the value of pleasure. **But some, like beauty and goodness – and indeed meaning and purpose, as I shall later suggest – are not derivable in this way.** Even if they led to suffering we would be right to hold them as non-negotiable, and indeed to hold them in reverence. To value such values.

In [Article 72](#), we read the following excerpt from one of President Xi Jinping’s recent speeches at the BRICS+ Conference in South Africa wherein several speakers proclaimed that the Age of the Hegemon was over and the New Age of Multipolarity has begun. Or maybe they implied, not said it at the Conference. For someone who openly proclaimed it a few months ago, read [‘The West must prepare for a long overdue Reckoning’](#). In any case, I also proclaimed it yesterday in Article 72 as Point 1: “The New World Order is already here: ...”

Here is the excerpt again, which is delivered as a third party report via the CPC:

At the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting held on March 15, 2023, President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech titled “Join Hands on the Path Toward Modernization.” In it he proposed the Global Civilizations Initiative (GCI), which calls for in-depth inter-civilization exchanges and dialogue through political parties as well as the advancement of human civilizations based on inclusiveness and mutual learning. This represents another effort by China to contribute its wisdom and solutions to promoting greater international cooperation.

2 <https://www.sociocracy.info/holon-and-holarchy/> This is a very interesting term viewing hierarchy as a series of inter-relationships between parts and wholes, rather than higher and lower etc.

Shared human values are the basis of inter-civilization exchanges and development

Human civilizations have different development trajectories, but they have the same core values, which are the spiritual bonds that connect civilizations, countries, and nations, as well as the underlying force behind the progress of humankind. President Xi called for the promotion of shared human values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom in 2015. They are the consensus of various civilizations and reflect universally recognized values, and they provide the impetus for building a global community of shared future.

*While championing these common values, we also need to appreciate their connotations for other civilizations and respect the approaches that other countries and peoples adopt to realize them. **With this in mind, we should seek common ground while putting aside differences, oppose uniting only with like-minded people while alienating those with different views, and refrain from imposing our own values and models on others and from ideological aggression.** These points embody the meaning and the fundamental requirements of our shared human values. Only by upholding openness, inclusiveness, and mutual respect can these values be truly upheld and an even closer global community of shared future be built.*

First, a philosophical quibble: the attentive Reader (!) may have noticed that the core values expressed by McGilchrist, namely **'beauty, goodness, truth'** vary somewhat from Xi's expressed value above, namely **'peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom.'** To be fair to Xi, he is a national leader discussing civilization State related core values whereas McGilchrist is discussing fundamental human being values.

First, are they both saying the same thing in different ways and second if the latter, what are the key differences? I would say that beauty is missing in Xi's list, however goodness is found in every value on Xi's list, and a truth quotient surely dwells within any notion of justice and perhaps also fairness, ideally also in democracy (the expressed will of the people is a form of societal truth).

So although not the same, and with the important exception of beauty, the two lists are not all that far apart. And yet here comes another quibble. Let us look again at the following paragraph from McGilchrist:

when science turns its gaze directly on values, it immediately begins to account for them in terms of something else assumed to be more fundamental. But for ultimate values there can be no such thing, much as there can be no such thing in the case of consciousness. In an age when it is widely thought that science alone can answer our questions, values may therefore become overlooked – and even devalued. Not a few readers for example, may be surprised by my including value alongside time, space, motion, consciousness and matter as a constitutive element of reality. Yet I believe it is as foundational as consciousness. ...

And now look again at Xi's list of values:

President Xi called for the promotion of shared human values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom in 2015. They are the consensus of various civilizations and reflect universally recognized values, and they provide the impetus for building a global community of shared future.

Is it just me, or does it not Xi's language – though admittedly delivered via a bureaucratic third party voice (designed to add the weight of objectivity) – seem strongly toned with dispassionate, quasi-scientific objectivity? Is not this the sort of style and perspective expected of a great Leader? Does not Putin also often reference 'objective truth' or 'objective history' in his speeches? Is this not also a Marxist (materialist) perspective?

The point being that just as the scientific perspective divorces itself by design from any feeling for the subject being examined under its reductionist gaze, is it not possible that modern leaders, of which Xi is a currently prominent example, are similarly afflicted with this philosophically fashionable form of contemporary myopia?

We wonders, aye, we wonders Precious!!

I do not think it mere coincidence that the only one of McGilchrist's 'beauty, goodness and truth' values, which he posits alongside 'space motion consciousness and matter as constitutive elements of reality', - namely beauty - is missing from Xi's list. It is the softest, most feminine, most intuitive, most subjective, and least utilitarian, practical or easily defined Value of the three. I am not attacking Xi or China necessarily, however I am raising a warning flag in wondering out loud if the values presented are not overly colored by modern-day reductionist materialism which nearly all of us cleave to, albeit mainly without acknowledging it.

The twist here is to see how the perspective from Science, or Scientism, insists on separating itself from its object of enquiry, which is the universe itself. It posits an external, self-existing so-called 'objective' reality which exists absent any experience, or therefore experienter of that reality. This is an unverifiable postulate, or assumption, therefore exists in the realm of belief or faith.

As McGilchrist points out elsewhere in this fascinating Chapter 26, the root of the word 'truth' is the same as 'troth' which comes down to faith, as in keeping faith, something chosen. The word 'dao' as many Daoists use it, means Way or Path as well as meaning the ultimate Truth of the way things are. It is a way of living deliberately chosen, a Way to which one makes a commitment to fashion one's life and perceptions, one's actions and feelings, in accordance with this Way. Seeing Truth involves choice; moreover, it is not an objective external Truth to which one can make such a commitment for the commitment itself IS the Way. How one behaves with one's family, friends and fellow citizens is the result of personally held principles and practices, one's Dao. Viewed, indeed experienced this way, clearly Truth is not a quality which can be measured by the reductionist Scientific Method.

