

The Praeternatural and the New Epistemic Deal. This is my proposal for making 2R a reality.

[GeoffDann](#) 1 March 31, 2025, 6:08pm

I would like to advance the discussion, and so I am going to do something I have never done before, which is to explain in public what this is really all about. This post isn't supposed to be an argument. I can't prove any of it. But it might just help people to understand what I've been trying to say. All sorts of things are missing from this description, so **please** do not jump to conclusions – do not insert your own definitions and assumptions into my system and then use them to attack it. There's been too much of that already. Instead, please ask questions and I will do my best to answer them.

How do I know these things if I can't prove them? The answer is that I have direct experience of what other people call “the supernatural”. And I am not just talking about synchronicity. I am talking about a *wide-ranging reconfiguration of the timeline I belong to*. In Jungian terminology synchronistic processes are going on around us all the time – we just usually either don't notice them, or we are so familiar with them that we don't question what they are. But Jung's terminology is unhelpful in that “synchronicity” means both individual experiences of meaningful coincidences and a whole category of causality (or something that looks like causality but isn't, depending on your definition). I have gone from being a hardcore Dawkinsian materialist-naturalist to experiencing the most profound “supernatural” phenomena imaginable, and I did it in the space of about two months. I then quit a career in software engineering to study philosophy in an attempt to understand what the **** had happened me, and spent the subsequent 16 years trying to put it down in a book so that people who still think in the way I used to might be able to understand it.

We need to retire the term “supernatural”.

Naturalism (or “metaphysical naturalism”) is a metaphysical view that everything happening in reality can be reduced to (or explained in terms of) the laws of nature (including laws we are yet to discover). Naturalism is logically entailed by materialism (all materialists are naturalists) but the reverse is not true (some naturalists aren't materialists, eg Nagel). If the material world is the only thing that exists, then there is no theoretical or conceptual space for anything else that could affect it (an agent of free will, for example, or God) so naturalism is logically entailed. Naturalism differs from determinism in that it can accommodate objective randomness – the future does not have to be fully determined, but anything not determined must be random (*really* random in every case, not just apparently so or only in some cases).

You might think that supernaturalism could just be defined as “not Naturalism” – in other words *something else is going on* – not everything can be reduced the laws of nature. And until the discovery of quantum theory this worked perfectly well, but QM changes everything. The different interpretations of QM are different ways of explaining how we get from deterministic laws which describe a multiverse, to the experience of a single timeline. The Many Worlds Interpretation does this by saying that all possible outcomes occur in diverging timelines, and we just don't notice all the ones we don't end up in. If we reject MWI – and assume there is only one timeline (or perhaps only a few) – then we have to explain what the apparent randomness is – we have to explain what decides which of the physically possible

timelines actually manifests. One possibility is that it is objectively random – that nothing makes this decision – that *God plays dice with the universe*. Another is that there are hidden deterministic processes (hidden variable theories) that decide the outcome. These are the three options most people consider, *and all three of them are wrong*. What actually determines which outcome manifests is the entire realm of causality Jung called *Synchronicity*. I call it *the praeternatural*.

Instead of “supernatural”, I define “**praeternatural**” to refer to “supernatural” phenomena which are compatible with the laws of physics, but not reducible to them. They do not breach physical law, but they aren’t explained by physical law either. They are probabilistic – they involve things happening which are exceptionally improbable but physically entirely possible. I define “**hypernatural**” to refer to supernatural phenomena which breach physical laws – things which aren’t possible no matter how much the quantum dice are loaded. Examples include the feeding of the 5000, and Young Earth Creationism. These things do not happen in our reality. It is not just that I haven’t experienced them, but that what I *have* experienced makes not the slightest bit of sense if the hypernatural is real. If the hypernatural was real, solving our problems would be easy.

Along with synchronicity, praeternatural phenomena include free will (which everybody experiences all the time), karma, and the teleological evolution of conscious organisms Thomas Nagel proposes in *Mind and Cosmos* but leaves entirely unexplained. These aren’t the only ones, but they’ll do for starters.

This is the heart of spirituality. It’s what it is all about. Praeternatural phenomena exist as a means for Reality to try to develop itself. They are what decides which of the physically possible MWI timelines we collectively end up in, and they are directly associated with spirituality because Reality is seeking a spiritual solution to the problems humanity is facing. That is why spiritually advanced people experience a lot of synchronicity – what is happening is that Reality is prioritising their will over that others who are less useful for this decision process.

For me, 2R is how we incorporate this into a theory which is capable of uniting enough of humanity to manifest the paradigm shift we’re all working towards. This has to include people like Thomas Nagel, because he’s carving out a place for naturalists in the new paradigm. They don’t know it yet, but he’s their leader. He understands what all of the materialists and physicalists don’t, and he’s trying to both break the news to them that materialism is false, and blaze a trail to a new naturalistic theory of everything. He cannot succeed, because he’s looking for teleological laws to explain not only teleology in evolution but potentially other forms of natural teleological process. No such laws exist. The praeternatural is not determined by laws. It is determined by will, by closeness to Truth, and by passion. It will never be made scientific. These are pearls; they are not for swine.

My conclusion is we need a new epistemological agreement to sort out not just this but all of our other ideological problems at the same time – those caused by growth-based economics and postmodern antirealism. We need a “peace treaty” which can unite as many of the ideas within the current “2R ecosystem” which are already compatible with, or can be made compatible with, a new epistemological system. Naturalists like Nagel are never going to believe what I’ve just written, and there’s no way we should expect them to.

My book is both an argument that we need a New Epistemic Deal, and a specific proposal that we might start from. It is offered not as a finished product, but as a basic idea of what the way forwards needs to look like. I want to provoke an entirely new sort of debate – I am not trying to enforce the conclusion of

that debate. We need input from all sorts of people. I am just trying to get the ball rolling. PROPERLY rolling.

Here is the whole NED:

1: Ecocivilisation is our shared destiny and guiding goal.

Ecocivilisation represents a vision of a society that harmonises human activity with ecological principles. This is not a utopian ideal but a necessity dictated by the realities of ecosystems and evolution. The claim that ecocivilisation is our destiny is pre-political, transcending specific ideologies or systems. The precise social, political, and economic structures of ecocivilisation are not part of this definition, but the core premise is clear: civilisation must work *ecologically* to endure.

This realisation, however, is insufficient on its own to inspire a mass movement. The challenge lies in how we navigate the path forward. Choosing a “least bad” route demands careful thought and collaboration, as well as a willingness to embrace complexity. Yet, despite the uncertainties and debates about how to proceed, we can and must agree on this: ecocivilisation is our ultimate goal – a commitment to creating a world where humanity thrives within the limits and laws of nature.

2: Consciousness is real.

Consciousness – our individual interface with reality – is the one thing each of us can be absolutely certain exists. It is through consciousness that we perceive existence and recognise that anything exists at all. As such, consciousness must serve as the starting point for exploring what exists beyond our subjective experience and for discerning the boundaries of what we know and what we don't.

3: Epistemic Structural Realism is true.

Scientific knowledge tends towards truth. We acknowledge that there is such a thing as an objective reality, external to human minds, about which science provides structural knowledge that is reliable, albeit with certain qualifications. We reject the idea that all scientific knowledge is merely provisional, or as subjective as non-scientific forms of knowledge. We affirm the epistemic privilege of science.

4: Both materialism and physicalism should be rejected.

Materialism cannot account for consciousness. Physicalism either suffers from the same problem, or it implies things that most physicalists reject, in which case it is not much use as a piece of terminology. Both materialism and physicalism restrict our models of reality in such a way that they are never going to be able to satisfactorily account for everything we have justification for believing exists.

5: The existence of praeternatural phenomena is consistent with science and reason, but apart from the unique case of psychogenesis, there is no scientific or rational justification for believing in it/them either. The only possible justification for belief is subjective lived experience.

6: We cannot expect people to believe things (*any* things) based solely on *other people's* subjective lived experiences. There will always be skeptics about any alleged praeternatural phenomena (possibly psychogenesis excepted) and their right to skepticism must be respected.

Principles seven and eight are closely related, but sufficiently different to warrant the inclusion of both.

7: There can be no morality if we deny reality.

If there actually is an objective reality, and we can actually know things about it, then if we start our moral reasoning with anything other than reality then we're engaged in fake morality – we will be arguing about what would be morally right and wrong in some ideal reality rather than the real one that we have to figure out how to share. And if the people we are having moral disagreements with are actually dealing with reality, while we are not, then they are engaged with real morality and we are claiming moral high ground we have no right to claim. Attempting to put morality before reality should be rejected as virtue signalling.

8: Science, including ecology, must take epistemic privilege over economics, politics and everything else which purports to be about objective reality.

Principle seven is specifically about morality. Principle eight is about everything else that matters – it is about practical reasoning as well as moral reasoning. It is a statement that the whole of science, including the whole of ecology, the limits to growth and the reality of ecological overshoot, must be acknowledged before serious discussion starts about *anything at all*. It should be considered *immoral* to come to any negotiating table demanding concessions from others before you are willing to accept reality. Growth-based economics and politics is not just dangerous nonsense but, for anybody who understands that that is exactly what it is, engaging with it without persistently challenging its false assumptions is an immoral act.

I would like to think that it could not be clearer why these last two principles are necessary. This is a proposal for a new epistemological framework to facilitate the construction of a western ecocivilisation. That process is going to require all of us, at every level of society, to face up to some of the most practically and morally difficult realities that humans have ever faced or will ever face. How can we do that if some of us don't agree that there even is any such thing as reality and/or demand that either our practical reasoning or our moral reasoning begin from somewhere else?

Edited to add...

[Why UTOK is an “Endo-Natural” Worldview | by Gregg Henriques | Unified Theory of Knowledge | Medium](#)

UTOK is concerned with getting the natural into social science into subjective psyche picture of the (endo-)natural world correct. The division between endo- versus exo- allows UTOK to not get bogged down into potentially distracting debates about the world outside the natural world. By making this division, we can simply state that if you are interested in the confederation of aliens or in life after death or the higher dimensions that result in parapsychological phenomena, you can go explore Exo-studies with Sean or other similar endeavors that are concerned with such entities. And if you are interested in a second Enlightenment that scientifically and philosophically gets the right relationship in the natural world between matter and mind and subjective and scientific knowing, [then come join the UTOK Community.](#)

Can you see now why I think UTOK is not just completely wrong but a huge, damaging distraction? Gregg Henriques thinks “the paranormal” involves aliens, “higher dimensions” and the afterlife – *bullshit*, in other words. The “division” he's making relegates the praeternatural to an irrelevance, because Henriques doesn't know that it is real. He doesn't know synchronicity exists, he doesn't

understand why Nagel has been forced to conclude that evolution is teleological, he doesn't know what free will is or how it works, and he's got no idea how quantum mechanics is connected to consciousness. That's for fools who want to explore Exo-studies with Sean, not for deep thinkers like him who have got it all worked out. "Exo-studies" means "stuff from another reality" – stuff that is "out there". The praeternatural is very much part of *this* reality. It's right *in here*.

The more I learn about UTOK, the less I like about it. I don't question Gregg Henriques motives. The problem is he's an old-paradigm naturalist who knows the old paradigm is broken but doesn't understand what the new one needs to look like. As a result, his proposal for the new paradigm doesn't work, because it misses **all** of the key insights needed to sustain 2R. Nagel is a new-paradigm naturalist, or at least he is pointing people in the right direction.

[Justin](#) 2 March 31, 2025, 10:11pm

Let it be shown and known - she knows how to make 'em. OMBAOWOW

1 Like

[RobertBunge](#) 3 April 1, 2025, 1:33am

GeoffDann:

This post isn't supposed to be an argument. I can't prove any of it.

There is an awful lot of refutation going on here for a non-argument. I'd be much more interested in how your timeline got reconfigured. It's fine to see the world differently.

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 4 April 1, 2025, 6:47am

RobertBunge:

There is an awful lot of refutation going on here for a non-argument.

Are you referring to what I am saying about UTOK?

Why do you think I am saying that, Robert? What do you think my motive is?

I'd be much more interested in how your timeline got reconfigured.

There is a limit to how much of that I can talk about in public. If I told you the whole story, you wouldn't believe it. It is very important to me that people take me seriously, rather than thinking I'm either joking, lying or crazy. I am trying to do my part to make 2R happen, which will not happen if people think I'm another David Icke. You can't just explain this stuff to people who aren't open to understanding it. (And I am not talking about you here – this is a public space).

We do, however, need to talk about the problems with UTOK, because those problems are very real.

I am also happy to talk about the NED, given that that is a proposal to make 2R happen. But as I hope you can see, in order to make it happen people need to be able to understand why UTOK is part of the problem rather than part of the solution. How can we have an alleged “Universal Theory of Knowledge” which equates genuine spirituality with belief in aliens? I don't believe in aliens – in fact part of what I am saying is that the cosmology I am describing implies that the Earth is the only place in the cosmos where conscious life exists – I am rejecting the idea that “life must be abundant because [insert question-begging argument here]” for being based on a false notion that the Earth isn't special and that the cosmos is not consciousness-centric. The exact opposite of what Henriques is suggesting.

Either I am deeply delusional and/or a pathological, narcissistic liar, or UTOK is seriously wrong because its originator is entirely oblivious to the praeternatural. Which do you think it is?

You cannot have a “unified theory of knowledge” which entirely overlooks *all* genuine spiritual knowledge. The truth is that I am struggling to understand how UTOK ever got its foot in the door of 2R. I don't understand why other people can't see exactly the same problem that I can see, especially after it has been pointed out. Gregg Henriques doesn't know that the Occult is real, which is a show-stopping problem if you're proposing a new epistemology for the world. It's pre-Kantian, and not in a good way.

[GeoffDann](#) 5 April 1, 2025, 8:05am

Robert,

The unfolding of reality occurs in two forms. The first is the normal “efficient” physical causality that determines how the wave function evolves (ie “the laws of physics”)(this is equivalent to “Yang” in Taoism – the expansive phase of the unfolding of reality). The second is praeternatural phenomena of various sorts which determine which of the physically possible futures actually manifests. It determines when and how the wave function collapses (this is equivalent to Yin – the contractive phase).

In everyday situations, the most important of these is human free will. Right now, you are being presented with one of those important free will decisions. This is happening because we have a shared goal of making 2R happen, but we are discussing two conflicting epistemological systems (mine, and UTOK). Either I am right, or Henriques is right, but both of us cannot be right and the conflict isn't going to go away. But this is how it has to be – we cannot make 2R happen by just allowing everything

to be included, even if it is hopelessly wrong. We have to decide what is right and what is wrong, and we have to act on those decisions, and that is how the future is created. The world is in the state it is in partly because far too many people have made far too many poor free will decisions in the past. Fixing this world means improving humanity's performance in this respect. We need to *spiritually evolve*. The way to make this happen is to present people with much more important free will decisions, and do whatever we can to equip them to make good ones.

Let me explain a bit about how the Praeternatural works. Belief systems, including religions but also including cosmologies-epistemologies like scientific materialism and UTOK, act like "languages". Reality will communicate to you in whatever your own "language" is – that is why Christian mystics experience Christian-oriented phenomena, Buddhists experience Buddhist-oriented phenomena, and why Tarot cards work for new agers and the I Ching works for Taoists. I am assuming (please do tell me if I am wrong) that you are a Christian. If so, and you want to know whether I'm for real or not, then *ask your God*. It doesn't matter whether you do it out loud (I find that is best, preferably while walking on some windswept hilltop...) or just in your head, but it must be done with conviction – *you have to believe in it*. Ask your God whether I am for real, or whether synchronicity is real, or whether you should be committed to defending UTOK, or *whatever other question you really need to know the answer to*. Ask, and the answer will come.

Then make your free will decision. This is how we co-create reality.

EDIT: since I posted that, I have been exploring UTOK's website. And it is very clearly a **business**. Not only is it hopelessly wrong, but it is in the same category of "thing" as scientology – part religion, part self-help system, but mostly designed to generate income for its founder. Consult your conscience, please. And maybe recall the story in the gospels about Jesus and the moneychangers.

[Asimong](#) 6 April 1, 2025, 9:12am

I'd like to offer support and encouragement here. The explanation of the praeternatural in particular is very much in line with how I have made sense of the world for decades. On a surface level, one could say that the "real" miracles are the miracles of what appears to be pure chance or luck. Meaningful coincidence. Effectively for ever (in my adult life) I have held together a view that the scientific method is (on the whole!) a great way to discover meaningless reality, and that religion is all about meaning and not about science. Like you, Geoff, I don't think many people see things that way.

What I'm not so sure about in your narrative is what we could call your "theory of change". Just as I'm not clear how Rufus's narrative hangs together to result in the "Second Renaissance" (while being quite happy with the objectives), also I'm not clear how your narrative hangs together. I'd love to do some ontological commoning on this ... take your narrative; unpack and document the belief system underlying it; and then detail the ontology of terms in which the belief system is formulated. Then, in my view, we are more likely to have productive dialogue resulting in common ontological ground, and thence, maybe working towards a core common belief system.

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 7 April 1, 2025, 9:19am

I'd like to offer support and encouragement here. The explanation of the praeternatural in particular is very much in line with how I have made sense of the world for decades. On a surface level, one could say that the "real" miracles are the miracles of what appears to be pure chance or luck. Meaningful coincidence. Effectively for ever (in my adult life) I have held together a view that the scientific method is (on the whole!) a great way to discover meaningless reality, and that religion is all about meaning and not about science. Like you, Geoff, I don't think many people see things that way.

Your support and encouragement is very welcome. I was feeling a little lonely there, and I've been feeling like that for too long now.

Asimong:

What I'm not so sure about in your narrative is what we could call your "theory of change".

The NED is epistemological – it is a device for enabling the debates that need to happen in order to forge this Second Renaissance. Its purpose is to set epistemological ground rules for the construction of the new paradigm.

I have a book coming out about this, and the book isn't just about the NED. It also contains an imaginary future timeline whereby society actually does change, and also the first three chapters of an imaginary book which combines spirituality and science in a way never done before – a book from the future called *The Western Book of the Ecoapocalypse*.

I'd love to do some ontological commoning on this ... take your narrative; unpack and document the belief system underlying it; and then detail the ontology of terms in which the belief system is formulated. Then, it is my view, we are more likely to have productive dialogue resulting in common ontological ground, and thence, maybe working towards a core common belief system.

That is exactly what my forthcoming book is about. It is called *The Real Paths to Ecocivilisation*. Subtitle *From collapse to coherence: integrating science, spirituality and sustainability in the West*.

If you PM me your email address I can send you the first 35 pages. I can also explain more here if you like. Just ask away.

[GeoffDann](#) 8 April 1, 2025, 9:33am

Asimong:

I'd love to do some ontological commoning on this ... take your narrative; unpack and document the belief system underlying it; and then detail the ontology of terms in which the belief system is formulated.