So that Dao or Way is the result of holding to Values such as Beauty, Goodness and Truth. First to see them – which takes care and effort over time – and then to cherish

them, and then to manifest and promote them in this our shared World. In this context, let us again attend:

I see value as intrinsic to the universe; and the possibility of appreciating and responding to value – therefore fulfilling its potential – as one reason for the cosmos having evolved life. Indeed, life could be seen as the very process of the cosmic consciousness continually both discovering and furthering its beauty, truth, and goodness; both contemplating and (not separately but in the same indivisible act) bringing them further into being: a process.

This is not surprising if awareness is foundational to the universe, rather than arising from it late in the day. ... As Theise and Kafatos put it, ‘the universe is non-material, self-organizing throughout, comprised of a holarchy of complementary, process-driven, recursive phenomena. The universe is both its own first observer and subject.’ ...

It would do the world a great service if, working with philosophers, artists and whomever world wide, the leading Multipolarists pushing for a New World Order these days were to put together a list of Core Civilizational Values for all member nations as guidelines so that, along with retaining their unique character and traditions, they can also see resonance between all other civilizations which value ‘beauty, goodness and truth’, which I would suggest should definitely make it onto that list!

Supplemental Section about U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

President Xi was right to emphasize shared Values as essential in putting together a better geopolitical Way. Indeed, according to this article, a Chinese gentleman helped craft the original United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1947 along value-centric lines. Here are some paragraphs from a speech given from [Oriental Health Watch, July 31, 2023](#): Zhang Wei, Dean of the Chinese Institute of Fudan University, Professor.

In promoting human rights, the Chinese philosophy, practice, and wisdom have all broken through the long-term Western dominant concept of human rights. This makes me think of Mr. Zhang Pengchun, a Chinese outstanding scholar and diplomat who made outstanding contributions to this in the 1940s. Zhang Pengchun was born in Tianjin in 1892, graduated from Nankai Middle School, and later stayed in the United States. He received a doctorate from Columbia University in 1923. After returning home, he served as the dean of Tsinghua School and a professor at Nankai University. He is an educator and drama activist who has studied in the Chinese and Western languages. After the outbreak of the anti-war in 1937, Zhang Pengchun was called by the government to promote the anti-war overseas and fight for foreign aid. He was later transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an envoy abroad and once served as the Chinese ambassador to Chile. In 1946, Zhang Pengchun attended the first United Nations General Assembly held in London, England, and later served as China’s representative to the UN Security Council. In early 1947, the UN Economic and Social Council decided to establish a Human Rights Commission to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Zhang Pengchun was elected as the sole vice chairman of this committee.



Zhang Pengchun, the vice chairman of the Human Rights Commission at the time

In the process of drafting the document, Zhang Pengchun contributed a lot of unique Chinese wisdom. First, he advocated that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should integrate the wisdom of different civilizations. He proposed that the concept of Confucianism “Ren” should be regarded as a basic trait of mankind in conjunction with the concept of “rationality”. He translated the words “ren” into “ the perception between people ” and “ the empathy for the situation of others ”. His proposal was finally adopted. The first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 was worded as follows: “ Everyone is born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience, and should be treated in the spirit of brotherhood ”. The word “conscience” here is conscience in English, which is the English expression of the concept of “Ren”.

Secondly, in the process of drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Right, many countries from the Christian tradition proposed similar human beings created by “ Creator ”, “ God ” human rights, etc. Concepts, and Zhang Pengchun clearly objected, pointing out that the purpose of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is to be universally accepted by countries of different faith, so it cannot be limited to a certain culture or religious tradition.

In addition, he emphasized that social and economic rights are also an important part of human rights. At that time, Western countries such as the United States and Britain emphasized civil and political rights, and believed that the economic, social and cultural rights advocated by the Soviet Union, such as the right to work, education, and the right to social assistance, were not enforceable and should not be counted as human rights. Zhang Pengchun expressed his views on Chinese culture as an example. He said that long before those concepts became modern concepts, the Chinese's discussion on economic and social justice had a history of at least 2,500 years. He quoted the 《 Avenue trip in the 》 note “, and the world is public... People do not kiss themselves, they do not have their own children, they end their old age, they are useful for their strength, they are young, widowed, widowed, lonely, lonely, and waste-affected people are all common. Zhang Pengchun’s claim was supported by the Soviet camp countries and Latin American countries at the time.

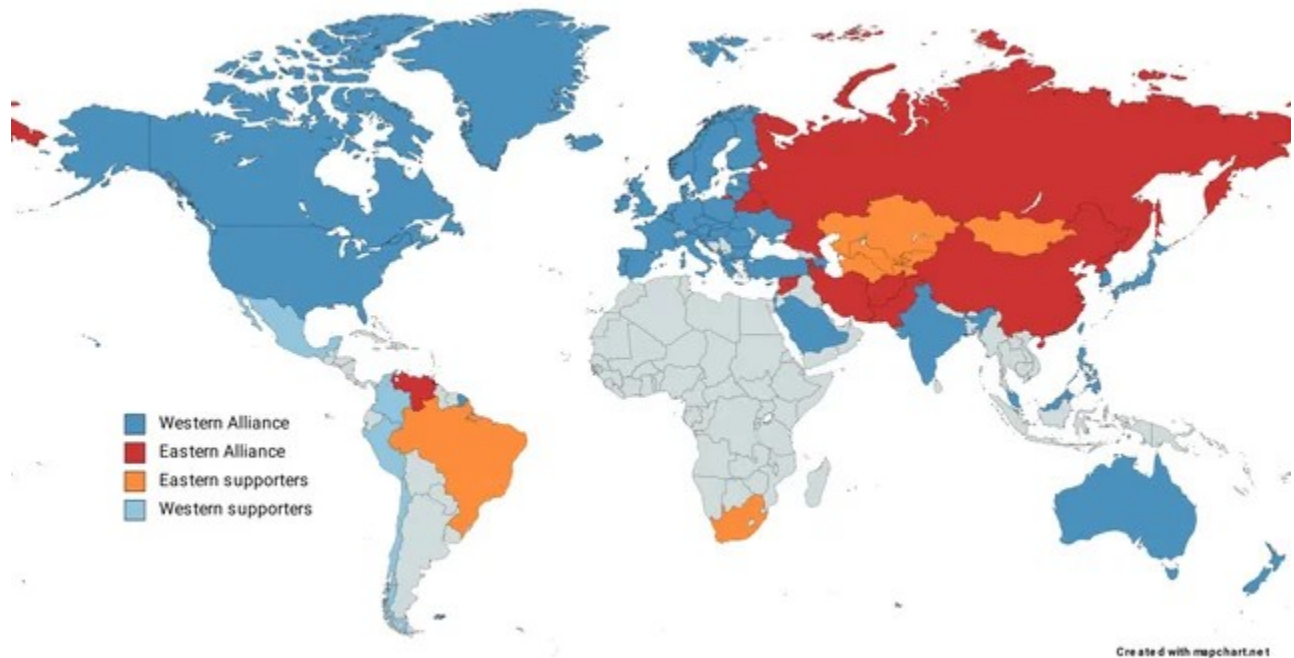
Eventually, Universal Declaration of Human Rights placed social and economic rights as equally important.

Finally, he insisted that “obligation” is as important as “right”. Zhang Pengchun repeatedly emphasized that in Chinese culture, rights and obligations are linked. A person can only progress his moral level if he realizes his obligations, and the purpose of the United Nations should be to increase people’s moral heights, not to promote extreme selfish individualism. His claim is finally reflected in Article 29, paragraph 1, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that is, everyone is obliged to society, because only his personality in society is possible Free and full development”.

Looking back at the Chinese wisdom provided by Mr. Zhang Pengchun for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially the balance of reason and conscience he emphasized, the balance of rights and obligations, the balance of economic and social rights and civil political rights, today No evaluation is enough. In the more than seventy years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, how many killings, tragedies, and disasters have our human society experienced, and the reasons for their investigations are not the destruction of these balances ? Here, we admire not only the vision, knowledge and wisdom of a Chinese outstanding scholar and diplomat, but also the profound wisdom of Chinese civilization and its high modernity.

The speech above makes a distinction between Rights and Obligations. The latter is similar in principle to appreciating Values as having an active aspect as well as passive. (Hence 'value adding' in the Title.) Values are things that are valued which is something that happens both spontaneously and also as a result of care and disciplined cultivation over time, as with a well loved garden or family member. Rights sounds a little like something which exists apart from the person possessing them, another seemingly external, objective thing, so maybe another way in which the reductionist mindset compromised dealing head-on with the notion of Values. In any case, the question raised here is whether or not modern world leaders like Xi Jinping are paying attention to, i.e. actively valuing, core values or rather watered-down reductionist equivalents. Given he often brings ‘modernization’ and ‘development’ into any consideration of values, this remain an open question worth keeping in mind, and as such – an open question - is where we will leave it in this Article.

Article 74 XIVth BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration



The following was a post in the MoA forum about the [XIVth BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration of 2022](#), introduced by the erudite poster karlof1 who is all over the multipolarity initiative and often [writes about](#) Russia and China. He kicked the discussion off with the above Declaration link and his own comment:

“Elsewhere, it appears that many were self-deluded into believing BRICS never had an ideology within its makeup, as Fyodor Lukanov revealed today in an RT op/ed. The BRICS Declaration made at the end of its 2022 Summit in Beijing as well as those issued before all contain ideology and the values that undergird BRICS; so, I have no idea where supposedly intelligent people got the idea that BRICS had no ideology or ideological goals/standards. As evidence, here's point #2 from the 2022 Declaration:

“We recall that in the past 16 years, upholding the BRICS spirit featuring mutual respect and understanding, equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness, and consensus, BRICS countries have strengthened mutual trust, deepened intra-BRICS mutually beneficial cooperation, and closer people-to-people exchanges, which has led to a series of significant outcomes. We reiterate the importance of further enhancing BRICS solidarity and cooperation based on our common interests and key priorities, to further strengthen our strategic partnership.”

I didn't bother emphasizing anything because IMO those values/ideologies are self-evident, and because I doubt Mr. Lukyanov will read this comment.”

I replied with:

Posted by: Scorpion | Sep 1 2023 0:28 utc | [88](#)

Am going to post in quite a few items (redacted with ...) to show the range of issues covered in the BRICS Declaration so those not interested in reading through the whole document (actually not all that long) can grok a quick overview.

12. We reaffirm our commitment to maintaining a strong and effective Global Financial Safety Net with a quota-based and adequately resourced IMF at its center. ...We welcome progress on voluntary channeling of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) from countries with strong external positions to support countries most in need, as well as the IMF's decision to establish the Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST).