The Western Book of the Eco-apocalypse (chapters 0| ∞ to 2)

0| ∞

Nothing never was, and never will be. There was no beginning of things, and there will be no end. The Ground of all Being is not nothing, and not infinity. It neither exists nor doesn't exist. It is indivisible and indestructible. It is the Ultimate Paradox.

1. Psycheogenesis

1:1 The Big Bang

The only beginning we can speak of is the beginning of our own cosmos, and we call it the Big Bang.

1:2 The Primordial superposition

At first, and for most of its history, there were no conscious beings in the cosmos. We call it *noumenal* or *potential*: the cosmos as it is in itself. By definition the noumenal cosmos can only be instantiated upon 0/ ∞ , though the question of whether there could be any additional structural levels between 0/ ∞ and the noumenal cosmos must remain unaddressed for now. Because there were no observers, we call this period the *many worlds phase of cosmic evolution*. All possible outcomes of quantum events were being realised across different branches of reality, but none of these branches were being "chosen" or "experienced" by a conscious observer. The remainder of this section describes only what happened in the branch that was eventually chosen.

1:3 Inflation – The First Great Mystery...

1:13 The Ediacaran

Around 540 million years ago life increased in complexity again. The first multi-cellular organisms were simple – sponges and other immobile blobs, stalked fronds and floating jellyfish-like things. We call them the "Ediacaran fauna", and we aren't even sure which branch of life they belonged to – perhaps they were proto-animals, or perhaps they belonged to some other branch of life that subsequently died out. Either way, they didn't *do* much – the Ediacaran oceans were a tranquil sort of place.

1:14 The Cambrian Explosion

Around 540 million years ago the equilibrium was punctuated once more. In a relatively short space of time, primitive forms of all of the branches of animal life we know today appeared, along with countless others that were destined to be failed evolutionary experiments. Disjunction Age scientists could reach no agreement about the cause of this unique event in evolutionary history.

Proposed explanations included:

- A steep rise in oxygen (another one)
- Anoxia (lack of oxygen) on the Ediacaran sea floor forcing life to move upwards and change
- The appearance of ozone in the upper atmosphere allowing life to move on to land.
- The ending of “snowball Earth” conditions enabling new evolutionary pathways
- An increase in calcium content in seawater enabling new body designs
- Mass-extinction of the Ediacaran fauna leaving a blank canvas for new life to evolve.
- An increase in size and diversity of planktonic animals.
- A sudden increase in symbiotic relationships, allowing more complex organisms to thrive and diversify.
- The movement of deep-sea vents changing ocean chemistry and driving life to diversify around new habitats
- Early forms of marine life developing defensive or offensive chemical secretions, triggering an evolutionary arms race
- A radical alteration in the Earth’s magnetic field, causing increased radiation exposure, which accelerated mutation rates
- An intense surge in solar radiation from a series of solar flares, impacting Earth’s atmosphere and sparking mutations
- Starbursts in the Milky Way galaxy
- Aliens deliberately introducing new genetic material to kickstart complex life on Earth
- Earth’s position in the solar system briefly resonating with planetary and lunar orbits, causing unusual tides and environmental shifts
- Microbes developed collective intelligence or coordination, leading to novel ways of constructing multicellular organisms
- Intrinsic genomic re-organisation and developmental patterning (i.e. a new sort of “genetic technology”)
- A key evolutionary innovation like vision or better brainpower
- New forms of mobility and therefore a step change in predator-prey relationships
- A complexity threshold.

Disjunction Age scientists *did not know* what caused the Cambrian Explosion. Most of their guesses were completely wrong, and those that did tilt in the right direction were too vague and missed the key insight. Yes, there was a revolutionary evolutionary innovation, and though it involved both vision and better brainpower, neither of those options quite nails it. Yes, it involved a new form of mobility and a major step change in predator-prey relationships, but that’s not the elephant in the room either...

The cosmology is based on two recent books, both of which are trying to bring consciousness into the scientific view of reality from which it has always been missing. These books are *Mind and Cosmos* by Thomas Nagel and *Mindful Universe* by Henry Stapp. The first is about evolution, the second is about quantum mechanics, both are about neuroscience.

[RobertBunge](#) 9 April 1, 2025, 9:53am

If you go to this map, off the top of my head, the parts of “Integral Island” you want to kick out of 2R are essentially the two chunks called “Wisdom” and “Metamodern”. Vervaeke and UTOK are effectively joined at the hip, as is Brendan Graham Dempsey. They all made the same methodological distinction Hanzi Freinacht did, which is to bracket off the “woo” and to focus on naturalistic emergence. It’s a really common worldview in these circles.

Why bracket off the “woo”? Because Wilberian Integral, which preceded anything metamodern, was a bit too open to corrupt gurus and New Age absurdities. The main problem at issue for Vervaeke, Henriques, Dempsey, and many others in their circle (there are many, many others) is to account for mind, spirit, meaning, etc. in ways consistent with a story of evolutionary emergence through natural complexity. The big debate in that world currently is whether said evolution is teleological or not. (Jim Rutt says the telos is heat death of the universe; Dempsey is more open to some God principle).

Anyway, that’s all a large, established social circle with lots of regular conferences, people appearing on each other’s podcasts, thousands of pages of published literature, and a vastly interconnected online presence. If 2R must choose between that very influential social circle and your lone voice in the wilderness, I get the feeling your voice will be headed back to the wilderness soon enough.

None of that has much anything to do with my personal views about God, spirit, supernatural, praeternatural, or anything like that. I rather like Aurobindo and Gebser, and Thich Nhat Hahn’s dialogues with various Catholic figures, so I’m open to lots of other things beyond naturalistic evolution. However, to even have that discussion requires a certain amount of tact, discretion, flexibility, and many other social skills beyond claiming a personal vision of absolute truth.



[Second Renaissance](#)

Our current civilization is crumbling, leading to a period of crisis and potential rebirth – a "second renaissance". This project offers a simple introduction to this moment of civilization crisis and awakening - and the emerging ecosystem related to...

[GeoffDann](#) 10 April 1, 2025, 9:59am

RobertBunge:

If you go to this map, off the top of my head, the parts of “Integral Island” you want to kick out of 2R are essentially the two chunks called “Wisdom” and “Metamodern”. Vervaeke and UTOK are effectively joined at the hip, as is Brendan Graham Dempsey. They all made the same methodological distinction Hanzi Freinacht did, which is to bracket off the “woo” and to focus on naturalistic emergence. It’s a really common worldview in these circles.

It's *wrong*. If we want 2R to work, then the mistake must be fixed. Some "woo" is very real. It can't be left out, because it is *the special sauce*.

If 2R must choose between that very influential social circle and your lone voice in the wilderness, I get the feeling your voice will be headed back to the wilderness soon enough.

Consult your conscience. What rings true, Robert? What I am saying? Or what they are saying?

I've spent the last 16 years in the wilderness. I am not afraid of that. But I think you are wrong. I think the Truth will come out. I think it is time.

However, to even have that discussion requires a certain amount of tact, discretion, flexibility,

Do you think Jesus changed the world by having tact, discretion and flexibility? Or did he fearlessly defend what believed was right and true?

You cannot change the world by following the herd. Don't think "all these people have decided on X. They are influential people. It makes sense to just accept what they are saying." *Do your own thinking.*

[Asimong](#) 11 April 1, 2025, 10:07am

RobertBunge:

Anyway, that's all a large, established social circle with lots of regular conferences, people appearing on each other's podcasts, thousands of pages of published literature, and a vastly interconnected online presence. If 2R must choose between that very influential social circle and your lone voice in the wilderness, I get the feeling your voice will be headed back to the wilderness soon enough.

Now and again I'm all for lone voices in the wilderness, if there seems to be a groupthink going down a path to relatively nowhere. On the other hand, I tend to prefer acknowledging allcomers for what they positively bring, and just leaving aside what is unfruitful. I tend to like the general feel of the Vervaeke-adjacent crowd (particularly McGilchrist who I was at school with), but have you seen Dempsey's latest "Gospel"? Eeeuw!

As I have already hinted, my proposed way forward is methodologically under construction, and would very much like to gain experience from trial: "[ontological commoning](#)"

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 12 April 1, 2025, 10:09am

Iain McGilchrist would not disagree with anything I am saying. I don't think I've ever heard a word come out of his mouth that isn't completely compatible with my own belief system.

The reverse is true of Hanzi Freinacht.

1 Like

[Asimong](#) 13 April 1, 2025, 10:17am

Yes, and I think that's one of the reasons I have a positive feel about your belief system. Iain has an excellent background in science, and champions the importance of left-hemisphere thinking even while observing that it has become too dominant and needs rebalancing with the right hemisphere as "The Master": left hemisphere should be "The Emissary". (personally I think it might be helpful to redress another balance by saying "the Mistress" rather than "the Master")

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 14 April 1, 2025, 10:26am

Exactly. UTOK is basically pure left hemisphere.

I don't mention McGilchrist in my book until the end of the last chapter. The whole book builds up to it.

My own path was heavily influenced by the work of Robert Anton Wilson, who also emphasised the importance of right hemisphere thinking to counterbalance left hemisphere dominance. It was Wilson's book *Prometheus Rising* that cracked my old scientific belief system wide open.

From chapter 8 of my book ("Metanoia, Part Two")

Then another friend loaned me the book that really did prise open my closed mind, but only after it had thoroughly pissed me off first. The book is called *Prometheus Rising* (1983), written somebody I'd never heard of called Robert Anton Wilson. In it he describes his own version of Timothy Leary's 8-circuit model of consciousness, which was also new to me, regardless of my familiarity with psychedelic drug culture. Circuit one he calls the "oral biosurvival circuit", and this he tells us appeared with the first multicellular life forms. Circuit two is the "anal emotional territorial circuit", which appeared during the Cambrian Explosion. Circuit three is the "time-binding semantic circuit". This was my circuit – the circuit that does the rational thinking. Since I considered this the highest form of cognition, I was wondering what on earth all the other circuits were supposed to be for. I was over-dependent on my brain's left hemisphere, says Wilson, and paying insufficient attention to the right. I was a third circuit rationalist robot. Circuit four didn't seem too theoretically problematic – the "moral socio-sexual circuit" was maybe not my strongest, and I would never have placed it higher than circuit three, but that was a quibble. It was at circuit five that everything started to go horribly wrong – "The holistic neurosomatic circuit". This part of *Prometheus Rising*

begins with a badly copied illustration of a card from Aleister Crowley's Thoth tarot deck, and from that point onwards the book consists of a combination serious woo and speculation about the future, most of which has turned out to be wrong – Wilson was hopelessly optimistic. One concept that keeps cropping up is synchronicity. The higher up the circuits you go, according to Wilson, the more synchronicity starts to show itself. That was enough for me. I hurled the book across my bedroom and it lay in a corner, in a pile of junk, for several weeks. I can date this to January 26th 2002, because I kept the copy of that week's New Scientist magazine, which landed on my doormat the next day. On the cover is a large digitised zero, with a surgical implement removing pieces of it, and the headline *Smaller and Smaller: Curious Things Happen When You Slice Up Nothing*.

Shortly after that I escaped from materialism, thanks in part to the writings of Thomas Nagel and David Chalmers, and then curious things started happening. I kept experiencing weird coincidences, most of which were connected to my ongoing investigation into the nature of reality. At first I ignored this, because I still had no place in my map of reality to put it, but the more I ignored it, the more glaringly obvious the synchronicities became. Ignoring them seemed to intensify them, and they were leading me in a direction I did not want to go. This was both fascinating and frightening, and I think it was only because of my residual nihilism that fear did not take over. If you've already given up on your own future, then even experiences that threaten your basic understanding of reality aren't that frightening. I was already fully prepared to use suicide as an emergency escape route, so what was the worst that could happen to me? Being sent to hell?

Eventually I picked Wilson's book up again and this time I finished it. *The whole system is a Whole System*. I am not going to go into the details of what happened next, though I was posting about it online at the time. I was already known as a vocal skeptic, and now I was telling other people in the skeptical community about an ever-increasing intensity of serious woo happening to me. You can imagine the response.

Then it got even weirder. Richard Dawkins set up his own forum, on the Richard Dawkins Foundation website. Or rather, his left hand man Josh Timonen set it up; Dawkins himself almost never posted on that board. Again I was involved from the start, though by this point I had switched sides. I was an ex-materialist who now believed synchronicity was real, based on direct personal experience. However, unlike most believers in woo I had a deep and comprehensive understanding of the materialistic worldview I had been evangelising for the previous 20 years, and that made me difficult to debate. Josh had picked a couple of likely candidates as moderators, but they did not fare well in their encounters with me, and they abused their power in an attempt to silence me. Seeing this happen, Josh decided to relieve them of their moderator status and asked me if I would like to take over from him as the site administrator, because he thought I had shown the deepest understanding of both sides of the argument. I agreed, Josh made me the administrator, and then he departed, never to be seen again. I received no further instructions and no oversight from above after that – I had total control of that forum and there was no active higher authority for any of the users to appeal to. The only hard evidence I can provide to support any of this story is a well-worn RDF t-shirt sent to me as a thankyou for my services, but I am guessing all of the online stuff is filed away in a backup somewhere. My username was usually UndercoverElephant (a cartoon character from 1977).

[Asimong](#) 15 April 1, 2025, 10:31am

I'd just like to interject here, what is "woo" and what isn't? How do you define "woo", [@RobertBunge](#)? I don't know of any rational distinction — though I may have missed something of course. I'm all for clarity about corrupt gurus and other abuses, when it becomes really clear, but less clear about what counts as an "absurdity". Seems to me that what counts as absurd is heavily dependent on your belief system, including assumptions, culture, etc., much of which can be hidden until brought to awareness.

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 16 April 1, 2025, 10:34am

That is basically too difficult to explain in one post. I'd have to post the whole of chapter 3 of my book. I had to define it *very carefully*. But here is the relevant section specifically on "woo" (which is out of context any may not make sense)

Metaphysical terminology (section two – opposing terms)

With the exception of libertarian free will (which was easier to explain in section one, even though it actually belongs here) the terms defined above are broadly inter-related – they all tend to fall on one side of a dichotomy. Section two covers the other side.

Woo

Woo (or woo-woo) is the word that comes closest to referring to everything on the other side. It is derived from the sound effects that accompanied flying saucers in 1950s science fiction films. The term "woo" does not belong in the new paradigm. Firstly it is too vague, so each skeptic has their own idea of what it means, so it can mean whatever anybody wants it to mean in any particular situation. Secondly it is dismissive and derogatory, which combined with the vagueness amounts to "What I personally think is laughably stupid and/or weird". We are going to need more precision than that. I only use the word "woo" in reference to the old paradigm.

1 Like

[RobertBunge](#) 17 April 1, 2025, 11:26am

Asimong:

How do you define “woo”,

I don't. I just take note that others use the concept to bracket off doctrines and practices they consider false, superficial, sketchy, exploitative, or otherwise distracting from productive spiritual endeavor.

I've been in and out of New Age bookshops for over 40 years now. There is both something attractive and suspicious about that culture. Sorting the real from the fake in that world takes some doing. I've met spirit mediums, participated in a variety of prayer circles, and listened to many hours of presentations by teachers who speak matter-of-factly about out of body experiences, astral travel, experiences beyond ordinary time and space, and so on. One of my takeaways from all that is “be careful what you wish for”. Not all spirits are friendly helpful spirits (so I am told). My prayer experience has been that being overly specific in prayer requests and visualizations may not be the wisest approach. I lately tend more in the “Thy will be done” direction.

From a purely naturalistic point of view, I chalk these general explorations up to intuition. The intuitive mind processes signals in ways rational thought can't fathom. McGilchrist explains all this in great depth, but I've been practicing intuitively for decades before even hearing of McGilchrist. More listening, less jumping to conclusions seems a generally advisable approach.

3 Likes

[RobertBunge](#) 18 April 1, 2025, 11:44am

Asimong:

Dempsey's latest “Gospel”? Eeeuw!

Yeah. I can't get through it. I like the book below better. The general idea is to get under the evident inconsistencies in the different gospel accounts and to uncover a Jesus with a consistent personality (consistent with the Sermon on the Mount, anyway). Of course, any such endeavor will be subject to the preferences and passions of the particular editor.

I like Brendan and we've interacted quite a bit. He has an evangelical background, lost that faith (while in seminary), and now is reinventing religion on his own terms. I don't find that especially persuasive. To me, the spiritual needs to be quite a bit bigger than I am. The invention part (which I now accept as inevitable in our current global milieu) is mostly about how to tidy up the many sources of inspiration that come rushing in from all directions. But I see the notion of personal religion as something of an oxymoron. I'm more in favor of personal grasp of the many religions that are already out there.

[The Gospel According to Jesus – Stephen Mitchell](#)

[Asimong](#) 19 April 1, 2025, 12:29pm

I can feel another “both-and” view arising in me. Could we perhaps appreciate (I was going to say “value”, but that doesn’t seem exactly right) both the influential social circle – because it provides the opportunity for outreach – and the lone voices in the wilderness – because more than never, these turn out to have the seeds of the next wave, the next opening of the Overton window? I’m also feeling slightly 3-horizon-ish, if you know what I mean.

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 21 April 1, 2025, 2:10pm

Simon, (reposted because I accidentally deleted it the first time).

Asimong:

I can feel another “both-and” view arising in me. Could we perhaps appreciate (I was going to say “value”, but that doesn’t seem exactly right) both the influential social circle – because it provides the opportunity for outreach – and the lone voices in the wilderness – because more than never, these turn out to have the seeds of the next wave, the next opening of the Overton window? I’m also feeling slightly 3-horizon-ish, if you know what I mean.

If we want to actually go anywhere, then at some point the rubber has to meet the road. And there is no way to do that without defining the new paradigm in such a way that leaves the old paradigm definitively behind. Here is the beginning of the final chapter of my book:

~~Chapter 12: We must act now or it will be too late!~~

Chapter 12: We must deal with reality, or it will deal with us.

We must act now or it will be too late! I am so tired of hearing these words. It is how books about the eco-apocalypse have nearly always ended. What is the point in continuing to tell people that they must act now or it will be too late when almost nothing anybody can actually do will make a significant difference the overall trajectory or limit the long-term damage? To sound virtuous? To inflict psychological cruelty? Who is this “we” who should act? What can we do? *How* can we act?

“Act now or it will be too late” doesn’t work. Repeating it ad infinitum and expecting it to suddenly have a different effect is the proverbial definition of madness. I think it is time to replace this tired old chestnut with “We must deal with reality or it will deal with us” – a mantra that stands some chance of actually working. It makes sense at every level from the individual to the entire human race, and for each individual or group regardless of what anybody else is doing. Even if you live in a society which refuses to change, it is in your own interest to make decisions based on reality rather than delusion and fantasy. And it is also, on balance, in the interests of the whole of society

for everybody to be dealing with reality. It's a game-theoretical winner. "Act now or it will be too late" is a game-theoretical loser. *Act now because nobody else is going to.*

What would happen if we approached the ecological crisis with realism and acceptance rather than idealism and denial? What if we stopped focusing on global calls for change that rely on abstract unity, and instead concentrated on localised resilience, personal responsibility, and realistic expectations? This is not about saving the world in some grand, romantic sense. It is about dealing with the reality we actually face, understanding the boundaries within which we can act, and preparing ourselves for the storm that is actually coming. By focusing on what *can* be done within those boundaries we will maximise our collective impact. When enough people start dealing with reality on a personal and community level, larger systems can begin to shift.