13. We note that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused serious shock and hardship to humanity...This is posing huge challenges to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development...

14. ...We support the leading role of the WHO in combating the pandemic, as well as acknowledge initiatives such as the COVAX and the ACT-A. We recognize the importance of the discussions in the WTO on relevant IP waiver proposals...We stress the need to continue to strengthen the cooperation on ...recognition of national document of vaccination against COVID-19 and respective testing, especially for purpose of international travel.

15. We reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism and continue to support World Health Organization (WHO) to play the leading role in the global health governance, while supporting other UN relevant agencies' activities....

17. We stress that BRICS countries should be better prepared for COVID-19 and future public health emergencies... We welcome the virtual launch of the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Center and commend the "Initiative on Strengthening Vaccine Cooperation and Jointly Building a Defensive Line against Pandemic". ...

18. We support continuing to hold the BRICS TB Research Network Meetings, which will contribute to achieving the WHO goal of ending TB by 2030. We support the ...holding of a BRICS Seminar of Officials and Experts in Population Development in the second half of 2022.

21. We commit to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States, stress our commitment to the peaceful resolution of differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation, support all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of crises.

Expediting Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

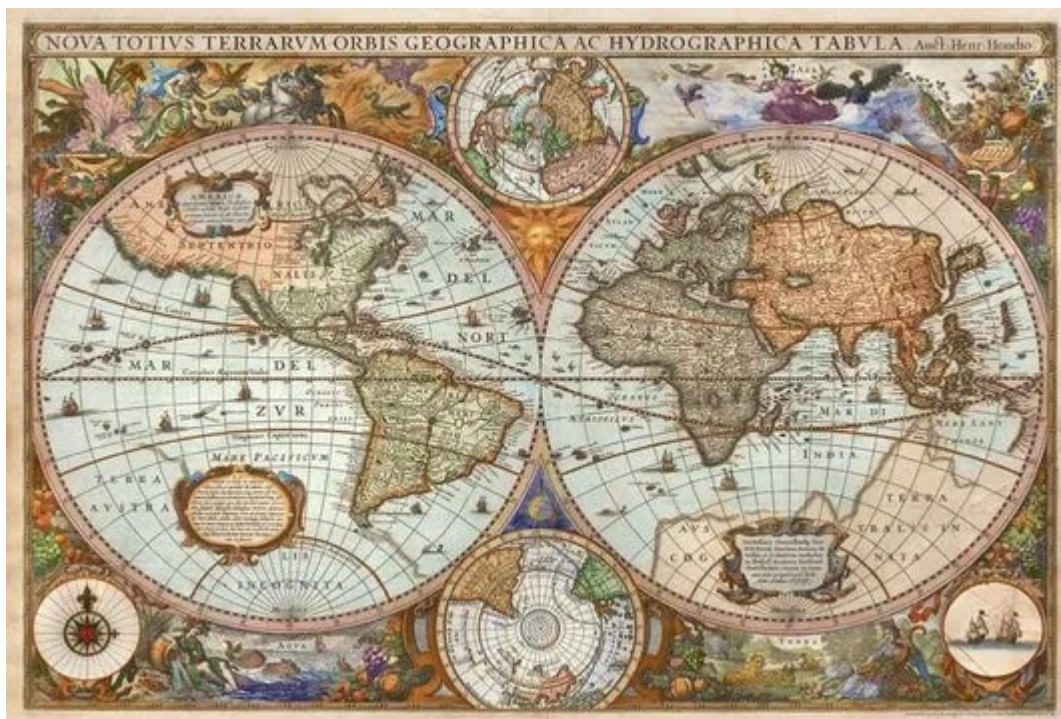
52. We note with concern that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and reversed years of progress on poverty, hunger, health care, education, climate change, access to clean water, and environmental protection.

We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in all its three dimensions - economic, social and environmental - in a balanced and integrated manner.

53. We commemorate the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and call on all parties to adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities,...We recall relevant provisions of the Paris Agreement, emphasizing that the Paris Agreement aims to strengthen global response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, and that peaking of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions will take longer for developing countries. We underline that the developed countries have historical responsibilities for global climate change, and should take the lead in scaling up mitigation actions and scale up indispensable support to developing countries on finance, technology and capacity-building.

57. We take note that the breakthroughs in the applications of digital technologies, such as Big Data and Artificial Intelligence (AI) may play an important role towards sustainable development. We take note of the BRICS Forum on Big Data for Sustainable Development. We support information exchanges and technical cooperation on AI technology. We recall the declaration of the 7th BRICS Communications Ministers meeting recognizing the rapid developments and huge potential of Artificial Intelligence technologies and its value to economic growth.

59. We commend the proposal to organize the BRICS High-level Forum on Sustainable Development. Taking it as an opportunity, we look forward to deepening cooperation on, inter alia, the fight against COVID-19, digital transformation, resilience and stability of industrial and supply chains and low-carbon development.



[The post continues:]

Thank you for engaging on this issue.

First, re: 'ideology':

Have been critical of Multipolarity because never heard organizational or procedural specifics. But regarding this XIV BRICS Summit Beijing Declaration as a Multipolar Order template, then one glaring thing missing – always my main concern – is conflict resolution mechanisms. Also, it lacks operational means for handling this plethora of issues. That said, it is seemingly proposing BRICS as the ultimate UN driver, perhaps after the wicked witch of the West has been shunted aside or finally Reset itself to join in.

Authority involves final decision-making power. This vision assumes a Round Table without any such ultimate authority. Unless again existing UN Committees are the assumed vehicle for such decision-making. Even so, the UN by design is not a true Executive Body; perhaps they plan to remedy that shortcoming.

Along with many feel-good ideal approaches for global growth, harmony and happiness this Declaration sounds like a whole lotta of Centralizing Globalism not just organic globalization; and the frequent references to 2030 Agenda, WTO, IMF, national documents of vaccination, Population Development etc. are alarming.

Am fully on board with dislodging the hegemonic banking cartels [the Eminence Grise behind the West's Industrial Revolution and much of the Modern World globally]. But creating a WHO-IMF-WTO run New World Order sounds ghastly unless you believe the utopian promises in ideologies like communism and socialism crafted by intellectuals hired by the same banking cartels whose harms they now promise to eradicate via the many 3-letter Globalista, and thus cartel-funded, organizations featured so prominently in this Declaration.

Sorry, but color me cynical!

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Additional Commentary:

This is the first I've heard of people complaining about BRICS's lack of shared ideology and in retrospect I might have asked Karlof1 what he/they exactly meant by that, about which more below. I didn't see all that much ideology in his excerpt, more like shared values or an agreed-upon way of working with each other. Which sounded excellent. Basically everyone doing everything they can to cooperate with no one member state or group of states taking advantage of any other.

But then after that brief overview of how pleased they are with such cooperation along the lines described, the rest of the Declaration involves specific initiatives involving a long list of different issues, though as I pointed out in my response, there is no statement about how such things are to be implemented unless it is by influencing the existing global institutions frequently referenced such as the UN, WHO, WTO, WHO

and so on, because those organizations do have implementation capability, albeit limited out of respect for nation state sovereignty.

I could say more. But my response basically left things with open-ended questions, even doubt. Much is said in the Declaration but even more is left unsaid. That is the problem I have with the entire Multipolarity business. One side is cooperating nicely and being virtuous; they are up against the other side (the wicked West) which is generally quite evil, and, after concerted efforts over many decades via media and the school system, increasing numbers of Westerners feel the same about their own societies and race, that they are evil and so are not reproducing at replacement rates, a type of slow, polite self-genocide.

So we are presented with a very positive, go-forward dynamic on one side filled with good will and mutual cooperation and on the other side a hegemonic Demon, led by rapacious Elites presiding over an irredeemably wicked population. (This is a little exaggerated to make the point.) Which I find interesting because it hearkens back to the contemplations I was offering up here before getting into this latest few Articles about multipolarity, such as Articles 61 and 62 about Good and Evil and meeting the Devil, or Dark Side after which I veered off into the blindness, both literal and metaphorical, created by an over-reliance on the left brain which then segued into considering the importance of values over left brain style mapping, or abstraction. And to my mind this is where red flags should be raised wherever any sort of ideology enters the matrix.

Value-based principles are the sine qua non of a good life or good society. But ideology which sounds like but isn't actually based in values are wolves in sheep's clothing for evil, especially in societal or political form, nearly always presents itself as 'doing what's best for the people'. Those promoting it are by and large sincere, at least those following the doctrine if not those promulgating it from the leadership levels.

In any case, I think we all need to consider very carefully what is being proposed. Both how evil the West is and how virtuous the Multipolarists are. There is definitely – at least IMO – some validity to this characterization but as some sort of absolute given, I cannot go that far. As the recent 'viral' popularity of the two songs 'Rich Men from Richmond' and 'I wanna go Home' vividly attest, there is a yearning, a hunger, for a return to ordinary decency and fairness in the West. If it is true that the Western elites, *primus inter pares* being the infamous banking / credit cartels, are incorrigibly evil, it follows that they have to a certain extent been exploiting their own populations as much as those overseas. I say 'to a certain extent' because clearly Western populations have enjoyed a higher standard of living than those in undeveloped nations and part of the BRICS credo is to end the overly exploitative Hegemonic practices which prevent

development on the part of those they are exploiting, something which sounds entirely worthy to me. And yet.

And yet it seems that the past few decades that improvement in living standards has stalled and indeed the quality of life – family life, spiritual life, civic life – has been steadily deteriorating and much of this is due to deliberate engineering on the part of those paid by and given status within society to lead its nature and progress – teachers, administrators, scientists, government officials on all levels and so forth – the so-called managerial and leadership classes.

And since the message from those classes is that the people in the West are undeserving somehow, and since the message from the Multipolarists is somewhat similar, this gives me pause. Are the two sides working together? Or am I jumping to conclusions? Do the multipolarists want nothing more than for We the People in the West to rise up and cast out their wicked Saruman-like elites? I cannot answer all that, though I do think it good to raise the question or in the immortal words of Gollum, the quasi-demon who saved the world for the rest of us in Middle Earth:

“We wonders, aye, we wonders Precious!”

Well, later on I offered two other (shorter) comments in a related thread:

Posted by: Scorpion | Sep 1 2023 3:50 utc | 146

Thxs for kind words.

Well I most certainly do not have all the answers either (obviously!) but I do raise questions, and actually believe that more of us should do so more often. Propaganda unquestioned soon becomes established truth.

I think it almost impossible to define what works and what doesn't except in very profound philosophical-poetical terms that only the most realized among us can express; such utterances become classics over time. Meanwhile, the world changes rapidly so recognizing elements from those classics unfolding within the chaotically arising unfamiliar present is no easy thing, even rarer to find any who can communicate it.