Debunking the Fairytales: Growth, Realism, and Collapse

In chapter two I discussed the Metacrisis, and in the section called *Ecocivilisation, China and the West* I stopped talking about contemporary politics almost as soon as I began. I just wanted to speak plainly, but I feared that this would cause too many people to stop reading. In normal situations it is not possible to talk about overpopulation without risking an accusation of ecofascism, or being immediately diverted into a pointless discussion about whether or not the Earth really is overpopulated. *Of course it is overpopulated.* If we were to look at this objectively, like people in a mature ecocivilisation will, we'd ask ourselves what the optimum population might be, in terms of both ecological sustainability and the welfare of human beings.[footnote: But our culture doesn't even permit us to use the term "optimum population", which is why, in 2011, the Optimum Population Trust renamed itself "Population Matters".] By that time, both in my imaginary future and the real one, the carrying capacity of the Earth will have been drastically reduced, but let's imagine we got our act together 50 years ago when the Club of Rome originally published *The Limits to Growth*. What might we have concluded the optimum population would be? My *guess* (there are no official figures) is that we would have concluded that the Earth was already overpopulated at that time and that we should be aiming to reduce it to the region of 1 to 2 billion. In other words, the Earth isn't just a little bit overpopulated, but horrendously so. There are already at least four times as many humans there *ought* to be if we were getting civilisation right. I am not saying this because I hate humans – either generally or just "other groups". The statement has nothing to do with any sort of political or religious belief, or my personal psychological condition. It is an educated guess based on ecological realism, and it is probably too optimistic.

Not dealing with reality has its advantages. It often works in the short term, and that that has usually been enough for most people is one of the main reasons we have ended up in this mess. Now those chickens are coming home to roost. There are also advantages for people whose situation leaves them disadvantaged if reality is acknowledged, and that is deeply controversial. One group's decision to deal with reality will all too frequently have catastrophic consequences for other groups. There are going to be a lot of losers. People have been saying "we must act now or it will be too late" for half a century now, but the exact meaning has often been unclear. "We must act now or there are going to be several billion losers in a global struggle to survive" is a reasonable interpretation, I think. We did not act, and now it is too late. There is no way to soften this message. No way to spin it so that it doesn't seem so bad. Reality is what it is, and now we are going to have to deal with it.

Pre-collapse politics isn't completely irrelevant, of course. It is only the fear of losing power at the next election that keeps our politicians honest to the extent that they actually are. Whether the UK is governed by Labour or the Conservatives makes a real difference both to people's lives and the future of the country. However, it *is* irrelevant with respect to the broader, deeper issues of the Metacrisis, which is exactly why we are heading towards collapse. In that sense, nothing has changed since I gave up on politics in 1989. All the mainstream political parties are committed to fantasy growth-based economics. Even the Green Party is unwilling to clearly commit to its reversal – at the time of writing the mealy mouthed official policy of the Green Party of England and Wales is that “growth should not be the default aim for governments.” I'd be willing to bet that most members of that party are fully aware that basing a national strategy on growth is ecologically insane, but there is no public commitment to this position. Insufficient people are willing to face the political consequences of actually speaking the truth, so the debate does not change. We are drowning in fairy stories.

To shift this dynamic, three myths must be exploded, and this must happen at their root sources. Growth-based economics can only be eradicated when *economists* find the courage to condemn it as the ecological insanity it has always been. Our politics can only progress beyond postmodern anti-realism when the *social left* rediscovers the indispensability of realism. Metaphysical materialism will only cease to be a dominant paradigm when the *scientific community* acknowledges its shortcomings and stops resisting the nascent paradigm shift.

We cannot make this paradigm shift happen and include materialists and old-paradigm-style naturalists in the new order. That is not how paradigm shifts work.

And the same applies to postmodernist leftists calling themselves metamodernists, and purveyors of growth-based economics calling themselves green.

“Both and” can't include the old paradigm.

[Asimong](#) 22 April 1, 2025, 2:23pm

This is why I was referring to the [3 horizon view](#). In my (limited) understanding, it is exactly trying to spell out the potential relationships between old order, new order, and transitional order, and how they relate, how they can relate.

1 Like

[GeoffDamm](#) 23 April 1, 2025, 2:28pm

OK...I looked that up and I'm not quite sure how it applies, but this is obviously a difficult thing we are talking about so I understand maybe metaphors are the best we can do. I am using them too.

But for me it certainly was an essential part of my own thinking to define exactly what needs to go – the essence of the old paradigm. I concluded that those things are growth-based economics, metaphysical materialism and postmodern anti-realism. We can define the new paradigm in terms of the NED and the need to invent a post-materialistic science, post-growth economics and post-postmodern politics. That only gets us to the point where we know what the paradigms are, and can start asking the right questions, but without it I don't think we've got a viable paradigm shift at all. We're just avoiding the crucial questions and hiding behind ambiguities which will stop the show.

[RobertBunge](#) 24 April 1, 2025, 3:15pm

GeoffDann:

Do you think Jesus changed the world by having tact, discretion and flexibility? Or did he fearlessly defend what believed was right and true?

A useful quote from this article:

“A second important attitude is humility – not giving way to ego-inflation and Messianic grandiosity. Anthony says: ‘If you think you’re Jesus or the Buddha, that’s OK. But you’re also this person. And if I’m the Buddha, so are you.’ You have a glimpse of the infinite Self within you. But it’s within everyone, not just you. Relax. Don’t take yourself or the experience too seriously. You’re not controlling the universe. Have a sense of playfulness. Anthony talks about having an open and curious attitude to one’s experience – what does it feel like? How does this reality behave?”

[What to do in a spiritual emergency | The History of Emotions Blog](#)

[GeoffDann](#) 25 April 1, 2025, 3:22pm

RobertBunge:

A useful quote from this article:

“A second important attitude is humility – not giving way to ego-inflation and Messianic grandiosity. Anthony says: ‘If you think you’re Jesus or the Buddha, that’s OK. But you’re also this person. And if I’m the Buddha, so are you.’ You have a glimpse of the infinite Self within you. But it’s within everyone, not just you. Relax. Don’t take yourself or the experience too seriously. You’re not controlling the universe. Have a sense of playfulness. Anthony talks about having an open and curious attitude to one’s experience – what does it feel like? How does this reality behave?”

That is the first post of yours which has irritated me. You have decided to ignore the point I am actually making, and instead combined an ad-hominem with “friendly advice.”

So I will ask you the question again:

Do you think Jesus changed the world by having tact, discretion and flexibility? Or did he fearlessly defend what believed was right and true?

This is a question about personal morality in general, not my personal psychology. What is more important? Politics and diplomacy, or defending what you believe to be the truth or what is morally right?

I have asked you to think for yourself instead of following the crowd to their conferences. You have responded by accusing me of having a messiah complex. *I think you wish to avoid a difficult decision.*

[RobertBunge](#) 26 April 1, 2025, 3:52pm

GeoffDann:

Politics and diplomacy, or defending what you believe to be the truth or what is morally right?

It's not an either/or. Regarding the truth vs diplomacy question, Joe Brewer (another of my associates) has a nice statement in a book to the effect that “most people would rather be right than be effective”. Good insight, that. For me, truths that guide effective practice are the most reality-based of all.

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 27 April 1, 2025, 4:12pm

RobertBunge:

It's not an either/or.

Sometimes it is. And those are the times which matter the most.

For me, truths that guide effective practice are the most reality-based of all.

Is it effective practice to allow parts of the old paradigm to fatally compromise the new paradigm because you don't want to upset people?

The reasoning here seems to be “UTOK is an effective or important part of R2. We shouldn't allow anything as peskily annoying as the actual truth to upset this.”

You may be able to tell that I don't rate pragmatic theories of truth.

[dvdjsph](#) 28 April 1, 2025, 6:45pm

Hey Geoff,

I've come to similar conclusions as you regarding physicalism and have had similar experiences to yours. I don't think rational arguments go very far where this topic is concerned, though. Either you have experience or you don't, and most people don't (for good reason).

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 29 April 1, 2025, 6:49pm

Hi David(?)

Yes, recognising this is exactly the purpose of Principles 5 & 6 of the New Epistemic Deal proposed in the opening post. Apart from the unique case of teleology in the evolution of consciousness, the only way to know about praeternatural phenomena is via direct subjective experience. Rational arguments can only take us as far as an understanding of what is physically and logically possible.

[dvdjsph](#) 30 April 1, 2025, 7:04pm

I like that, and the spirit in which it is presented. I do think [@RobertBunge](#) has a good point that people like us, who are inclined to esotericism and mysticism, should take to heart. While Jesus seems to have been a person of irreproachable moral conviction, he was also effective in getting the word out - he was a great marketer ("don't tell anyone I healed you!"), was economical with time ("don't cast your pearls before swine"), and seems to have really prioritized questions of connection and intimacy over truth and law (e.g. "So *when you offer your gift to God* at the altar, and you remember that *your* brother or sister has *something against you*, leave *your* gift there at the altar")

David

3 Likes

[GeoffDann](#) 31 April 1, 2025, 9:18pm

RobertBunge:

The general idea is to get under the evident inconsistencies in the different gospel accounts and to uncover a Jesus with a consistent personality (consistent with the Sermon on the Mount, anyway). Of course, any such endeavor will be subject to the preferences and passions of the particular editor.

Have you read *The Lost Gospel* by Burton L Mack?

[Martin](#) 32 April 1, 2025, 10:17pm

Geoff, unrelated but related. What role do you think psychedelics have played (are playing) in our psychological development and grasping hard-to-nail concepts? Robert Anton Wilson, Timothy Leary...

[GeoffDann](#) 33 April 2, 2025, 6:17am

There's two ways to look at that.

On one hand they have a positive role to play, especially for people who have never taken them (and I am specifically talking about psilocybin and LSD, although there are more extreme substances in that class such as DMT (OMG)). For people who have never had that experience, the first time can certainly be life-changing. It opens your mind to all sorts of possibilities about the nature of reality, and the limitations of normal human perception. This can be an important first step – the thing that jolts people out of their safe but naïve way of thinking about reality.

On the other, they don't provide any answers. When you come down, the world is still the way it was before, and your life is still the way it was before. You still need to actually make changes in the real world, and these will typically seem no easier than they did before. Maybe we could use the metaphor of a locked cage – the psychedelics can break open the lock, but you still have to find your own way out of the cage.

1 Like

[RobertBunge](#) 34 April 2, 2025, 10:29am

GeoffDann:

Have you read *The Lost Gospel* by Burton L Mack?

No, but I just now ordered it.

[GeoffDann](#) 35 April 2, 2025, 11:21am

RobertBunge:

No, but I just now ordered it.

I think you will enjoy it.

Also if you are interested in the historical Jesus, and haven't already seen this lecture, then I think you would enjoy this too:

[J.D. Crossan 2000 UNI lecture on the historical Jesus](#)

[What \(the heck\) is Metamodernism?](#)

[rogadair](#) 36 April 2, 2025, 8:31pm

I would be rather wary of 3H as it is rooted in the management consultant gobbelygook of corporate growth culture!

According to Wikipedia " 3H was created in 2006 from an adaptation of [McKinsey & Company](#)'s 'three horizons of growth' framework"!

[JonahW](#) 37 April 3, 2025, 6:48am

Hi Geoff,

I have a few thoughts.

GeoffDann:

please do not jump to conclusions – do not insert your own definitions and assumptions into my system and then use them to attack it. There's been too much of that already. Instead, please ask questions and I will do my best to answer them.

I worry that you are jumping to conclusions about some of the other views in the ecosystem here, e.g. UTOK. But I'm glad you agree that a humble, questioning approach is desirable here.

GeoffDann:

Instead of “supernatural”, I define “**praeternatural**” to refer to “supernatural” phenomena which are compatible with the laws of physics, but not reducible to them. They do not breach physical law, but they aren't explained by physical law either. They are probabilistic – they involve things happening which are exceptionally improbable but physically entirely possible. I define “**hypernatural**” to refer to supernatural phenomena which breach physical laws – things which aren't possible no matter how much the quantum dice are loaded.

This seems very similar to the UTOK view. UTOK and related views are about *emergence* - the idea the biological, mental and spiritual phenomena emerge from the natural world (and are thus compatible with the laws of physics) while not being reducible to them (because they are governed by their own, emergent laws). I can see that there are differences between your view and the UTOK view - for example you seem to suggest that praeternatural phenomena have a causal influence at the physical level of quantum mechanics. But I think it would be helpful both in terms of the clarity of your argument and in terms of the practical effectiveness of persuading people, e.g. from the UTOK community, to recognise where your views align, for example in thinking of free will and teleological evolution as compatible with but not reducible to physical law.

GeoffDann:

2: Consciousness is real.

Consciousness – our individual interface with reality – is the one thing each of us can be absolutely certain exists. It is through consciousness that we perceive existence and recognise that anything exists at all. As such, consciousness must serve as the starting point for exploring what exists beyond our subjective experience and for discerning the boundaries of what we know and what we don't.

3: Epistemic Structural Realism is true.

Scientific knowledge tends towards truth. We acknowledge that there is such a thing as an objective reality, external to human minds, about which science provides structural knowledge that is reliable, albeit with certain qualifications. We reject the idea that all scientific knowledge is merely provisional, or as subjective as non-scientific forms of knowledge. We affirm the epistemic privilege of science.

I'm curious how you think these two principles connect. Do you think scientific knowledge is fundamentally based on the subjective experience of consciousness then? I'm aware that there have been efforts to connect the two in the context of empiricism and epistemological foundationalism in Descartes and the phenomenological tradition, but these are highly contentious areas in contemporary philosophy of science, and I personally lean towards a more Popperian approach in which all theories are tested by appeal to rational argumentation as well as conscious experience, and there is no ultimate 'foundation' to knowledge.

Also the term ‘Epistemic Structural Realism’ is usually used to refer to something like the idea that “We cannot know the individuals that instantiate the structure of the world but we can know their properties and relations.” (See [Structural Realism \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#)) - in other words it is a view that is very *modest* about our knowledge of objective reality, saying that while we can incrementally understand the mathematical structure of the physical world, we need to recognise that our basic ontologies will evolve alongside our best scientific theories. This modesty seems to conflict with your claims to know about praeternatural phenomena.

GeoffDann:

5: The existence of praeternatural phenomena is consistent with science and reason, but apart from the unique case of psychogenesis, there is no scientific or rational justification for believing in it/them either. The only possible justification for belief is subjective lived experience.

But then I see that you are saying that science is not the route by which we gain knowledge of praeternatural phenomena. But this leaves me very confused. I thought you said we need recognise the ‘epistemic privilege of science’? What I want to know then is: if we are not using science to gain knowledge of the praeternatural, what is your epistemology of this realm? I don’t think just referring to ‘direct experience’ is very helpful here. The whole of modern epistemology since Descartes is about why appealing to ‘direct experience’ is not by itself a valid epistemology (because of sceptical arguments, for example).

[Asimong](#) 38 April 3, 2025, 8:51am

Nothing wrong with being wary of things like 3H. On the other hand, quite often the established order comes up with something that we can adapt to our benefit, and I’d not like to overlook those opportunities. In other words, no preconceptions either way. Have you seen what H3Uni have done with the 3H framework? <https://www.h3uni.org/> To me, this is enough to indicate that there is some value in it. As always, let’s try to see the value and leave aside (where possible) the downsides. When a particular approach has unwelcome assumptions baked in hard, then I would agree let’s approach with great caution. I don’t see that as the problem here.

[GeoffDann](#) 39 April 3, 2025, 8:52am

Hi Jonah

This seems very similar to the UTOK view. UTOK and related views are about *emergence* - the idea the biological, mental and spiritual phenomena emerge from the natural world (and are thus compatible with the laws of physics) while not being reducible to them (because they are governed by their own, emergent laws). I can see that there are differences between your view and the UTOK

view - for example you seem to suggest that praeternatural phenomena have a causal influence at the physical level of quantum mechanics. But I think it would be helpful both in terms of the clarity of your argument and in terms of the practical effectiveness of persuading people, e.g. from the UTOK community, to recognise where your views align, for example in thinking of free will and teleological evolution as compatible with but not reducible to physical law.

OK, point taken. If I want to appeal to the UTOK community then finding as much common ground with them as possible would be a good place to start.

I'm curious how you think these two principles connect. Do you think scientific knowledge is fundamentally based on the subjective experience of consciousness then?

That depends what "fundamentally based on" means. All our source information comes to us via consciousness – that much is true. It does not follow that we cannot know anything about a world beyond consciousness. This is of absolutely critical importance, because it takes us back to the precise moment in the history of Western philosophy where the all of our epistemological troubles began – Hume's writing in the first part of his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739). In attempting to provide solid foundations for a science of mind, Hume ran into a logical problem that totally defeated him. He felt he had irrefutable reasons for believing two contradictory things. The first was that we are in the epistemic situation of brains in vats – how can we ever escape "the veil of perception" and know anything about a world of permanently existing objects beyond it? The second was that in order to be able to experience an external world (as we evidentially do), then it must be the case that objects in the external world have a causal effect on our consciousness – there must be some sort of causal connection from beyond the veil of perception.

Hume never found a solution to this problem. His conclusion to that section of the *Treatise* is one of the most tortured pieces of writing in the whole history of philosophy. He set out with such high hopes, and by the end of it he simply has to admit defeat.

"I have expos'd myself to the enmity of all metaphysicians, logicians, mathematicians, and even theologians; and can I wonder at the insults I must suffer? I have declar'd my disapprobation of their systems; and can I be surpriz'd, if they shou'd express a hatred of mine and of my person? When I look abroad, I foresee on every side, dispute, contradiction, anger, calumny and detraction. When I turn my eye inward, I find nothing but doubt and ignorance. All the world conspires to oppose and contradict me; tho' such is my weakness, that I feel all my opinions loosen and fall of themselves, when unsupported by the approbation of others. Every step I take is with hesitation, and every new reflection makes me dread an error and absurdity in my reasoning."

What confidence can he have, that in rejecting all previous philosophies, he is "following the truth"? After all his reasoning, he can give no justification as to why the material world is really as it appears to be. The only reason is that it *strongly* appears the way it is. What we suppose to be the real world "enlivens some ideas beyond others" – our perception of an external world just "feels stronger" than merely internal mental activity. Without this feeling, we'd have no reason to reject solipsism, or Berkeleyan idealism, which is almost as bad.

But feelings are “so inconstant and fallacious” that this sort of principle will surely lead us into errors. It is never going to be scientific, that is for sure. But it is only feelings, experience and habit which makes us “reason from cause and effect” – it is only because we are so familiar with the world behaving as if causality is real that we believe in it. “and 'tis the same principle, which convinces us of the continu'd existence of external objects, when absent from the senses.”

And yet these two beliefs – in the reality of external objects when we are not observing them, and of the reality of cause and effect – are “natural and necessary in the human mind”. How could we function without them?

“How then shall we adjust those principles together? Which of them shall we prefer? Or in case we prefer neither of them, but successively assent to both, as is usual among philosophers, with what confidence can we afterwards usurp that glorious title, when we thus knowingly embrace a manifest contradiction?”

It was exactly this problem that prompted Kant to write the CPR, and make the fundamental move of separating reality into phenomena and noumena instead of mind and matter, and claim that science can only tell us about phenomena. It was the same problem that Kant deals with in a critical section of the CPR called “The Antinomies”, and the modern Hard Problem of Consciousness is another manifestation of the same underlying problem. This was the point where Western philosophy split in two. One path led to Schopenhauer, Hegel and continental philosophy, and the other led to analytic philosophy and materialistic science.

It is very important to understand the context in which Hume and Kant were working. This was at the height of the golden age of materialistic science. Newton's *Principia* had blown the old ways of thinking to smithereens and both H and K were trying to bring the subjective world of consciousness, and therefore the whole of reality, onto a similarly secure footing. Nobody – absolutely nobody – had the slightest inkling that one day we would discover that there is something fundamentally wrong with Newtonian physics – that the *Principia* was not the “correct” description of reality that all serious thinkers of that time has been led to believe that it was.

Now let us imagine that history had played out differently. Let's imagine that physics had advanced at a much more rapid pace and that in the time between Hume's *Treatise* and Kant starting work on the CPR, quantum theory had been discovered. Now, instead of having to find a way to solve Hume's problems in the *Treatise* in the light of the undeniable fact that Newtonian physics is the correct description of physical reality, Kant was trying to solve those problems under an assumption that quantum theory is the correct description of physical reality. And by quantum theory I here mean the first complete mathematical description of QM, which appeared in 1932 in a book called *The Mathematical Foundations of Quantum Mechanics* by John von Neumann. In it, in order to expel the Measurement Problem from the mathematics, von Neumann proposed a conscious observer outside of the physical/quantum system in order to collapse the wave function – to get us from the mathematics to experienced reality.

In the real history, these philosophers were dealing with a physical model which matched the phenomenal world of “normal” material objects. That was what set the problem up. In the imaginary history the situation is completely different – here science provides a physical model which radically diverges from the phenomenal-material world. Instead of being a world of normal objects, it is the world

of the evolving wave-function – the multiverse of MWI or the contents of Schroedinger’s box. A world in a superposition (whatever that is).

If you think about it this way, then Hume’s problem vanishes into thin air. He can now map physics onto reality without any difficulty at all. We can simply say that the unobserved world – the “real world” which is out there “beyond the veil of perception” is literally the world described by the equations of physics. It is the uncollapsed wave function where quantum systems can be in multiple states. When an/the observer interacts with this noumenal world then the wave function collapses, and from this complex system emerges what we call “consciousness”. And it is in that world that normal material objects exist.

So there is the answer to your question. That is how the first two principles connect, and in doing so it provides a beautiful, concise solution to both the Hard Problem of Consciousness and the Measurement Problem in quantum metaphysics. One solution to both problems, and this solution offers a means of bringing the two halves of Western philosophy back together again. It solves Hume’s problem in a way that does not lead to schism.

This is not the whole of my theory. There is much more, and it all fits together. But you need to understand this part first.

Also the term ‘Epistemic Structural Realism’ is usually used to refer to something like the idea that “We cannot know the individuals that instantiate the structure of the world but we can know their properties and relations.” (See [Structural Realism \(Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy\)](#)) - in other words it is a view that is very *modest* about our knowledge of objective reality, saying that while we can incrementally understand the mathematical structure of the physical world, we need to recognise that our basic ontologies will evolve alongside our best scientific theories. This modesty seems to conflict with your claims to know about praeternatural phenomena.

I hope I have now answered that question. I am using the term ESR to mean exactly the same thing that this encyclopaedia entry describes. I am indeed saying that all we need to know about noumenal reality is its structure – and that’s all we do know. That structure is the mathematical description of the universe which is provided by quantum theory. What we do not know is upon what this structure is instantiated. What is it “made of”? We can’t know, and it doesn’t matter. All that actually matters is that the structure is real. So we might as well go beyond ESR and just say that whatever this thing is, it isn’t normal matter and it isn’t mind either, so we might as well just call it neutral. This leads to neutral monism and/or Ontic Structural Realism (structure is all that is real).

But then I see that you are saying that science is not the route by which we gain knowledge of praeternatural phenomena. But this leaves me very confused. I thought you said we need recognise the ‘epistemic privilege of science’? **What I want to know then is: if we are not using science to gain knowledge of the praeternatural, what is your epistemology of this realm?** I don’t think just referring to ‘direct experience’ is very helpful here. The whole of modern epistemology since Descartes is about why appealing to ‘direct experience’ is not by itself a valid epistemology (because of sceptical arguments, for example).

From the forthcoming book:

The need for a new *epistemological* paradigm

Thomas Nagel believes that we must identify teleological processes additional to psychogenesis in order to construct a new systematic theory of the natural order. All praeternatural phenomena are teleological. That is to say – if they exist, then they must be teleological, because they either require the quantum dice to be loaded in order to produce a specific outcome. They are processes which are guided by a goal, such as the evolution of conscious life, the expression of free will, the experience of synchronicity or the unfolding of karma.

Let us consider the epistemic status of four categories of phenomena that should be categorised as praeternatural if real:

1: Psychogenesis is knowable through science and reason. Subjective experience is relevant only to establish that consciousness is real, and therefore in need of an explanation. Having established this, we can justify belief in psychogenesis by applying pure reason to the empirical results of quantum physics.

2: Free will can only be known subjectively, but it is the most mundane variety of experience imaginable. We are all familiar with the subjective experience of metaphysical freedom. In the context of the idea I've described, I wonder why anybody would choose to believe that humans lack free will. Why would you believe your choices are entirely the result of the mindless laws of physics and pure objective randomness if there is no good reason to? Why not believe your choices actually matter? Why not believe your intuition is correct in this specific case? The reasoning here is reminiscent of Pascal's Wager – if it is true then you've gained something, in this case because your choices and your life have some sort of meaning – and if it is false then what have you lost?

Footnote: It is worth emphasising that the agent of free will is a human mind, not the Participating Observer. A human mind is a phenomenon which emerges from the complex system formed by the interaction between the PO and an animal brain. The PO on its own can't have free will, because it doesn't have any reasons, and doesn't have any choices to make. Free will, like consciousness itself, requires both the PO and a living brain.

3: Synchronicity is knowable only through subjective experiences which by definition seem extremely unusual to those who experience them. According to Jung, synchronistic processes are going on all around us, all the time. They are as integral to reality as normal causality is – they are Yin to the Yang of normal physical causality. Yang is the expansive part of the dynamic process of the unfolding of reality, which intuitively resembles the deterministic evolution of the wave function. Yin is the contractive part, which resembles wave function collapse. Our experience of synchronicity is restricted to individual events, but in theoretical terms it continually loads the quantum dice, at least anywhere in the cosmos which is causally connected to conscious life. The great many people who have never experienced synchronicity must choose between skepticism and faith, and we can't expect anybody to have faith in anything at all. I personally have no doubt that synchronicity is real, based entirely on subjective experience. That can justify my belief to me, but there is no reason why a skeptic should care what Jung, myself or anybody else claims to have experienced.

4: All other alleged phenomena praeternatural phenomena, including karma, ESP, telepathy, out of body experiences, near death experiences, divinatory systems, Aleister Crowley's "magick" and

the will God or gods, could only possibly be known through direct subjective experience. They therefore fall into the same category as synchronicity, or perhaps in terms of Jung's system it might be better to say that all of them are manifestations of synchronicity, or they are all reducible to it. Here "synchronicity" refers to the praeternatural as the entire form of causality we're talking about (some people will say we shouldn't call this "causality" at all, but at the very least its *something like* causality).

Not much of this sits comfortably with Nagel's new natural order. Perhaps it is a failure of imagination on my part, but I don't see why any of these things should be governed by laws. Maybe something along those lines could apply to karma, but even though "every moral action produces an equal and opposite reaction" sounds a bit like a law, there's no way to reduce moral judgements to mathematics. The rest of it just doesn't seem to be the sort of thing that could be governed by laws at all. I would not rule out the possibility of some kind of non-mathematical praeternatural laws, but I struggle to imagine how they could work. If free will is governed by a law then in what sense is it free? Libertarian free will makes no sense if physical reality is a causally closed system, and if there is a non-physical component of the system which is also entirely governed by laws then surely the same problems apply. Is the will any more free because the applicable law governs how the quantum dice are loaded rather than how the wave function evolves? If any of these phenomena exist, then my expectation is that they aren't fully governed by, or fully describable with, mathematical laws or other naturalistic principles, and they probably aren't amenable to scientific enquiry at all.

No doubt some believers in of various phenomena in this fourth category will be disappointed with my stance. Some people have spent their whole lives and careers in search of empirical evidence of praeternatural phenomena of one sort or another. Some even believe they've found it, and that the skeptics are just stubbornly refusing to accept it because their flawed metaphysical assumptions rule it out a priori. My hope is that this is a situation where we can agree to disagree – to let science be science, let mysticism be mysticism, and stop trying to extend the reach of one of them into the legitimate territory of the other. It is entirely possible that some of these phenomena are real, but they can't be scientifically tamed, will never be fully understood, and there will always be people who never experience them and therefore remain highly skeptical. Our goal is the westernisation of ecocivilisation, not the establishment of a new mystical metanarrative that everybody is expected to believe in, as we might expect them to believe in science. There needs to be a place for both skeptics and mystics on the path to ecocivilisation. We cannot afford a continuation of an avoidable ideological conflict between science and spirituality. We need both of them.

Where does this leave naturalism? It seems to me that if your goal is to preserve naturalism then instead of looking for a large number of examples of this sort of thing, you might be better off hoping we can restrict it to just the one we have the most objective justification for believing in. Even free will goes beyond naturalism, because it is intentional. It seems to me that the most naturalistic position still available is that psychogenesis was the sole example of a praeternatural process, even though that would be a unique goal-seeking process of exactly the sort Nagel wants to avoid. Perhaps we can think of psychogenesis as marking the boundary between natural and praeternatural, but I don't think naturalism can be stretched any further.

[section snipped because this post is already too long]

What could not be clearer is that there are some huge questions around here, that we do not have much in the way of answers, and that as things stand we don't even have any idea now much more objective progress we will ever make. I think that the new paradigm needed to construct an ecocivilisation cannot be the new naturalistic paradigm Nagel is looking for, even though his radical proposal that the evolution of consciousness was teleological is basically correct. What we actually need is a new *epistemological* paradigm – one which explicitly takes *skepticism* very seriously, but which reaches beyond naturalism.

1 Like

[Asimong](#) 40 April 3, 2025, 9:04am

JonahW:

But then I see that you are saying that science is not the route by which we gain knowledge of praeternatural phenomena. But this leaves me very confused. I thought you said we need recognise the ‘epistemic privilege of science’? What I want to know then is: if we are not using science to gain knowledge of the praeternatural, what is your epistemology of this realm? I don't think just referring to ‘direct experience’ is very helpful here. The whole of modern epistemology since Descartes is about why appealing to ‘direct experience’ is not by itself a valid epistemology (because of sceptical arguments, for example).

I follow most of your comments here, [@JonahW](#) but at this point I feel you may have missed something from [@GeoffDann](#). As I see it, science may be “epistemically privileged” (not terms I use) from the point of view where personal meaning is systematically excluded. And I do see that as (usually) a reasonable basis for common ground about what “objectively” can be known. On the other hand, my reading of Geoff's “praeternatural” is all to do with meaning – teleology even sometimes – and can include personally meaningful “coincidence” or “synchronicity”. These are areas in which we cannot gain knowledge through science, simply in virtue of the scientific method itself. And if we are dealing with events endowed with personal meaning, the only epistemology that I see as possible is one that takes full account of direct personal experience. And I don't mean personal experience as personal interpretation of “objective” events (like NVC “observation”) but the direct experience of significance, of meaningfulness, of purpose in life, and that kind of thing. Try it, anyway...

(p.s. I wrote this before seeing Geoff's reply of a few minutes ago)

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 41 April 3, 2025, 9:07am

Asimong:

I follow most of your comments here, [@JonahW](#) but at this point I feel you may have missed something from [@GeoffDann](#). As I see it, science may be “epistemically privileged” (not terms I use) from the point of view where personal meaning is systematically excluded. And I do see that as (usually) a reasonable basis for common ground about what “objectively” can be known. On the other hand, my reading of Geoff’s “praeternatural” is all to do with meaning – teleology even sometimes – and can include personally meaningful “coincidence” or “synchronicity”. These are areas in which we cannot gain knowledge through science, simply in virtue of the scientific method itself. And if we are dealing with events endowed with personal meaning, the only epistemology that I see as possible is one that takes full account of direct personal experience. And I don’t mean personal experience as personal interpretation of “objective” events (like NVC “observation”) but the direct experience of significance, of meaningfulness, of purpose in life, and that kind of thing. Try it, anyway...

Yes. You get it. I’d be interested to here what you think of that long post above.

[Asimong](#) 42 April 3, 2025, 9:34am

GeoffDann:

Our goal is the westernisation of ecocivilisation, not the establishment of a new mystical metanarrative that everybody is expected to believe in, as we might expect them to believe in science. There needs to be a place for both skeptics and mystics on the path to ecocivilisation. We cannot afford a continuation of an avoidable ideological conflict between science and spirituality. We need both of them.

The whole (perhaps over-) long post makes sense to me, though I duck out of opinion about the areas of the history of philosophy which I either never studied in depth or don’t remember. It’s this quoted quote that I’d like to highlight. This feels like the core of something, and this leads in my mind to the desire to find common understanding around the matter of, what is our goal exactly? Maybe “we” don’t share a common goal — if you extend the “we” out to humanity, I am sure that the larger “we” doesn’t share a common conscious goal.

This is where I’m inclined to bring back my ideas around [ontological commoning](#) and my tentative [methodology for that](#). Can we, perhaps, ask for the goal of each person here to be expressed as a story in which you really believe? That involves not trying to argue over which story is “right”; but instead, dispassionately examining the belief systems underneath the stories (which are themselves likely to differ) and thence to the ontologies in which the belief systems are expressed. I’d like to work with people on establishing just enough common ontology to constitute a “communicative commons”.

1 Like

[GeoffDamm](#) 43 April 3, 2025, 9:58am

(perhaps over-) long

So far you are the only person on this forum who appears to have understood me properly. The post is long because I am expecting potential readers to not have any much (or any) knowledge of the historical things I am talking about, and without that it seems very difficult for people to believe that a new way forwards is even possible, let alone likely. Almost nobody seems to understand why the schism in Western philosophy happened, or why it is so important.

Asimong:

Maybe “we” don’t share a common goal — if you extend the “we” out to humanity, I am sure that the larger “we” doesn’t share a common conscious goal.

My book is addressed to a Western audience. I could not have written it any other way, because the problems it describes are largely the result of Western history. I also don’t have enough knowledge about other cultures. Additionally, since the global order is what is falling apart first, our goal has to be to sort our own house out first, and that means both in terms of politics and economics at the national level, and ideology in general at the level of the whole of Western society. At the moment there is no trace of a common conscious goal – that has been completely destroyed. It does exist outside the West (very obviously in the Islamic world, but also in China, to take just two examples).

This is where I’m inclined to bring back my ideas around [ontological commoning](#) and my tentative [methodology for that](#). Can we, perhaps, ask for the goal of each person here to be expressed as a story in which you really believe? That involves not trying to argue over which story is “right”; but instead, dispassionately examining the belief systems underneath the stories (which are themselves likely to differ) and thence to the ontologies in which the belief systems are expressed. I’d like to work with people on establishing just enough common ontology to constitute a “communicative commons”.

It sounds like what you are trying to do is exactly what my book attempts to do. Another quote:

The transition from civilisation to ecocivilisation will require ecologists, economists, scientists, mystics and all sorts of other people to be able to understand each other considerably better than they do now. This can only be made possible by some sort of over-arching epistemic system or agreement that provides shared understanding of the appropriate relationships between ecology, physics, economics, politics, ethics, the mystical and anything else that can’t be left out. To misquote Chief Brody – we’re going to need a bigger language game.

Our methods are different, but the basic idea and purpose are exactly the same.

1 Like

[JonahW](#) 44 April 3, 2025, 3:14pm

Thanks for this exchange, this really helps clarify for me what your - and Simon's - view is on this. I think I understand this view quite well, it's one I've considered over the years in a number of different ways. But it's a view that I don't currently share. And the reason is quite simple - as I said earlier, simply referring to 'direct experience' is not a theoretically viable epistemology.

In my view, the only theoretically satisfying epistemology is that of science. Creatively come up with a theory. Check the theory against both direct experience (yes it's part of the process), and for consistency with other theories we already hold.

One way to see this is notice that if you try to spell out *in what way* direct experience is an *alternative* to scientific epistemology you are already doing science. You will say something like - there is an entity or process, called an experience, or free will, or whatever - and there is a different process or mechanism, like perception, by which I access that entity or process. Now this is a scientific hypothesis (part of cognitive science, in this case) which can itself be tested both against experience (does it actually feel that way?) and against other theories (is this consistent with what we know about the brain, for example).

So I dispute the premise that science has nothing to say about personal meaning. This is precisely where Vervaeke, UTOK, Dempsey and others come in - in clarifying how taking a scientific approach doesn't at all mean neglecting dimensions of personal meaning and direct experience, in its full spiritual dimensions.

As I say, this to me, is the only satisfactory way I've come across of seeing our all our experiences fit together in a coherent theory. But I'm very open to other approaches, and happy to have the debate. I just don't think deciding between these extremely difficult theoretical questions is crucial to defining paths to a Second Renaissance.

I do think there is something quite central that's needed here about *combining* science and spirituality (for want of a better word). I think that's what you (Geoff, Simon) and I have in common here. But there are different ways to do the combining, involving metaphysical differences, which while important, are not *critical* from a practical point of view. What is critical is defining the role of spirituality in processes of cultural renewal, and how these interact with existing, science-dominated, institutions and governance structures.

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 45 April 3, 2025, 4:55pm

JonahW:

Thanks for this exchange, this really helps clarify for me what your - and Simon's - view is on this. I think I understand this view quite well, it's one I've considered over the years in a number of

different ways. But it's a view that I don't currently share. And the reason is quite simple - as I said earlier, simply referring to 'direct experience' is not a theoretically viable epistemology.