That said, there is a difference between good and evil, even though one of the principal characteristics of evil is that it is deceptively seductive and nearly always dressed up as the good - at least at first. For people not to buy into its seductive makeup they have to be well grounded in actually following the Good as Path, so to speak, rather than observing it judgmentally as external random happenstance.

So here we are. The rhetoric coming from the multipolarist anti-hegemonic BRICS is unrelentingly positive, reasonable, uplifting, inspiring. It seems clearly in contrast to the increasingly revealed evil of the West peopled by a race grown fat and entitled from the proceeds of wicked plunder and ugly racism. For that is the narrative the good side is telling, no? Is it really that simple and Manichean? We shall soon learn...

Well, we shall see. The world is changing. A new one is emerging. The older I get the better the Lord of the Rings story becomes. Tolkein was a master of old European lore, material reaching back beyond pagan or Christian, though he was a dedicated Christian himself like most of the finest of his generation, many of whom were sacrificed in French mud.

It seems that every time contains the beginning, middle and end of his tale. Every time contains evil deep within going back to the Elder days from a Darkness beyond telling. every time contains lineage and potential of blessed sacredness, some of which dwells among us always, hidden like Lothlorien Elves. Lineages of kings and queens walk among us, recognized or not. That too which is twisted and broken, evil tribes, uncouth cultures, lost souls, original natures distorted by ambition, envy, bitterness or mistreatment. It's all there; it always is.

And too there is a good way forward – always; and bad ways forward too - always. The way to Victory of the Good always involves finding ordinary, humble good-heartedness, like that of two small hobbits, wandering in the wild, bearing a precious burden, the burden of the destiny of us all, though presently hemmed in by darkness and despair. And it is always a close-run thing, always on a knife-edge!

May we individually and collectively be worthy of such a burden, which each of us always carries. There are no guaranteed outcomes.

Afterthought about Ideology:

An ideology is a set of beliefs or philosophies attributed to a person or group of persons, especially those held for reasons that are not purely epistemic, in which "practical elements are as prominent as theoretical ones." Formerly applied primarily to economic, political, or religious theories and policies, in a tradition going back to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, more recent use treats the term as mainly condemnatory.

I personally have a slightly different definition of ideology, namely that it is belief based on abstract concept versus bedrock values. As discussed earlier, values are active in that they are something personally put into practice from intent, training and habit. Ideological beliefs can motivate all one's actions but can also end up tending towards fanaticism in the face of inevitable obstacles, with the believer blaming Other for the problem and then feeling obliged to overcome such Other, never questioning the Ideologically-driven Belief itself which often feels compelled to strive for some Idealized (usually utopian) goal, which unrelenting earnestness often ends up creating Hell in order to achieve the desired Heavenly end. Whereas actions rooted in virtuous bedrock values do not go astray that way; obstacles lead to self-reflection, course correction, softening, deepening, more determination, courage, generosity and humbleness. Subtle differences at the starting gate, perhaps, but with broad ramifications as the race is run over time.

Article 75: Coemerging Good & Evil



[Yin within Yang, Yang within Yin, Good within Evil, Evil within Good](#)

Since mid-July this blog has been offering up Articles that have been swirling around two general issues, one involving Good and Evil ruminations and the other involving reductionist materialism and its personal and societal ramifications. In a [recent piece](#), we looked at some of the language in statements from the BRICS XIV 2022 Declaration (the day after which a more recent 2023 Declaration was published saying more of the same) to examine it for signs of the sort of [cognitive blindness](#) that the reductionist materialism evidences. (Simply put, an over-emphasis on the left brain approach, as discovered and defined by Iain McGilchrest an accomplished neurologist, clinical psychiatrist, philosopher and author.)

Then, in looking at the two BRICS Declarations along with a few pundit commentaries, we reflected on the narrative strenuously promulgated by Presidents Putin and XI, namely that the US-NATO axis is an unprincipled, self-serving globalist tyrant imposing its 'Rules-Based Order' on other nations in ways that always and only benefit its own interests, whilst on the other hand the 'Global South' or 'Rest of the World' ('RoW') is finally pushing back against this Hegemon determined to build a better, fairer world based on mutual cooperation not hegemonic plunder, violence and exploitation which has been the Way of the West for several centuries now and counting.

In the recent BRICS conference in Johannesburg from which came the latest [XV 2023 Declaration](#), ten nations asked to join with another thirty or so already lined up, the main thrust being that of resisting US-led Hegemony which dominates and exploits them without contributing to their own development, indeed hampering it with crushing IMF debt. Six were granted entry with more no doubt to be accepted in

coming years. There is a feeling from this latest conference that a paradigm shift is underway, that Old World Order is now giving way to Multipolar New World Order which is no longer maybe happening some time in the future but is already here and with epoch-making potential. At the same time I noticed in their language that any executive functions implied in many of their published Articles involve existing United Nations or other prominent NGO's like the World Health Organization (WHO), all funded by public-private partnership, in other words both governments and private foundations sponsored by international oligarchs like Bill Gates.

So: the over-arching narrative is that the RoW is creating a geopolitical alternative to the existing post-war world order dominated by the US-NATO 'Western' axis, especially since the 1991 demise of the communist USSR. For sure, there is some truth to this narrative.

But what if it is yet another Big Lie? This too is possible. After all, the IMF, WTO, WHO and so on are all funded by the same occluded Big Finance forces that are behind the UN and dominate all Western governments. In the US, everyone now has heard the term 'Deep State' though few can define it. To some it is a perpetual Civil Service that has more clout and less public accountability than elected officials, including Presidents or Prime Ministers. To others it's a more shadowy network of old Banking Houses who own the City of London and the Federal Reserve and who also control senior branches of national Intelligence which together seem to steer national and international policy, trumping whatever lesser influence elected representatives may bring to the table for a few years here and there. Some say that huge investment houses like Vanguard and BlackRock really run the West, being the visible tip of the iceberg of such hidden Deep State power networks. No matter what they are and who leads them, there does seem to be some truth in the notion that they not only control most Western polities but also the international bodies they created like the UN, WHO, WEF etc. And now here come recent BRICS Declarations openly stating that they are aligned with recent UN accords and initiatives. So it seems that BRICS and the UN and the WEF and the Deep-State-run Western Hegemon and the RoW are all following the same play book. If so, then surely the meta-narrative of The Hegemon versus Rest of the World is false? Is there any other conclusion to draw?

And if so, does that mean that all the positive, mutually cooperative rhetoric coming out of the Multipolarity Movement is a lie and the Hegemon is indeed as benign and generous as it proclaims to its own populations? Probably not, since again there is some truth to the 'Hegemon versus RoW' narrative. But that doesn't make the emerging Multipolar Narrative necessarily true either. Which is where the thrust of this blog comes in, namely exploring various traditional contemplative issues in the light of everyday occurrence, in this case the inter-relationship, indeed possibly interpenetration, of so-called Good and so-called Evil which was being explored before the latest flurry of geopolitical Articles arose.

This rumination theme returned in a recent email to an old friend, Roger Tucker, who runs the geopolitical aggregator site www.sitreppworld.info.

“Well, I'm not fully on board with the dissidents. [Those claiming Multipolarity movement is a Deception.]

Something have been exploring with my articles of late is the inseparability / coemergence of light and dark, good and evil. I think some of the things going on are mixes of both good and evil rather than either good or evil.

The [Multipolarist] cooperation and emphasis on win-win development seems real, indeed admirable.

As does the observation that overly exploitative IMF policies have deliberately suppressed development in poorer nations for far too long. This cannot continue. That seems true as well.

But also China's rise has been largely due to their allowing top-level Western corporatism and finance into their nation in return for access to Western markets which in turn, quite predictably, hollowed out Western manufacturing greatly harming millions of peoples' lives about which 'Globocap' types couldn't care less. The point being that China didn't do this on her own and still isn't. Western elites are part of China's rise.

Does that make the BRIC bloc's desire to do things differently a hoax? I doubt it. But are they as independent and purely motivated as they portray? I doubt it.

Same with Putin and Russia. Which makes the seeming bifurcation and conflict true on some levels but not on others; there is smoke and mirrors in the mix. Probably like most times in history the aristocracy who frequently consult with each other as fellow peers even as their populations on the ground are slaughtering each other in the trenches as enemies. As I like to say there are always layers within layers and levels upon levels; endlessly so.

Exhibit 1: the entirely unnecessary Ukraine war which has cost the lives of several hundred thousand young men for absolutely no good reason. But at the same time allowing all these geopolitical changes to move forward more rapidly and as far as concerns the West, the elites are not seen to be driving such changes rather responding to the other side which is painted as evil, authoritarian, stubborn etc. - 'the Enemy'. Indeed both sides can excuse what is happening by blaming the Enemy.”

Then yesterday in a well established alternative media publication called the Off-Guardian, I came across [an article about Russia](#) well worth reading; here is their closing argument:

“So, we think the real question is – in this stark new post-2020 reality what does “pro-Russian” (or pro-American, or pro-any state anywhere) even mean any more? What big moral questions divide them? What real options are we offered?

– Being coerced into getting poisoned by SputnikV rather than Astra Zeneca?

- Being locked up and lied to by Biden as opposed to Putin?
- Getting Agenda 2030 served up via Moscow as opposed to DC or London?
- Having your CBDC in programable dollars as opposed to programable rubles?

Currently to be “pro-Russia” is to be pro-Globalism, pro-Agenda 2030, pro-phony pandemic legislation and pro-clot shots.

We absolutely are not pro any of those options.

Are you?

So are you NATO shills now?

Yes. Yes, we are.

Even though we have literally never endorsed a single action NATO has taken. Ever. Even though we have only ever pointed out NATO is, and always has been, a force for chaos and evil in this world...

we are now “NATO shills”.

That’s the great function of the fake binary – it turns intelligent people into human on/off switches, blinded to nuance or free thought.

If you don’t side with Team A, then you must be siding with Team B. You have to pick a side even if the only difference between them seems to be the color of their jerseys. And if you refuse to pick a team someone will pick one for you and insist you are in it.

What we want to say to these people is this –

If you strip off your pre-2020 preconceptions, turn down the feel-good, psychologically manipulative speeches from beloved leaders – what government anywhere is currently working for a better world, or any world beyond the Great Reset, carbon-monitored Agenda 2030 New Normal hellscape?

I think the answer to that, dear binary-hugger, is – none of them.

This is where we are right now and why we are no longer saying things that can be defined as “pro-Russian”.

Our values haven’t changed. The situation has changed. The reality on the ground has changed.

But wait, I hear some of you cry, ok Putin may be shilling for covid and ok, he might be promoting the same globalist nightmare as every other major world leader..

but you can’t deny he’s fighting Nazis in Ukraine!

Surely this gives Russia back some small amount of moral ascendancy?

Well, in so far as Russia – or anyone – is genuinely fighting Nazis they will continue to have our support, which is why we were quick to point out last year the hypocrisy and deception of the Western media version of events in Ukraine.