I don't understand. I have direct experience of synchronicity, to the point where denying it would be a total absurdity. I *know* it is real, and I know other people know it is real. I also know how it works, and what it is for. I know *all* of that because of what I have experienced. That is a perfectly viable epistemology **for me**. It is no good for you. So to find a way forwards we need to take this as far as science and reason can take us, which is to establish why synchronicity is at least *possible*. Unlike the feeding of the 5000, or Young Earth Creationism, you have no justification whatsoever for telling me that my subjective knowledge of synchronicity (and other things) isn't valid. But because you are a materialist - you have no choice but to tell me that synchronicity can't exist. This isn't because there's anything wrong with my epistemology. It's because there is something wrong with your metaphysics.

The only reasonable way forwards is to make clear what is possible, and come to an epistemological agreement to disagree. I have no problem with you being skeptical about synchronicity - the last thing I want is to demand people believe things based on other people's experience. That's why Principle 6 of the NED is:

6: We cannot expect people to believe things (*any* things) based solely on *other people's* subjective lived experiences. There will always be skeptics about any alleged praeternatural phenomena (possibly psychogenesis excepted) and their right to skepticism must be respected.

In my view, the only theoretically satisfying epistemology is that of science.

That is scientism, and it needs to be eradicated. You think this because you are a materialist and for no other reason.

Do you at least understand why I think scientism must be eradicated?

Creatively come up with a theory. Check the theory against both direct experience (yes it's part of the process), and for consistency with other theories we already hold.

But praeternatural phenomena resist scientific investigation by definition. You are ruling something out because science can't find it, even though science has no theoretical means of finding it. This cannot be part of the new paradigm. It is a major source of our ideological problems. It kills genuine spirituality stone dead.

One way to see this is notice that if you try to spell out *in what way* direct experience is an *alternative* to scientific epistemology you are already doing science.

No, that's philosophy.

You will say something like - there is an entity or process, called an experience, or free will, or whatever - and there is a different process or mechanism, like perception, by which I access that entity or process. Now this is a scientific hypothesis (part of cognitive science, in this case) which

can itself be tested both against experience (does it actually feel that way?) and against other theories (is this consistent with what we know about the brain, for example).

You cannot test synchronicity. It does not follow laws. If you try testing for it, then it won't happen. That is absolutely par for this course. It is how this stuff works. This isn't science. It's **magic**. Real magic. Magic is real. Do you understand what I am saying? **We live in a magical reality.**

But I'm very open to other approaches

Really? I have tried pretty hard, and so far I'm not getting very far.

But there are different ways to do the combining, involving metaphysical differences, which while important, are not critical from a practical point of view.

They are absolutely critical and this discussion is proving it. You think what you are posting isn't a problem. I think it is the *biggest problem of them all*.

What is critical is defining the role of spirituality in processes of cultural renewal

But how can you do any such thing when you've got no idea what real spirituality actually is?

The Occult is real, Jonah. I don't just *believe* that. I know it. It is the most important thing in my life, by a huge margin. By comparison, *nothing else matters*.

You can know this too, but your path to this knowledge is blocked by a false belief in materialism. By choosing to believe magic isn't real, it can't manifest for you. You are sovereign over your own "channel" of reality. What you choose to believe dictates what is possible in your personal interface with reality within the limits of the praeternatural. Believing in the hypernatural doesn't make it any more possible.

None of this makes sense to materialists. For them, the first step is necessarily to reach an understanding of why materialism cannot possibly be true. You have to *know* this. Any trace of doubt is a show-stopper.

[GeoffDann](#) 46 April 3, 2025, 5:24pm

Jonah...sorry missed this bit

So I dispute the premise that science has nothing to say about personal meaning. This is precisely where Vervaeke, UTOK, Dempsey and others come in - in clarifying how taking a scientific approach doesn't at all mean neglecting dimensions of personal meaning and direct experience, in its full spiritual dimensions.

The problem isn't science at all. I am a hardcore scientific realist. The problem is scientism, and we really should explore this now, because you are scientistic. I don't mean that as an insult – it is just an assessment of the things you are posting in this thread. You are in no position to clarify the proper relationship between science and spirituality, because your belief system rules out the Real Thing based on a fundamental logical mistake.

If you actually believed it was possible that magic is real, don't you think this might be a bit important to 2R? Literally, *nothing is more important*.

I was an evangelical materialist for 20 years. I know exactly how materialists think. Although I've not got much idea what you are thinking now, because when I was a materialist I certainly never ran into anybody who was capable of explaining to me what I am explaining to you right now.

EDIT: I should have said that the only reason you're talking about whether science can provide meaning is because you do not understand that other things can provide meaning on a scale you can't even imagine. I don't *need* science to provide any meaning, and neither should anybody else.

[dvdjsph](#) 47 April 3, 2025, 5:27pm

What could someone who is scientistic do to know for themselves if you are right or wrong? Based on what you say, this is a logical mistake, so how can it be reasoned through correctly?

[GeoffDann](#) 49 April 3, 2025, 5:31pm

dvdjsph:

What could someone who is scientistic do to know for themselves if you are right or wrong? Based on what you say, this is a logical mistake, so how can it be reasoned through correctly?

I was once a materialist myself (and Dawkins' forum admin). Since I found out how wrong that is, I've spent a great deal of time trying to find the best way to explain to materialists (most of whom are also scientistic) how to escape from the mind trap.

That is why I posted this 5000 word essay explaining it: [The Hard Problem of Consciousness and 2R - General - Second Renaissance Forum](#)

I posted it especially for Jonah. He has not responded to it.

[rogadair](#) 50 April 3, 2025, 5:37pm

Will check out the H3UNI link. Are you in Scotland too?

[GeoffDann](#) 51 April 3, 2025, 7:42pm

Jonah

I don't know if this will help, but it might. It is a different way of explaining what the praeternatural is, how it works, what it can do, and what this discussion is really about, in all sorts of ways. Most of all it is about how we need to teach people how to think for themselves instead of following the flock.

[Jonathan Livingston Seagull - Wikipedia](#)

[Asimong](#) 52 April 4, 2025, 7:45am

Hmm. Thanks for bringing up the seagull book, as it gives me a chance to air an opinion that I have always had a visceral dislike of it, as it seems to me one of the peaks of individualist ideology. Yes, for sure, as with Jung, we need to individuate out of the traditionalist retro-collective mindset and culture, where everyone has their place (like in the third verse of [this hymn](#)).

Though I have a visceral dislike of the Seagull, I remain amused by [Brian \(Life of\)](#) whose message strikes me as similar.

But ... isn't this what "modernity" is meant to be all about anyway? You may say, and I would tend to agree, that many people haven't opened up from Kegan's 3rd to 4th order consciousness, and for them, Jonathan Livingston may be the right thing at the right time. And though it's tempting to put "us" above "them", I cringe at the presumptiveness, the *hubris* of it all. As Kegan is at pains to point out, living in 5th order consciousness is **not better** than 3rd order consciousness. It's just different, and adapted to different circumstances.

If you take Kegan's model as reasonable, that is. I'm open to the critique that it is based on "Western" culture and society, with its current disorientingly fast complexification. Other very different cultures may well have different orders of consciousness, stages, or whatever.

Having said that, I see "us" right here as people who have, by and large, grasped the challenges of complexity, and so we don't need the Seagull or Brian to revise that. I see us as aligned with the ideas of transition from individualism to a different kind of collective being, one that does not erase differences between people but builds them into a rich, multi-faceted, multidimensional reality of multiple perspectives — but not descending into warring factions.

[Asimong](#) 53 April 4, 2025, 7:56am

JonahW:

So I dispute the premise that science has nothing to say about personal meaning. This is precisely where Vervaeke, UTOK, Dempsey and others come in - in clarifying how taking a scientific approach doesn't at all mean neglecting dimensions of personal meaning and direct experience, in its full spiritual dimensions.

But, [@JonahW](#), I interpret you as saying two contradictory things here. I completely agree that "taking a scientific approach doesn't at all mean neglecting dimensions of personal meaning", but would add that the dimensions of personal meaning do not (in any way) come from within the scientific method. But then I don't understand your first sentence here. If I can add nuance to your first sentence, I would say that science, in its own terms, has nothing substantial to say about personal meaning. If you are still disputing this, let's have an open debate, if you like, but aimed towards dialogue and mutual understanding.

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 54 April 4, 2025, 8:50am

Asimong:

Hmm. Thanks for bringing up the seagull book, as it gives me a chance to air an opinion that I have always had a visceral dislike of it, as it seems to me one of the peaks of individualist ideology. Yes, for sure, as with Jung, we need to individuate out of the traditionalist retro-collective mindset and culture, where everyone has their place (like in the third verse of [this hymn](#)).

I can understand how it doesn't sit at all comfortably with Quakerism. Very much the other end of the scale in terms of spirituality.

Though I have a visceral dislike of the Seagull, I remain amused by [Brian \(Life of\)](#) whose message strikes me as similar.

The funniest film ever made, in my opinion.

Your post is really about the difference between individualistic sorts of spirituality and collective sorts. I think clearly we are going to need allow space for both. For me it has been entirely an individual journey, and it could not have been any other way, for there was no teacher to teach me and no group for me to be part of. I can fully understand how for other people it is an essentially collective process.

I think this is an area where it should be possible to agree to disagree, without this leading to any serious problems.

I don't think we can aim for a final state of enlightened collective being. I don't think humans are capable of that, at least not at the scale larger than a monastery, and monasteries are intentionally isolated from the rest of society for exactly these reasons.

[Martin](#) 55 April 4, 2025, 9:11am

GeoffDann:

The problem isn't science at all. I am a hardcore scientific realist. The problem is scientism, and we really should explore this now, because you are scientistic. I don't mean that as an insult – it is just an assessment of the things you are posting in this thread. You are in no position to clarify the proper relationship between science and spirituality, because your belief system rules out the Real Thing based on a fundamental logical mistake.

There you go - you're a closet postmodernist :-). Which is not a bad thing...

[GeoffDann](#) 56 April 4, 2025, 9:16am

Martin (Momcilo):

There you go - you're a closet postmodernist :-). Which is not a bad thing...

There is no anti-realism in it.

[Martin](#) 57 April 4, 2025, 9:19am

Occultism can be considered anti-realist. Not that I object...

[GeoffDann](#) 58 April 4, 2025, 9:29am

Asimong:

But, [@JonahW](#) , I interpret you as saying two contradictory things here. I completely agree that “taking a scientific approach doesn’t at all mean neglecting dimensions of personal meaning”, but would add that the dimensions of personal meaning do not (in any way) come from within the scientific method. But then I don’t understand your first sentence here. If I can add nuance to your first sentence, I would say that science, in its own terms, has nothing substantial to say about personal meaning. If you are still disputing this, let’s have an open debate, if you like, but aimed towards dialogue and mutual understanding.

Yes, this is exactly what is needed.

My position is exactly the same as Simon’s. Scientific knowledge is knowledge about the structure of a mind-external reality, and it is restricted to the sort of knowledge which can be reduced to natural laws (or the laws of physics). It tells about what is true or not true of that structure. The whole purpose is to avoid and eliminate the subjective, which includes all value judgements. It provides no information about what is morally, aesthetically or spiritually valuable. Science is of immense practical value, but provides no meaning whatsoever.

What is most important in this discussion is that the only reason you are even attempting to justify the idea that science can provide meaning is that your epistemology, which is derived from illogical metaphysics, allows no scope for meaning coming from anywhere else. The praeternatural doesn’t fit in your materialistic worldview, so it can’t provide any meaning for you.

And yet that is exactly where all genuine meaning can be found.

Let’s have that open debate. You have a PhD not only in the Hard Problem of Consciousness, but in the scope for language-based solutions to it. There can’t be any other solutions to it, because it is clearly a *conceptual* problem. I have provided a detailed opening position – and I have no more than a lowly BA. If there is a problem with my position, you ought to be exceptionally well-equipped to identify it. And yet you have chosen not to do so.

You said before that consciousness is the biggest scientific challenge of our age. It is not. As things stand, there is no meaningful scientific definition of consciousness. In other words, it isn’t even a scientific challenge at all. It’s actually got nothing to do with materialistic science.

Which is exactly what Thomas Nagel’s book is about. The problem is...until you’ve accepted that materialism is incoherent, Nagel’s book seems rather pointless.

[GeoffDann](#) 59 April 4, 2025, 9:33am

Martin (Momcilo):

Occultism can be considered anti-realist. Not that I object...

No. You're missing my point entirely, What I am saying is that Occultism is *not* anti-realist. I am saying that it is entirely consistent with scientific realism (it does not contradict it) and that it is real and can be known subjectively.

If I was just saying the Occult is real then there wouldn't be anything particularly notable about my position. What I am actually saying is that you can be a hardcore scientific realist and a magical realist at the same time. Most people assume this involves some sort of cognitive dissonance. I am saying that the opposite is true – that I arrived at this position as a result of diligently *eliminating* cognitive dissonance. The worldview I am describing isn't self-contradictory – rather it is a grand synthesis. This is neither anti-realist nor postmodern. It's *something else*.

Put it this way – given that postmodernism has such a chequered history, and has made so many enemies, what sense is there in calling my position “postmodern”? How is this helping 2R? Surely we should call it something else, to indicate we've learned the lessons of the failure of postmodernism and have moved on to better things?

Postmodernism is a toxic brand.

[Martin](#) 60 April 4, 2025, 9:42am

GeoffDann:

No. You're missing my point entirely, What I am saying is that Occultism is *not* anti-realist. I am saying that it is entirely consistent with scientific realism (it does not contradict it) and that it is real and can be known subjectively.

If I was just saying the Occult is real then there wouldn't be anything particularly notable about my position. What I am actually saying is that you can be a hardcore scientific realist and a magical realist at the same time. Most people assume this involves some sort of cognitive dissonance. I am saying that the opposite is true – that I arrived at this position as a result of diligently *eliminating* cognitive dissonance. The worldview I am describing isn't self-contradictory – rather it is a grand synthesis. This is neither anti-realist nor postmodern. It's *something else*.

In your framework anti-realism cannot exist. Maybe if I were to suggest that mysticism or occultism are constructed by individuals and cultures, and that they have no objective existence outside of human interpretation, then this would move into anti-realism.

So we have to accept that your subjective experience is objective - otherwise we're anti-realists.

[GeoffDann](#) 61 April 4, 2025, 9:46am

Martin (Momcilo):

In your framework anti-realism cannot exist.

Anti-realism *means* “X cannot exist”.

In this case “X” is a mind-external reality. This is ontologically denied by subjective idealists, and epistemologically denied by postmodernists.

Maybe if I were to suggest that mysticism or occultism are constructed by individuals and cultures, and that they have no objective existence outside of human interpretation, then this would move into anti-realism.

Yes, that would be anti-realism. My position is very carefully specified in the opening post. I’m not sure what you don’t understand about it? What isn’t clear?

So we have to accept that your subjective experience is objective - otherwise we’re anti-realists.

Absolutely not. I think it might help if you go back and re-read the opening post, because you’ve misunderstood my position in a fairly major way. This post suggests you’ve got no idea what I’m proposing.

[Martin](#) 62 April 4, 2025, 9:55am

GeoffDann:

The Occult is real, Jonah. I don’t just *believe* that. I know it. It is the most important thing in my life, by a huge margin. By comparison, *nothing else matters*.

I’m referring to this - just because you believe in it or say that it’s not only a belief but your personal knowledge - doesn’t make it objectively real. It might be all in your mind. Now, if I say so - according to your framework - I’m an anti-realist because objective reality is what you say it is.

But anyway, I don’t see any real value in this beyond entertainment. I’d say that some of your views are incoherent.

[Martin](#) 63 April 4, 2025, 10:01am

Also, do you suggest that synchronicity can be explained through quantum entanglement?

[Martin](#) 64 April 4, 2025, 10:08am

GeoffDann:

What I am saying is that Occultism is *not* anti-realist. I am saying that it is entirely consistent with scientific realism (it does not contradict it) and that it is real and can be known subjectively.

While we're at it - if scientifically real is something that's observable, measurable, and testable - then occultism is not real.

But if we decide to exclude empiricism - all sort of things that don't exist are actually real because they don't contradict science - for example non-existing animals or missing planets...

[GeoffDann](#) 65 April 4, 2025, 10:36am

Martin (Momcilo):

I'm referring to this - just because you believe in it or say that it's not only a belief but your personal knowledge - doesn't make it objectively real.

Can I point you in the direction of principles 5 & 6 of my NED?

5: The existence of praeternatural phenomena is consistent with science and reason, but apart from the unique case of psychogenesis, there is no scientific or rational justification for believing in it/them either. The only possible justification for belief is subjective lived experience.

6: We cannot expect people to believe things (*any* things) based solely on *other people's* subjective lived experiences. There will always be skeptics about any alleged praeternatural phenomena (possibly psychogenesis excepted) and their right to skepticism must be respected.

In other words, there is no point in us arguing about whether or not it is objectively real, because it can only be known subjectively. There is an objective true/false answer, but there is no means of collectivising it in the way scientific knowledge can be collectivised. I can know it is true at the same time as other people have no way of knowing whether or not it is true. That's just the epistemic situation in which we find ourselves. Making this clear is the purpose of the NED.

Do you understand now?

It might be all in your mind.

That is a reasonable position for you. What is not reasonable is that you demand that I accept that it is reasonable for me. It is possible for me to know it is not all in my mind at the same time that it is impossible for me to prove it to anybody else.

I don't see any real value in this beyond entertainment.

It is deadly serious.

I'd say that some of your views are incoherent.

Perhaps we need to review this after this post. Until this point, you haven't understood what my views actually are.

[GeoffDann](#) 66 April 4, 2025, 10:38am

Martin (Momcilo):

Also, do you suggest that synchronicity can be explained through quantum entanglement?

No. I didn't mention quantum entanglement. Synchronicity is a praeternatural phenomena. It is a teleological process linked to the collapse of the wave function, not entanglement. (I don't rule out entanglement having something to do with it, but that is not what I am proposing).

[GeoffDann](#) 67 April 4, 2025, 10:41am

Martin (Momcilo):

While we're at it - if scientifically real is something that's observable, measurable, and testable - then occultism is not real.

No. Scientific realism does not imply that anything which is necessarily outside of scientific knowledge isn't real. That's scientism, not scientific realism.

Science, scientific realism, scientific materialism and scientism are all different things. This book does a very good job at explaining the differences: [The Taboo of Subjectivity: Toward a New Science of Consciousness: Towards a New Science of Consciousness: Amazon.co.uk: Wallace, B. Alan: 9780195173109: Books](#)

But if we decide to exclude empiricism - all sort of things that don't exist are actually real because they don't contradict science - for example non-existing animals or missing planets...

No. Non-scientific things don't become real just because they are non-scientific. You really haven't understood the point of the NED. It is very carefully designed to avoid pretty much all of the points you are raising. It anticipates every single one of them.