But let's not be hopelessly naive...

I mean that's Propaganda 101 after all – if you want to quell dissent, divert attention from unpopular policies and rally faltering support – start a war.

Sorry, I mean a “special military operation”.

Do we agree Russia is suddenly absolved and suddenly a righteous cause again just because it moves some troops into Ukraine – while at the same time continuing the same anti-human agenda of lies and fear porn?

Well, surprisingly, no, we don't. Any more than we think this is about Putin “defending humanity” against Schwab, Gates and the globalist hordes.

But we'll be talking more about this curious, contradictory and puzzling “not-war” – and its stenographers and apologists amongst the alt media – very soon... “

For those interested, the first critical article I read was [BRICS - a key instrument for establishing the New World Order](#). Yourie Roshka's style is overly forthright perhaps, but he makes good points, cites the Declarations frequently, and also links to the next piece about good and evil coexisting which is really the topic of this Article.

This last piece is from author [Iain Davis](#), a staunch critic of the Multipolarity agenda though no fan of NATO Hegemony.

“The notion that a political leader, or anyone for that matter, is entirely bad or good, is puerile. The same consideration can be given to nation-states, political systems or even models of world order. The character of a human being, a nation or a system of global governance is better judged by their or its totality of actions.

Whatever we consider to be the source of “good” and “evil,” it exists in all of us at either ends of a spectrum. Some people exhibit extreme levels of psychopathy, which can lead them to commit acts that are judged to be “evil.” But even Hitler, for example, showed physical courage, devotion, compassion for some, and other qualities we might consider “good.”

Nation-states and global governance structures, though immensely complex, are formed and led by people. They are influenced by a multitude of forces. Given the added complications of chance and unforeseen events, it is unrealistic to expect any form of “order” to be either entirely good or entirely bad.”

The text is both italicized and emboldened because it presents what this Article is about which is NOT whether or not the Multipolar Agenda is another Big Lie; determining that is something for each individual to decide for him or her self. Rather, it's about the fundamental ambiguity of reality in relation to so-called Good and Evil, and many other similarly related yin-yang polarities. Good and evil are always present each and every moment in life because every moment we choose whether manifest virtue or not. Which means also that in our participation in the world, both our limited personal world and the larger societal world which we read about from afar but are also a part of and whose machinations effect our lives on the local level, we can choose a virtuous manner or not. As is rightly said: 'manners maketh man'.

So my attitude is that insofar as some of the stated aspirations of the BRICS and Multipolarity bloc are positive and reasonable, I support them and wish them well. Maybe there are nefarious agendas hidden in the mix, including outright lies; these am not party to. And also not all people in the exploitative Hegemonic bloc are wicked so I can wish them well too and pray that we within such captured polities nevertheless can follow the better angels of our nature. I can hope that the US can restore its representative republic. There are people in the electoral process who are pledging to do so, namely Trump, RFK Jr and Ramaswamy. I can wish them all well and need not allow long established cynicism about Western decline to undermine such positive aspirations. Meanwhile of course we each have our lives to lead on immediate and local levels whilst not getting distracted by overly heady, abstract realms. But even when dealing with distant and abstract matters – such as this BRICS business – we can choose to maintain some sort of virtuous, positive, sane, basically good attitude about it rather than falling into some sort of cognitively dissonant, or mentally discursive, stupor.

This ties in with the materialism issue: by positing some sort of external 'objective reality' divorced from mind or any other intelligence, a 'matter-only-is-real' model, we conveniently absolve ourselves of any agency because reality is seen as something autonomous that happens on its own which we therefore have nothing to do with. Indeed, to the typical materialist atheist, the notion of valuing virtue is anathema, quaint, even absurd. Religious faith, basically, is for people with mental problems, people comfortable dwelling in delusion. That such a criticism can validly be lain at their door never occurs to them, and if one were to do so they would be unable to grasp it.

When contemplating social issues, like ongoing elections, geopolitical developments or the conflict in Ukraine, we tend to revert to materialist default mode, regarding these things as part of an external, objective reality. The instant we do so, we divorce ourselves from such phenomena erroneously believing we are disconnected from them.

Leaving aside any argument as to whether or not our attitude does or does not effect people and events far away, the fact is that our contemplation of far away events and people effects us. And at that point we do have agency, and again we have the choice whether to regard such things with sanity or confusion, with virtue or non-virtue, with compassion or disaffection. In this way, at least, we are very much connected to such things and thus also they with us. So how we regard them, how we feel about them, how we respond to them, is something active from within ourselves, not passive from external 'objective reality'.

The point being that goodness is something done and felt, it doesn't exist on its own in an (imagined) external objective realm. The materialist view tends to ignore this fundamental truth of human experience, that ignorance being essentially the same as the visual blind spots in the Gorilla and yellow spot experiments from recent Articles. This profound ignorance has far-reaching effects in that it becomes part of ways in which we both individually and collectively absolve ourselves of responsibility for engendering Good, or virtue, in self and others.

That's one side of it. The other being that good and evil coexist within each of us, always. This perhaps is symbolized by the famous Tai Chi symbol. We like to think we can align with all-good, but it simply doesn't work that way. So I am comfortable regarding both The Hegemon and the Multipolarity movement as having both good and evil elements, as is the case with myself. Otherwise, there is a tendency to insist that my side is right and the other side is wrong at which point neither side can ever meet the other. This is the same as one's own inner good side being unable to meet and greet one's own inner bad side. No, the good side sees and accommodates the evil within, as well as the evil without. Both are always in play.



Yin within Yang, Yang within Yin