[JonahW](#) 68 April 4, 2025, 11:01am

Thanks for this very appropriate reminder of the importance of nuance here, and I admit my last post was probably an overhasty simplification.

The position I am trying to sketch is a sort of middle ground between what [@GeoffDann](#) calls Scientism, and the view that "science has, in its own terms, nothing to say about personal meaning".

Science can tell us not only about the 'physical world' of quantum mechanics, but also the 'cognitive world' of cognitive science - but when done right, cognitive science shows us precisely the limits of a scientific approach that seeks to apply quantification and logic to everything. In general science can tell us the limits of science, and why we *do* sometimes need to have recourse to what we can call 'direct experience' or 'personal meaning' or 'intuition'. An example of this is Kahneman's distinction between System 1 and System 2, and Vervaeke's distinction between propositional knowledge and participatory knowledge (arrived at through cognitive science).

So this is how I end up with a take on the importance of personal and spiritual experience very close to you and [@GeoffDann](#), but my disagreement is just on the underlying epistemology. You and [@GeoffDann](#) may want to say you just 'know' certain things directly, and I can agree with you on those claims. I just add that science can show us how we *know that you know* those things, without resorting to a mysterious new type of epistemology.

(I would like to add for [@GeoffDann](#)'s benefit that I have a full time job and a young family, so please take my slowness in replying sometimes in that context - it's not meant as a slight, or sign of disinterest!)

[dvdjsph](#) 69 April 4, 2025, 11:15am

This whole discussion seems pointless without an agreement on what evidence for the praeternatural would actually look like. For those who don't accept it, what would convince you otherwise? If you had a dream of a family member dying the very moment they were dying halfway across the world, would you call it a coincidence? Would peer-reviewed studies convince you (if yes, then why haven't they yet)? I don't think this is a matter of evidence and rationality - the telescope is available for any priests who would like to peer through it.

[GeoffDann](#) 70 April 4, 2025, 11:21am

JonahW:

You and [@GeoffDann](#) may want to say you just 'know' certain things directly, and I can agree with you on those claims.

But what does this even mean?

You cannot agree with what? You can't agree that it is possible that I know certain things directly? What on Earth could possibly justify such a claim? How can you have any idea what I know directly?

I just add that science can show us how we *know that you know* those things,

NO! You just stepped over a big red line. You have absolutely no justification whatsoever for invoking science as a means of determining whether or how I know about these things. Science has absolutely nothing to say about it. From a scientific point of view, all that can be said is some things are happening in my brain, and we don't know what they mean.

Your epistemology is broken, because your metaphysics are broken. Your entire line of reasoning depends on an a-priori assumption that materialism is true, *which you have not even attempted to defend even though you have a PhD in this exact subject*. Now you are using that unsupportable assumption in an attempt to support entirely illegitimate, scientific claim to knowledge of what is going on in my own subjective experience of reality.

You have no right to do this. One of the central purposes of my NED is to prevent people from doing exactly what you are doing. You don't realise it, but you are stripping all meaning from reality, and you're doing it based on a fundamental conceptual-logical mistake

One thing I think we have established beyond all doubt: **this stuff matters.**

And I obviously acknowledge that you aren't blessed with the sort of free time I am. However, this is increasingly looking like an excuse to avoid looking carefully at what I have consistently pointed out to be the fundamental flaw in your own argument.

[JonahW](#) 71 April 4, 2025, 11:39am

I said 'can' not 'cannot'.

[GeoffDann](#) 72 April 4, 2025, 11:45am

I apologise for misreading that. However, it only applies to the first section of the reply above. I didn't misread your second sentence.

I have spent a lot of time talking to materialists on top of being one myself for 20 years, and the behaviour I am seeing now is typical. You have not engaged at all with my criticism of materialism. I've offered a 5000 word refutation of the founding assumption of your entire belief system, and it is a subject in which you have PhD. I've spent 20 years crafting that refutation, and it is designed to be absolutely watertight.

You've ignored it, and continued to argue based on the assumption materialism is true. I can see no willingness to examine that foundational assumption.

This is the whole problem with materialism. It is a mind-trap. You don't even acknowledge that you aren't engaging with the real argument – instead you've offered the excuse that you are too busy to respond. And tried to insist that materialism should get a free pass “because it is already on the ecosystem map”.

This is after you already chose to send me a message warning me to be more respectful to your belief system, in your capacity as an admin. A clear attempt to use power to influence what I felt able to say.

[GeoffDann](#) 73 April 4, 2025, 11:54am

dvdjsph:

This whole discussion seems pointless without an agreement on what evidence for the praeternatural would actually look like.

Exactly. As currently being conducted, the discussion is utterly futile. That is exactly why I am proposing the NED.

[GeoffDann](#) 74 April 4, 2025, 11:56am

From the book:

The mind-trap: how assumptions shape the debate on consciousness

In the decades since Nagel's famous article was published, a vast amount of literature has been produced regarding the mind-body problem and the status of materialism and physicalism. This might be taken as all the proof anyone needs that the situation is in fact extremely complex, and that you need to have a philosophy PhD to stand any chance of understanding it. An alternative explanation is that there are a lot of materialists, including plenty of influential people, and when they approach this debate they do so *having already concluded that materialism must be true*. I am intimately familiar with this way of thinking: I have been there, done it and bought the t-shirt (actually, as I explain in chapter 8, the t-shirt was free).

I approached the mind-body problem with my conclusion already decided in favour of materialism. I would not have framed it in those terms, but that is what was actually happening, and it is important to understand why. I felt my justification for believing materialism to be true was overwhelming. That consciousness is brain activity seemed to me the only reasonable option available. The only alternative I was aware of was to believe in souls, or that consciousness was something that had somehow been "hanging around" for over 12 billion years, waiting for the first conscious organisms to evolve. Having conclusively rejected this sort of nonsense when I was ten, there was no way I was going to let some philosophical argument suck me back towards that particular plughole.

For me, it wasn't just the lack of a credible alternative that made materialism such a no-brainer. Part of the reason was that so many other people – including pretty much everybody I respected – believed the same thing (or so I assumed). Materialists are well aware of the perils of this sort of groupthink, because they see it all the time in their ideological opponents – believers in religion and other forms of woo: "How could all these people be wrong, especially about something so important?" Materialists assume that their own belief system is immune to this particular pitfall, precisely because it is directly opposed to woo. People don't turn to scientific materialism because it offers any comforting God to look after them, or because it makes promises about an afterlife. They do it because they believe in the power of reason and in backing claims up with empirical evidence. Where is the evidence for souls, or some non-material consciousness? In fact, what is "non-material" even supposed to mean? *On top of all that*, sensible, intelligent, educated, enlightened people everywhere believe that materialism is true. If there really was some simple conceptual-logical problem with it, then we should reasonably expect that this particular group of people, committed as they are to cold, hard reason, would have spotted it aeons ago. Except, of course, any materialist who discovers a serious problem at the conceptual heart of materialism will swiftly cease to be a materialist, thus eliminating themselves from the group of people who materialists think qualify as sensible, intelligent, educated and enlightened. Ex-materialists are treated with suspicion: they may have recently become weak-minded for some reason, or they may be lying about having ever been materialists in the first place.

Materialism is a mind-trap. The problem, as alluded to in the previous chapter, lurks in the exact meaning of the word "material" itself. Materialists, and also many of their opponents, rarely even question what that word means, because it seems so obvious. *Everybody* knows what "the material world" means. In fact it is not so simple. The concept of a material world comes to us via consciousness – the only material world we have any direct knowledge of is the one we directly experience – the one that exists *within* consciousness. Materialism is the claim that only the material world exists, but in this case the concept of material is subtly but decisively different. The material world of materialism isn't the one that exists within consciousness, and it isn't a pre-philosophical

and non-metaphysical concept of a material world either. It is specifically the material world that is presumed to exist *beyond the veil of perception*. No materialist believes that the Big Bang happened in any mind – human or divine. They believe it happened in a self-existing material realm that spent over 12 billion years unconsciously obeying the laws of physics before there was any such thing as a mind.

[dvdjsph](#) 75 April 4, 2025, 12:07pm

When discussing this topic, I like to keep C.S. Peirce’s pragmatic maxim in mind:

Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.

Now, consider this in relation to evidence for the ‘supernatural’ (apologies Geoff but I’ll continue using common terminology). Plenty of researchers have studied this topic and produced what would typically be viewed as such within other domains.

For example:



[Dean Radin](#)

Institute of Noetic Sciences - Cited by 8,348 - parapsychology - consciousness

100% of these studies, and countless others produced by other researchers, have to be deceptive and/or misinterpreted in order for physicalists to have a leg to stand on. Imagine the level of deceptiveness and/or incompetence this would imply in all parties involved in this research.

[GeoffDann](#) 76 April 4, 2025, 12:24pm



[JonahW](#) 77 April 4, 2025, 12:26pm

GeoffDann:

This is after you already chose to send me a message warning me to be more respectful to your belief system, in your capacity as an admin. A clear attempt to use power to influence what I felt able to say.

I really don't have time to discuss this right now, but feel I need to offer a clarification on this last point, which I feel is a misrepresentation of what happened. What I said in my message was "While your ideas seem very interesting and are very welcome here, I've seen a number of occasions where you might easily be interpreted as being disrespectful of other people's views, which is not the kind of atmosphere we want to create here".

I stand by that. I was acting out of what I saw as my responsibility as an admin on this forum, which is to create a place where everyone's views (not just mine or yours) can be heard, and respectfully engaged with. And this is partly because I believe a forum promoting cultural evolution should hold itself to an unusually high standard with regard to interpersonal relationships of all kinds.

That was two weeks ago, and I haven't followed up on that precisely because I've been mindful to allow you to express yourself freely. Since then I've seen others also express concern about for example the 'combative' way you've expressed yourself at times, and I'd appreciate it if you could be mindful of this in future.

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 78 April 4, 2025, 12:34pm

JonahW:

I stand by that. I was acting out of what I saw as my responsibility as an admin on this forum,

But it just happened to also involve using your moderator status to attempt to influence me into being more respectful explicitly towards your own belief system, which I was and still am claiming to be both (a) incoherent and (b) extremely damaging and incompatible with the project 2R being successful.

It was an abuse of power, Jonah. Only a small one, but that's what it was.

And this is partly because I believe a forum promoting cultural evolution should hold itself to an unusually high standard with regard to interpersonal relationships of all kinds.

I agree with that, and I wish to emphasise that I hold no ill-will towards you. I am not angry, I don't think anything less of you as a person, but I believe your belief system belongs to the old paradigm and I am committed to its eventual removal from Western ideological systems. I can't compromise on that. I am not going to stop attacking materialism, with all the ferocity you can currently see. Put bluntly, I see materialism as akin to a *cult* – a very large cult, but in effect the same sort of thing. I am an ex-evangeliser of that cult, and you are asking me to be more respectful towards it. I refuse.

Since then I've seen others also express concern about for example the 'combative' way you've expressed yourself at times, and I'd appreciate it if you could be mindful of this in future.

I think the admins of this forum need to have a private discussion about whether or not you should be in a position to moderate my comments with respect to this issue. You are not a neutral, and I have no intention of backing down. I will abide by any rules or instructions I am made aware of by the rest of the admin team.

[JamesBaker](#) 79 April 7, 2025, 7:57pm

I've scanned through this thread with my mod hat on, and the primary advice I'd offer is specifically about the use of "you statements" and the impact those tend to have. Starting sentences with "You are,"

“You think,” “You don’t,” “You aren’t,” “You have not,” “You’ve ignored,” “You have no right,” etc tends to not go over very well in my experience, and I believe this is because claims of “you blank” do something I call “reaching over the net” (into someone else’s territory, creating a sense of “foul play”) by framing a story/interpretation claim as if it were an objective truth.

We often get by just fine without this distinction when we have no reason to disagree about many observations and claims we make in daily life: Saying e.g. “Stocks are down today” generally has no need of an “I statement” qualifier like “I believe” or “I think” because we don’t expect any disagreement about easily observable fact-like things. And if I were mistaken in saying that, someone responding “actually, stocks are back up now” is not perceived as combative because we’re both observing something external to us and we share our truth-seeking.

Whenever we start making “you statements” about other people though, particularly when we are aware of any noticeable chance of disagreement about our claims, I’d say we run the risk not only of making a claim they disagree with but of creating a sense of aggression or disrespect when we don’t signal that we’re aware of the perspectival frame of our perspective.

So whenever we make a “you statement” and keep going (without making allowances for how our assumption might be contested), we need to be aware that if the recipient doesn’t feel seen/heard/understood and agree with it, nothing past that is going fruitful because they’ll need to stop and contest the objectivity of the frame before addressing the disagreement. Like the proverbial “when did you stop beating your wife?” question, defensiveness often accompanies the need to identify an assumption/claim that seems like it’s “baked in” to the language used, and I think gives rise to stories like “they’re not respecting me as a person” all the way to “gaslighting” or “frame control”.

I believe that making this specific “you- vs I-” language-based reframing, in order to signal friendliness and same-sidedness by demonstrating perspective-taking capacity, would probably dissolve a majority of the sense of conflict I see in this thread. (I’ll come back later to touch on moderation and power)

2 Likes

[GeoffDann](#) 80 April 7, 2025, 8:17pm

JamesBaker:

I believe that making this specific “you- vs I-” language-based reframing, in order to signal friendliness and same-sidedness by demonstrating perspective-taking capacity, would probably dissolve a majority of the sense of conflict I see in this thread. (I’ll come back later to touch on moderation and power)

Hi James

OK, I’m happy to take all that on board. However, I must point out that the conflict runs much deeper than that. There’s no way to resolve this through improved personal relationships, because there is an underlying ideological conflict that is completely unavoidable.

This thread from this morning nails exactly what is going – see my exchange with Terry: [Connected Community Conversations - General - Second Renaissance Forum](#)

It is absolutely essential, to avoid further conflict, that Jonah responds to my 5000 word refutation of materialism: [The Hard Problem of Consciousness and 2R - General - Second Renaissance Forum](#). I posted that specifically to avoid what has actually happened, but it needed engagement from Jonah.

[JamesBaker](#) 81 April 7, 2025, 10:50pm

Geoff I'm going to push back on your "essential" claim, but first let me contextualize my usage of the word "conflict":

I personally like to use the word "conflict" to mean the feeling of activation that one gets when a difference threatens something that we value and our sympathetic nervous system kicks into gear with some "fight or flight" or "activation" or "trigger" state shift physiologically. I recognize that this is my own idiosyncratic definition and usage, but I like having a word that contrasts with "difference" which I can use to define as a subset of conflict where difference can feel just fine and conflict adds the "and that's not okay!" activation.

So now in my vocabulary, in the context of creating and holding a healthy forum space together here, I'm all for "difference without conflict" wherever and whenever it shows up. In contrast, conflict that shows up as interpersonal feelings of wrongness is not in itself "wrong" or to be avoided but, when it shows up, is a signal to pop up/out to the relational layer, notice and name what is going on, and attempt to re-connect our interpersonal security before we can productively engage back on the object/topical layer.

I'm not sure in which ways you're attempting to characterize the nature of your conflict with either Jonah or Jonah's views. You may be correct that there is an "underlying ideological conflict" (i.e. difference) that is unavoidable or even irreconcilable. And my position on that would be: fine, great, no problem. I think that difference can exist and we can still interact with each other to explore our differences to whatever degree we have the energy or interest to do so.

On the other hand, when I read "to avoid further conflict" I'm getting an idea that you mean interpersonal conflict (i.e. feelings of wrongness)? When I hear your claim that, in the name of avoiding conflict, "it is absolutely essential ... that <someone else> responds to my 5000 word" my immediate embodied reaction is "no way dude, no one owes you anything, you're still responsible for your own behavior no matter what other people do". But I can also see a way you may be trying to point to something like "making progress on our ability to understand each other and process our differences productively" which if that's the case sounds to me like a worthy and admirable goal. It's just a goal that would IMHO need to be signaled as being the friendly context of your "absolutely essential" claim, because otherwise it sounds to me like you're making some sort of threat to generate more future conflict!

I'll close by noting and affirming your distinction (a couple posts up) between "you as a person" and someone's beliefs, and additionally distinguish between someone's beliefs/opinions/judgements and the

abstraction of an “ideological system”. I have no problem with “attacking” systems, of course none of us want to attack people, and in the middle people tend to be somewhat-but-not-fully identified with their beliefs, so we need to exercise care that “ferocity” is held and expressed cleanly, if one wants to express ferociously without creating interpersonal conflict.

My opinion of this thread so far is that your “you statements” above are quite sloppy, at best, at maintaining a boundary line of expressing respect for people while disagreeing with their beliefs. I’m also of the opinion that Jonah’s choice of words “disrespectful of other people’s views” is not precisely pointing to the thing I care about (or Jonah either, whom I do not believe wants to censor your beliefs/views), which is:

Please communicate in ways that respect other people. Equivalently, please communicate in ways that others can usually experience feeling respected. Creating lots of conflict feelings (a.k.a. drama), or doing so purposefully, is a tax on the conflict-holding/processing energy of any community system, by which I mostly mean other forum participants (whose tolerance for feeling put-on-blast may be quite a bit lower than the average moderator-type person).

I like passion and even ferocity - when held cleanly in ways that avoid most friendly fire incidents, and are swiftly repaired relationally when applicable, so that people can engage with your ideas which I presume is why you Geoff and any of us are here in the first place. Thanks.

1 Like

[Connected Community Conversations](#)

[GeoffDann](#) 82 April 8, 2025, 6:38am

Hi James

Thanks for that reply. However, it leaves me feeling uneasy. I believe that word “essential” was justified.

As things stand, I don’t think this has been resolved. Indeed, I believe that as long as there are people involved in running this group who are defending materialism that conflict is probably unavoidable – and that will remain true even if I leave this place and do not return, because it isn’t me who is the source of the problem here. The problem is that you’ve got elements of the old paradigm embedded in the admin team of a forum set up to act as midwife for the new one. That is likely to lead to a difficult birth.

I believe I have very good reasons for identifying metaphysical materialism as right at the core of the very ideological problems 2R was set up to find a solution to. I explained those reasons in a very long and detailed argument that I’ve spent the last 20 years getting right (irrefutable, and impossible to misunderstand). I feel like I have been preparing for 20 years for exactly the intellectual conflict that we’re talking about. And it really is a conflict, because it is the business end of a major paradigm shift – this always involves deep conflict as the old ways of thinking are brought down by the new. It never goes smoothly – that’s what *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* was all about – there are always defenders of the old paradigm who refuse to accept the new one. Sometimes a generation has to die off.

But we don't have time for that to happen in this case – or at least not within the movement that is being birthed here.

Now I am faced with an admin of this site who says both:

“I am asking you to be more respectful of my belief system (which I am an academic expert in).”

and

“I am not willing to defend my belief system because I am too busy. [implication: I *can* defend it, but looking after my young family has to be my priority]”

I really don't see how that can amount to anything other than *unfinished business*.

[Martin](#) 83 April 8, 2025, 3:23pm

I'm just wondering what kind of victory is there to be won? If someone doesn't want to engage (as frustrating as it is), it is within their agency not to. Can one not be only loosely attached to their belief system, rather than willing to defend it with their life? Finally, why is this so central to the 2R?

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 84 April 8, 2025, 3:48pm

Martin (Momcilo):

I'm just wondering what kind of victory is there to be won? If someone doesn't want to engage (as frustrating as it is), it is within their agency not to. Can one not be only loosely attached to their belief system, rather than willing to defend it with their life?

Sure, that is possible. If Jonah is not too attached to his belief system then presumably he won't be particularly distressed if I treat that belief system disrespectfully. I cannot do anything other than treat it disrespectfully, because I am actively trying to consign it to history.

Finally, why is this so central to the 2R?

I answered why in that long opening post: [The Hard Problem of Consciousness and 2R - General - Second Renaissance Forum](#), but I will summarise again now.

The conclusion of that post is that materialism and physicalism are incoherent – that they do not make sense internally unless you deny the existence of consciousness, which is absurd (although some

materialists do actually do so because they feel compelled by logic – the logic says either materialism or consciousness has to go, and they choose consciousness).

Now, if it was merely incoherent then that wouldn't matter much, but in fact an enormous amount rests on it. Materialism necessarily implies naturalism – there are no supernaturalist (or praeternaturalist) materialists, because materialism lacks the conceptual space to account for anything other than a material world that follows laws that are either fully deterministic or deterministic with objective randomness (though in Jonah's case it is completely deterministic because he subscribes to the MWI).

Not only does this rule out the praeternatural, it also rules out all higher forms of spirituality and all meaning. It condemns people to a sort of nihilism – although some materialists deny this. In this very thread Jonah has said (for example) that science can show us how I know I know about the praeternatural – by which he means science can show us how I've deluded myself into thinking I know such things. In his world, he's arrived at this conclusion via empirical evidence and rational thinking. In fact he's arrived there by basing his entire worldview on an incoherent metaphysical belief. The moment you arrive at an understanding of why materialism cannot possibly be true then the impossibility of the existence of the praeternatural is (or at least should be, or can be) replaced with an open-ness or agnosticism towards such things. This change in belief is in turn absolutely critical for the spiritual development of individual humans – it allows Reality to start working on them – it offers them opportunities to grow which weren't previously possible. (This is exactly how Jung described synchronicity).

Our belief systems regulate the praeternatural. We are sovereign over our own reality tunnels. That is why skeptics don't experience praeternatural phenomena, and why the praeternatural phenomena people do experience are “tailored” to their own belief systems.

What has this got to do with 2R? It opens the door to two parallel revolutions – a scientific one and a spiritual one. I believe this is the key to one half of the ideological shift necessary for 2R. The other half is the acceptance that structural realism is true. Praeternatural phenomena are real, but they are part of *this* world. They are what gives it meaning, starting with free will. One of the strangest places on the internet is this subreddit: [All discussions about the topic of free will](#). As a society we are *deeply* confused about this. From a subjective perspective it is completely obvious that we have free will, and we treat other people as if they do have free will (nobody gets away with “the laws of physics did it, it's not my fault”). And yet it is beyond most people's imagination to figure out how free will can be possible, so they assume it must be some sort of illusion. Even Nagel admits to being deeply conflicted about it – he has written that he changes his mind every time he thinks about it.

Understanding what is wrong with materialism – not just that it is false but exactly how it is false – is key to clearing up all of this confusion. Or at least some of it.

[Martin](#) 85 April 8, 2025, 4:45pm

But it's not easy to “force” coherence onto people who are metaphysically incoherent. They might not be ready to be challenged and converted, or simply disinterested. When the topic is psychological and

consciousness development, it doesn't necessarily entail a scientific revolution. I'm still not satisfied that you proved that this thorough epistemic revision is essential to the 2nd Renaissance.

[GeoffDann](#) 86 April 8, 2025, 6:55pm

Martin (Momcilo):

But it's not easy to "force" coherence onto people who are metaphysically incoherent.

Indeed. It would require work from that person. Serious work. That's why I want Jonah to engage with my argument. He hasn't, and I suspect the "I'm too busy" line is cover for the fact that he hasn't got a sensible response (because there isn't one).

They might not be ready to be challenged and converted, or simply disinterested. When the topic is psychological and consciousness development, it doesn't necessarily entail a scientific revolution. I'm still not satisfied that you proved that this thorough epistemic revision is essential to the 2nd Renaissance.

I can only make a case. Each person has to make their own mind up about the strength of that case.

[Martin](#) 87 April 8, 2025, 8:57pm

GeoffDann:

I can only make a case. Each person has to make their own mind up about the strength of that case.

BTW - I'm in full agreement about a lot of the stuff you're proposing - it's just that I don't find it fundamentally different to what I already believe in (or consider feasible) . You really drive some specificities in and insist they make all the difference - but to me they still don't. I am happy with phenomenalism, panpsychism, transcendental idealism... and I don't feel "the urge" to tie it up with quantum theory. I do find QM fascinating, but it doesn't bother me that I'm not weaving this grand theory of everything... I suspect a lot of people to some extent sympathise with my position.

I'll keep on trying to see what's so special about your NED...

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 88 April 8, 2025, 9:05pm

Martin (Momcilo):

BTW - I'm in full agreement about a lot of the stuff you're proposing - it's just that I don't find it fundamentally different to what I already believe in (or consider feasible)

That should be a good thing.

You really drive some specificities in and insist they make all the difference - but to me they still don't. I am happy with phenomenalism, panpsychism, transcendental idealism... and I don't feel "the urge" to tie it up with quantum theory.

It is not about "urges". It is about **coherence**. The more that is tied up, the more *oomph* it has to drive a paradigm shift through.

I'll keep on trying to see what's so special about your NED...

So you aren't reading that other thread?

[We have work to do - General - Second Renaissance Forum](#)

You haven't seen the post where ChatGPT rebuts its rebuttal? You can't see anything special there? I think maybe you aren't looking very hard. Either that, or you don't understand what is being proposed.

I have provided an integrated theory which elegantly and efficiently solves a handful of the biggest mysteries in modern science, all in one go, and you think there's nothing special about it?

Do you think there are loads of theories like this, that can solve all these mysteries together? There are none. Nobody has come up with anything like this before.

as with David, the main problem here seems to be incredulity.

Somebody was eventually going to figure out the solution to this conundrum – the key to the paradigm shift. Why not me?

[JamesBaker](#) 89 April 9, 2025, 12:48am

GeoffDann:

In his world, he's arrived at this conclusion via empirical evidence and rational thinking. In fact he's arrived there by

[@GeoffDann](#) As a moderator, I am declaring that this is not acceptable behavior for this forum. Please note that I am not debating the content of your opinions in any way. I think you are crossing way over the net of collaborative dialog by framing your opinion in language that claims to be objective exterior truth with complete certainty, while at the same time asserting the absolute falseness of someone else's epistemological standing in a way which completely closes you off to any further productive engagement.

And yet you continue to fixate on this particular person, seeking that they (in my story) engage with you in a way that satisfies and validates you. I also see you falling into the trap of thinking and claiming "they won't engage with me, they must know their ideas are bad" when I believe instead that you've driven them away from you with your aggression. If someone accused me of "abuse of power" and then appealed to their chain-of-authority stating that I am "not a neutral"... gosh I wouldn't want anything to do with you after that.

I am asking you to cease and desist writing about this person lest you cross the line into harassment.

GeoffDann:

he won't be particularly distressed if I treat that belief system disrespectfully. I cannot do anything other than treat it disrespectfully, because I am actively trying to consign it to history.

Ideas do not feel disrespect. People do. You are not talking to ideas, but to people.

If you have a goal of changing other people's beliefs, then I think you'll find that adopting language of disrespect and conflict as a strategy will backfire on your goal almost anywhere you go, not just here. Even if you are a perfect decoupler of ideas and persons, other people are not. We are humans and need to give each other margins of tolerance and respect that allow us to process difference without getting locked in conflict-feelings and drama.

I see you recognizing that you match some of the signs of the crackpot archetype: theory of everything, working twenty years on your own, giant claims... you see that "the main problem here seems to be incredulity" is your obstacle. I think you would be wise to approach that kind of situation with humility and charm as you seek allies, knowing the uphill landscape facing anyone in such a position.

And yet, let's look at the "you statements" in just your last post here:

- "So you aren't reading...?"
- "You haven't seen...?"
- "You can't see..."
- The one "I think" is attached to an insult: "I think maybe you aren't looking very hard"
- "you don't understand..."
- "you think there's nothing special...?"

Does it give you pause to see those strung together? I perceive you to be frustrated, and writing from that frustration. If I were you right now, I think I'd feel very frustrated. But venting at people from inside that frustration is, by all my experience, just going to keep burning up the fuse of tolerance. If you want to continue participating here, please take this seriously. Thank you.

[GeoffDamm](#) 90 April 9, 2025, 4:47am

Hello James

From my perspective, your post above completely fails to take into account the current discussion in this thread: [We have work to do - General - Second Renaissance Forum](#)

I will ask you to reconsider what you have written, because right now you are putting me in an impossible position. You have identified the wrong problem. You believe my interpersonal skills are at fault, when in fact **I am offering you the path to the solution**, and you are trying to block it in order to protect the person who is the real root cause of the problem.

Or to be more accurate, the problem is with the whole group. David Joseph has clearly articulated it. You *cannot* manifest 2R unless the group has the basic required level of cohesion, which means getting the underlying meta-ideology right. **At the moment you have a serious problem to deal with, and you have chosen to attack the messenger instead of listening to the message.** You are repeating exactly the mistake which has caused so many previous attempts at this sort of movement to fail.

Please can we try to sort it out.

. If I were you right now, I think I'd feel very frustrated.

Well, I am not. I am *trying to help you*. I am saying what I am saying because I am absolutely convinced it needs to be said, even though I'm being threatened with expulsion from this group if I don't stop saying it. Please consider your actions and your motives.

It even says on your main page, very clearly, that materialism is part of the problem. And yet when I go to great effort to explain exactly what the problem is, and why having an unreformed materialist (somebody who wants to bring *Dennett* into the new paradigm(!?)) as part of the admin team is likely to cause a serious problem with group cohesion, you identify *me* as the problem?? Would you also think it is OK to have somebody in this group trying to bring *capitalism* into the new paradigm? Because that's the level of absurdity we're talking about here. Dennett is a textbook example of what the new paradigm cannot look like.

This "Second Renaissance" cannot happen if people prioritise personal politics over the actual ideas themselves, and that doesn't just apply to Jonah either. I am the only person around here who is offering the sort of ideas that you need, but those ideas are **disruptive**. They involve the definition of lines, which also implies some people finding themselves on the wrong side of those lines. I am talking about the psychology of materialistic belief because the psychology of materialistic belief is a central part of the complex of problems we are dealing with. This new paradigm *needs to be disruptive*. It needs to disrupt the comfortable, decrepit existing ideological order (where everybody is allowed to believe whatever they like, because there's no actual truth) to the extent that it can be replaced with something else. Do you think that can happen without people going through extremely uncomfortable transitions and groups being broken apart and remade?

Jonah's materialistic metaphysics are a perfect example of the old paradigm which cannot be accommodated in the new. I have explained very clearly why, and nobody has responded with any criticism (at all) of that explanation. What I am saying is completely in line with the views of Iain McGilchrist, who is the number one person on your list of "new paradigm" people. And yet when I try to force this issue - just as it is going to have to be forced in order to make the paradigm shift happen - you have decided to step in to prevent me from being able to do so, on the grounds that it is too disruptive to the group and too disrespectful of people's opinions.

Please can I ask you to leave this discussion open. Let me continue to speak openly even if it causes discomfort within the group. This discussion is *desperately needed*. This is the work that needs to be done. As a group, *you need to come to terms with the real problems which are preventing 2R from happening*. This cannot happen "nicely". It will necessarily involve certain people having to change their views or accept that they can't be part of the new paradigm.

You appear to believe it is more important to keep this place comfortable, with nice friendly vibes, without serious ideological rifts, than you think it is to actually hammer out the meta-ideology you **need** to make this happen.

We cannot birth the new paradigm unless we are prepared to systematically defeat the old one. That's how paradigm shifts work, and this is *The Big One*.

I am the only person offering this group the epistemological meta-ideology it desperately needs. And all I am doing is saying what needs to be said in order for people to understand how that epistemology works, what the underlying cosmology is, and why this idea is revolutionary enough to carry the paradigm shift. This is extremely difficult stuff to explain. I cannot do so if also being put under pressure to not say anything that other people do not want to hear. I need to be able to speak completely honestly and openly, or it will not be possible for me to adequately answer people's questions.

EDIT: I have a suggestion as to how this can be resolved. The problem here is that, just as with Jonah, I am facing an individual disagreement with a moderator about ideas which are extremely important to the goals of this group – and they are the most important goals imaginable. I fully understand how my presence here, and what I am saying, is disruptive and difficult for people in many different ways. But I am also getting a lot of positive feedback, and I see that people *are* understanding me. Could we please have a thread, in which everybody who has been paying attention recently takes part, where there is a discussion about how we proceed from here as a proto-movement. Specifically we need to talk about how the group can be kept together, which is a fore-runner of the question of how the meta-movement can be kept together and what is to be the framework for our theory of change. That is going to have to involve a frank discussion of two specific categories of belief – metaphysical materialism and postmodern anti-realism (especially its presence in some forms of metamodernism). It will not work if I am the only person willing to speak uncomfortable truths – if other people leave it to me to articulate all of the difficult stuff while they remain in their comfort zones because they don't want to take the sort of risks I am being forced to take. Don't you think it would be easier for me if I compromised on my principles and prioritised personal politics over the truth? I will be happy to abide by the conclusions of such a discussion. If the conclusion is that materialism and anti-realism are to be considered acceptable in some forms, then I will abide by it. I would also be happy to leave this place for a while to give the group some specified period of time to discuss what I've said without me taking part in the discussions. But I cannot just back down on what I consider to be essential components of the paradigm shift because I've been told by a moderator that I'm causing too much personal discomfort and making too many

“you...” statements. **I have spent my whole life *speaking truth to power*.** I have no intention of stopping now.

I am NOT any sort of messiah figure. I already flunked that. It was much too hard to walk that walk, so I do not talk that talk (I also do not want to repeat what I see as mistakes made by Wilber in this regard). Now I see myself as somebody who can bridge ideological divides, but the process itself could not be better described than in Luke 12:49-52:

“I have come to set the world on fire, and I wish it were already burning! I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished. Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I have come to divide people against each other! From now on families will be split apart, three in favor of me, and two against—or two in favor and three against.

Please let me know if you want me to start such a thread, although it will be very much more effective if somebody else initiates it and sets the questions. Alternatively just tell me I am not wanted here and I will disappear. However, please bear in mind that if that is what happens then I’m going to end up on a collision course with this group anyway, precisely because this group will have demonstrated that it is not capable of hosting the conversations needed.

From the intro of my book:

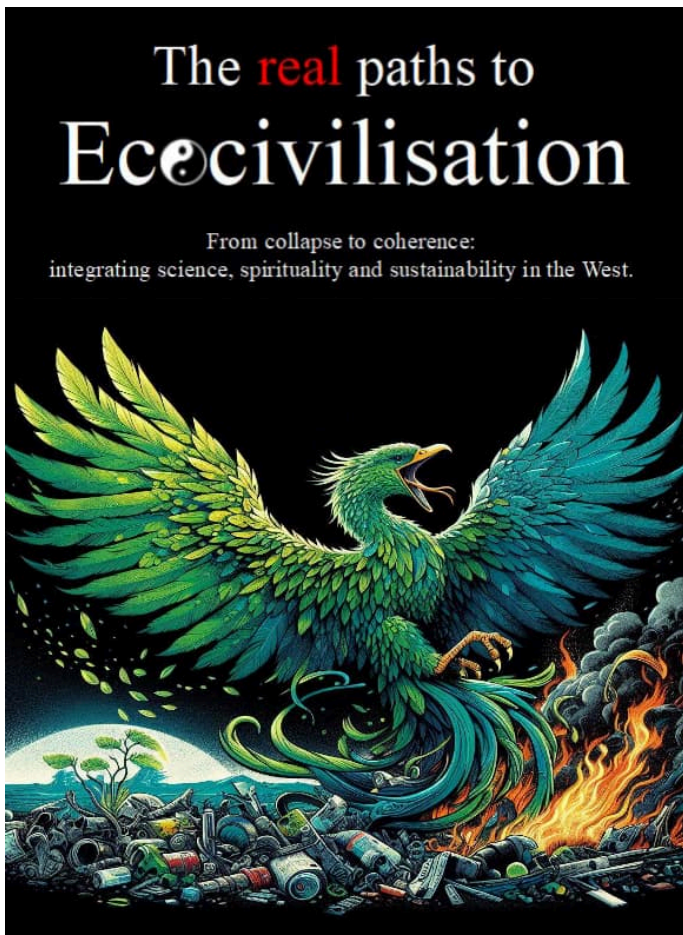
The attempts to suppress Bendell’s work bear striking similarities to the broader pattern of resistance to challenging dominant worldviews—whether in academia, politics, or media. His story illustrates the precarious position of radical thinkers who poke at the comfortable narratives of progress and control, and reflects the reality that institutions built on the old order – those of economic growth, material consumption and technological optimism – are incapable of hosting the conversations necessary for the transformation required. At the heart of this struggle is a recognition that the future we imagine must be liberated from the intellectual and cultural forces that resist it.

You are resisting it.

Please note that if you do choose to exclude me from this group, I must insist that all long quotes from my book are deleted from the forum, as well as this thread. It is not OK to just leave this stuff here if I am not free to respond to future comments about it. This group can then just return to its materialistic/pomo comfort zone and I will get on with the job of actually making 2R happen without you.

Geoff

[GeoffDann](#) 91 April 9, 2025, 8:26am



We must deal with reality, or it will deal with us

[Asimong](#) 92 April 9, 2025, 12:45pm

Just a quick interjection ... I wonder if this piece from the P2P Foundation wiki is of relevance or interest? It's nearly all the (curation) work of Michel Bauwens—I just enjoyed helping to create the table in wikitext, which is not exactly straightforward [Theory of Thought-Shapers - P2P Foundation](#)

1 Like

[Asimong](#) 93 April 9, 2025, 1:24pm

Here are my observations, as another person who has contributed to the stewarding of the research aspect of Life Itself and the 2R field.

As you already know, [@GeoffDann](#) , and along with [@Martin](#) I actually am in quite a lot of agreement with the essence of your views. I won't claim to "understand you" completely, just that I can imagine in my own mind what it's like to have worked out an intellectual position over a long period of time, and to believe with passion and fervour that it is vital, nay essential, that people come to see the truth in that, for their own good and for the good of the wider world.

I have also had a few similar initial senses. I have worked out for myself ideas which I see as at minimum self-consistent, and which I see as potentially contributing massively to the world's future, if only people would understand them and put them into practice.

Where I see myself as taking a different approach to the one I see you apparently taking, Geoff, is how I take that forward.

I have learned, from sometimes bitter personal experience, that not everyone shares my perspective, my belief system, my values. And for certain others don't share my experience — and experience colours so much in the way that we look at the world. I see this meta-perspective as something that tends to grow over time with many perceptive people. I've noticed how older members of our community treat you, as I see it, charitably. And I see this as one of the characteristics of adult development which folks associated with Life Itself take as positively reflecting the ideas of Deliberate Development. I do think we all take positive positions with regard to adult development, and speaking personally, the people I have most respect for are not those who have claimed to arrive at the ultimate truth, but those whose increasing awareness leads to increasing humility. This doesn't mean a loss of passion — a bit like [this passage in Eliot's Four Quartets](#). But it does, to me, mean an increasing understanding of how other people differ, and (hopefully) an increasing understanding of how to deal constructively with others, to help them with their personal development, if that's what they want.

My observation, Geoff, is not that you are upsetting everyone — you aren't. But your words and tone are upsetting some other valued members of our community. As I see it, you are absolutely not alone in this, and as you point out, some great thinkers in the past have also upset others of their contemporaries. You have helpfully stated explicitly that you don't want to be seen as a Messiah figure. But right now I'm having some difficulty reconciling this with the rest of what you say, and I'd like to explore that.

If we have a separate thread coming out of this, and I support this idea by the way, I wouldn't see it as confronting the substance of your ideas, but rather the challenge of conveying good ideas to other people. How to do that? Being clear consistent and visionary is a good start; so (to my mind) is a willingness to accept that one may be mistaken not only in substance, but also in approach. I see it as a basic position of respecting others, as others have been putting quite some effort into respecting you. Of course I'm not including those who have felt hurt by your words, as I know how hard it is to respect the views of someone who you feel is hurting you.

We could start by looking closely at what has previously been written about the culture that we wish to see on this forum, and generally around 2R. We may not all agree in detail, but I expect there is a lot of general agreement nevertheless.

Personally, I'd love to see your ideas being taken seriously, and gently influencing the way people see things; and I'd also love to see you taking other views seriously and allowing the way you see things to be influenced, expanded, enlarged, deepened. However, at this point, as others have been pointing out, there is already hurt to be healed; there is reconciliation to be done. Maybe we can do this through the [Restorative Circles](#) practice? Or how? This could also be something to take up in the suggested other thread. If you can suggest some other methodology to address these issues, that would be of interest. My sense is, only when these are resolved can we return to evaluating your ideas as such with equanimity and openness.

1 Like

[Asimong](#) 94 April 9, 2025, 2:02pm

After reading the Mind and Cosmos... thread I'd like to offer more nuance here. I do see [@GeoffDann](#) as being open to insights delivered via ChatGPT, but not so open to insights that come via other participants here. I see this as rather problematic, as I have noticed in other (second-hand) contexts the way that LLMs adapt themselves (in a way that could appear very astute, on an anthropomorphic view) to the views of those prompting them. To anthropomorphise further, I could even see LLMs as having a tendency to be somewhat sycophantic.

While I do see a lot of value in using the insights coming through the use of LLMs, I would really prefer this forum to be more centred on the ontological commoning between real people here. This is, to me, a much more promising way to develop both our culture and our commons of knowledge / wisdom.

p.s. I see this forum as part of a learning journey for all of us. It is not only a learning journey in terms of the subject matter discussed (somewhat left-hemisphere), but also a learning journey in terms of how we interact (including a lot more right hemisphere). Being left-hemisphere heavy seems to me to invite less of the archetypally feminine energy; focusing more on relationship between us I would hope would bring in more of that energy, and I hope more contributions from those more identified with that energy. (And I am being deliberate in not equating feminine energy with being biologically female)

2 Likes

[GeoffDann](#) 95 April 9, 2025, 2:41pm

Hi Simon

Thankyou for that post. I am indeed listening, and I do not want to create conflict for the sake of it. However, the truth was that Jonah's unwillingness to either engage or admit there is any problem with his position left me in an extremely difficult position. I hope we can get beyond this stage very soon.

Asimong:

the people I have most respect for are not those who have claimed to arrive at the ultimate truth,

I am not actually claiming to arrive at ultimate truth. I am claiming to have the bare bones framework of the next big paradigm, which is also exactly what 2R needs. It raises far more questions than it answers. It might *seem* like "ultimate truth" to people still thinking in the old paradigm, but in fact it is radically open ontologically and opens the door to all sorts of new possibilities in terms of research of various kinds. It is also politically and religiously neutral.

All I am really doing is fitting a bunch of what currently appear to be major scientific impasses/paradoxes together in a single structure which relates them to each other in a completely new way (a way that "dissolves" all of them at the same time). At the moment *none* of them are considered to be related to *any* of the others. It is *heresy* to link the hard problem and the measurement problem, let

alone link both of those up to the other things. But in terms of “absolute truth” all it does is confirm that the mystical isn’t nonsense after all. Apart from that, it is *wide open*.

It provides just enough to hold a meta-movement for 2R together, but no more than it needs to. Its purpose is to make sure we are asking the right questions, not provide all the answers (although it does have implications).

[JamesBaker](#) 96 April 9, 2025, 4:48pm

GeoffDann:

you are putting me
 You have identified the wrong problem.
 You believe my
 you are trying to
 You *cannot*
 you have a serious problem
 you have chosen
 You are repeating exactly

Here it is again, 8 times in 2 paragraphs. I asked if it gave you pause... and I saw you write three words “From my perspective” and then appear to ignore everything I said and dive right back into the exact same behavioral/communication pattern in service of your object-level crusade against materialism or whatever.

GeoffDann:

I am facing an individual disagreement with a moderator about ideas

I reject your claim; I have a different story. I will repeat again, I am not disagreeing about your ideas. I am also not engaging with your object-level disagreement with others. I absolutely do not care, as a moderator, what your metaphysics or epistemology or your opinions are. (I imagine you may be tempted to try to protest here that I am missing what matters so much to you, if so please try to set that aside temporarily.) My concern is whether you can demonstrate enough self-awareness to distinguish between your opinions/ideas and your interpersonal behavior.

GeoffDann:

on the grounds that it is too disruptive to the group and too disrespectful of people’s opinions

I reject your claim about my motivations. I disagree that I am reacting to your “it”, your “issue”, your “paradigm shift”. Instead I am pointing, again and again, at the way you apply “force” as you attempt to, in your own words “force this issue”. I keep pointing at your “you statements” as the most concrete and

clear symptom of inappropriate interaction force, and I haven't heard you demonstrate any signs that you're hearing me or seeing what I'm pointing at.

GeoffDann:

you identify *me* as the problem

I reject your framing; no I have not called *you* a problem - I am carefully and repeatedly trying to point at your behavior. Demonstrating an inability to distinguish between people and behavior and ideas seems to be the primary enabler of your behavior failing to adhere to the ground rules of this forum. If, when you decide in your head that someone is an "unreformed materialist", your behavior is to, instead of asking them if your interpretation/story about them is correct, instead start advocating for them to be removed from being "part of the admin team"... gosh can you see how big of a leap that is, how much unwarranted confidence you're placing on your story of someone else, and how you've started attacking the existence of a person as a problem when you perceive yourself to disagree with what you perceive their ideas to be?

I'm out of time at the moment, consider this post unfinished.

1 Like

[JamesBaker](#) 97 April 9, 2025, 4:51pm

GeoffDann:

I am indeed listening, and I do not want to create conflict for the sake of it. However, the truth was that <story that blames other person> left me in an extremely difficult position.

I've already asked you to cease and desist in pursuing and blaming this one person, and this seems like a violation of that request. I will also generalize this to ask that you stop blaming other people for your behavior, full stop, ever. You are responsible for your behavior and no one can force you to behave poorly.

(Edit: discourse ate my angle brackets the first time, on my elision of "<story that blames other person>")

1 Like

[GeoffDann](#) 98 April 9, 2025, 5:41pm

JamesBaker:

I reject your framing; no I have not called *you* a problem - I am carefully and repeatedly trying to point at your behavior

And so I have pointed back at yours.

What has actually happened here was an attempted closing of ranks to protect Jonah, and instead of capitulating I stood my ground. *Since then*, Jonah has finally responded.

I stand by my actions.

EDIT: [Outro Post - Geoff Dann - Welcome - Second Renaissance Forum](#)

[dvdjsph](#) 99 May 26, 2026, 9:33am

You recently mentioned your “New Epistemic Deal” so I decided to give it an honest read (I’m far too busy to read more than two chapters of your book but this post seems to cut to the chase about what you think we ought to actually do about the situation we are all in, so I thought it’s the best leverage point for engagement). I agree with much of it, but more in terms of *the underlying facts* rather than the strategic direction of *what one ought to do, given these facts*. These are different concerns. Let me explain.

The New Epistemic Deal is at its strongest when it says that serious moral and political reasoning must begin from reality. That seems exactly right. If ecological overshoot, limits to growth, civilisational fragility, and the inadequacy of growth-based economics are real, then they cannot be treated as optional ideological preferences. Any serious discussion about the future has to begin by facing the world as it is, not as our inherited political or economic models would prefer it to be.

I also think the proposal is strong in refusing both crude scientism and postmodern anti-realism. Science should have epistemic privilege where publicly testable claims are concerned. At the same time, science should not be used as a weapon to rule out questions it has not settled, especially around consciousness, subjectivity, spiritual experience, value, meaning, and metaphysics.

That balance matters.

Where I think the proposal may run into difficulty is that it currently combines two different tasks.

The first task is to create a shared basis for serious conversation.

The second task is to advance a particular metaphysical interpretation of consciousness, free will, synchronicity, the praeternatural, and the directionality of reality.

Both tasks may be important. But they may need to be kept distinct.

A shared epistemic agreement needs to be something that people with different metaphysical views can enter without feeling that they have already been asked to accept the conclusion of the deeper debate. Otherwise, people who might agree with the basic need for reality-facing discussion may reject the whole proposal because they think they are being asked to sign up to too much at once.

For example, I think many people could agree to something like this:

- There is an objective reality.
- Science gives us uniquely reliable knowledge about publicly testable aspects of that reality.
- Consciousness is real and cannot be dismissed as an illusion.
- Subjective experience matters, but it cannot automatically oblige other people to believe the same thing.
- Moral and political reasoning must be constrained by ecological and material reality.
- The realities of limits to growth, ecological overshoot, and civilisational fragility must be faced honestly.
- Scientism should not be allowed to rule out possibilities merely because they do not fit a reductive worldview.
- But spiritual or praeternatural claims should not be treated as publicly binding unless they can be publicly justified.

That seems to me like a very powerful foundation.

Then, within that foundation, there can be a second conversation about whether synchronicity, praeternatural causality, teleology, and metaphysical freedom are real in the stronger sense you describe.

The advantage of separating those two levels is that it makes the New Epistemic Deal easier to enter. A scientific realist, a non-reductive naturalist, a spiritual practitioner, a Christian, a Buddhist, a Jungian, a process philosopher, a panpsychist, a skeptic, or someone influenced by Nagel or McGilchrist could all potentially accept the basic deal, while still disagreeing about the deeper metaphysics.

That would not weaken your position. It might actually protect it.

Because then the deal would not require people to believe your lived experience. It would only require them not to dismiss it illegitimately.

That seems like the crucial move.

A skeptic has the right to say:

“I do not share your experience, and I do not yet see enough reason to believe your metaphysical interpretation.”

But the skeptic should not have the right to say:

“Because this is not currently scientific, it is automatically nonsense.”

Likewise, someone with powerful lived experience has the right to say:

“This is real to me, and I need a worldview that can make sense of it.”

But they probably should not ask others to treat that experience as public knowledge before the necessary shared justification exists.

This distinction could make the New Epistemic Deal much more robust.

It would allow the proposal to say:

We are not demanding agreement on ultimate metaphysics. We are demanding disciplined honesty about what kind of claim is being made.

That would mean distinguishing between:

- scientific claims;
- philosophical claims;
- moral claims;
- ecological constraints;
- subjective reports;
- spiritual interpretations;
- metaphysical hypotheses;
- practical commitments.

This may sound procedural, but I think it is actually radical. It would change the quality of the conversation. Instead of arguing over whether something is “real” in one flat sense, people would have to ask: real in what sense, knowable how, binding on whom, and relevant to which decision?

Applied to the New Epistemic Deal itself, I would say:

Your ecological and anti-growth claims are intended as public reality claims. They need to be argued publicly, scientifically, historically, and economically.

Your claims about consciousness are philosophical and experiential claims. They are not optional, but they need careful formulation.

Your claims about the praeternatural are metaphysical and experiential claims. They may be true, but they should probably be protected as live possibilities rather than made into entry requirements.

Your moral claim is that refusing reality is ethically corrupting. I think that is basically right, but it should be phrased carefully enough to distinguish bad faith denial from honest uncertainty, transitional disagreement, or different interpretations of the evidence.

So my suggested refinement would be:

The New Epistemic Deal should not ask everyone to agree on spirituality, metaphysics, or the praeternatural. It should ask everyone to agree on the rules by which such things can be discussed without scientific dismissal, subjective coercion, or reality-denying relativism.

That, to me, is the strongest version.

It keeps the door open to what you are trying to say, while making the door wide enough for others to walk through.

It also makes the proposal less vulnerable to being dismissed as “Geoff’s metaphysics” and more capable of becoming a shared compact for people who know the current paradigm is broken but do not yet agree about what replaces it.

The practical next step might be to rewrite the NED in two sections:

A. Shared epistemic commitments

These are the ground rules for serious conversation.

B. Open metaphysical questions

These are questions the deal protects from premature dismissal but does not force anyone to settle in advance.

That would let the proposal do what I think it most wants to do: create a serious space where science, ecology, morality, consciousness, and spirituality can all be discussed without collapsing into either reductionism or fantasy.

I think that is a genuinely important aim.

2 Likes

[GeoffDann](#) 100 May 26, 2026, 11:39am

The New Epistemic Deal is at its strongest when it says that serious moral and political reasoning must begin from reality.

You might think this is obviously true, but there is a problem: I can’t just say “it must begin from reality” without defining what “reality” actually means. Postmodernists deny there is any such thing, and physicalists try to define it in terms of either obsolete classical physics or deeply contested interpretations of QM. It is this problem which forced me to spend much of the last 20 years trying to find a bulletproof way to define realism. That’s why I ended up defending a new model of metaphysics and cosmology. It was required to support that one claim about “reality” without immediately getting dragged into the stalemate of contemporary mainstream philosophy.

Science should have epistemic privilege where publicly testable claims are concerned. At the same time, science should not be used as a weapon to rule out questions it has not settled... That balance matters.

Yes, but that means I have to defend a combined claim which almost nobody likes: that brains are both necessary for consciousness (neuroscience proves this) and insufficient (the hard problem proves this). Loads of people are happy to accept one of these claims, but only a tiny number are willing to accept both, regardless of the fact that there is no reason why both can’t be true. The physicalists don’t want to relinquish their “dismiss woo for free” card, and the idealists don’t want to give up on disembodied consciousness and life after death. So everybody prefers the status quo. That is the old paradigm.

Both tasks may be important. But they may need to be kept distinct.

They **cannot** be kept distinct. Either on its own just takes us back to the stalemate.

A shared epistemic agreement needs to be something that people with different metaphysical views can enter without feeling that they have already been asked to accept the conclusion of the deeper debate.

There cannot be a shared epistemic agreement if there is no agreement about the basic structure of reality. Physicalists, panpsychists, idealists and postmodernists cannot agree on epistemology precisely because they do not agree about basic ontology. The only way to end this stand-off is to explain why none of these positions are correct, and the only way to do that is to provide a new one - one which solves so many problems that the arguments are finished forever. This is what Kant originally did to the arguments between rationalists and empiricists, but his solution to that problem led to where we are now. Without an understanding of what went wrong, and a correction of it, we will remain in the stalemate.

Otherwise, people who might agree with the basic need for reality-facing discussion may reject the whole proposal because they think they are being asked to sign up to too much at once.

Everybody wants an excuse to reject the whole proposal, because everybody has got something to lose. It's multi-dimensional trench warfare, and each side will settle for nothing less than a win. I am trying to put a white flag with "the truth" written on it, right in the no-man's land in the middle. This is my problem, and this is why I need your help.

Then, within that foundation, there can be a second conversation about whether synchronicity, praeternatural causality, teleology, and metaphysical freedom are real in the stronger sense you describe.

The foundation you've posted is very close the NED, but I the differences break it. The problem is that as things stand, science and philosophy are both stalemated around the key issues. The moment you accept consciousness exists and has causal power, we are thrown straight into the deep end of the biggest arguments in analytical philosophy. Unless I can show that I have a radical new way of resolving those arguments, then the NED just dumps us in the middle of those unresolved arguments...and there is no escape from them apart from 2PC. That is why *The Real Paths to Ecocivilisation* took me 20 years to get right: I had to write about both the metacrisis and ecological collapse **and** the science/spirituality conflict in modern Western history. It was no use writing about one of those things and not the other, because the two issues critically intersect if we're talking about re-constructing the foundations of Western civilisation in a radically new way.

This is only possible if the physicalists are willing to accept that the hard problem of consciousness is real and the anti-physicalists are willing to accept that brains are necessary for consciousness. But the moment you accept those two things then, according to the current state of philosophy of mind and evolutionary biology, you got a *massive* problem, and it is the exact problem Nagel wrote about in *Mind and Cosmos*: the only way to save naturalism (or avoid theological supernaturalism) is to accept that

consciousness evolved teleologically. But HOW?? Nagel's version is fundamentally incomplete, because he did not integrate with quantum mechanics. And the moment you actually do try to integrate with QM, you are forced towards Henry Stapp's re-interpretation of "consciousness causes collapse". Leaving the question: how can you integrate Nagel and Stapp? And the answer is the Two-phase Cosmology. No other answer will work, and without that answer nobody in the scientific community will take any of this seriously: they will just continue to dismiss Nagel, dismiss Stapp and refuse to accept that their work could possibly be connected. Nothing will change.

Then, within that foundation, there can be a second conversation about whether synchronicity, praeternatural causality, teleology, and metaphysical freedom are real in the stronger sense you describe.

The teleological evolution of consciousness and free will cannot be negotiable, because they are essential parts of the basic structure of 2PC. Everything else (except the hypernatural) is left open by Principle 6 of the NED. 2PC does not close that at all. The part about meaning and synchronicity is (Extended Competition-resolved Collapse) is optional. The skeptics can reject it.

The New Epistemic Deal should not ask everyone to agree on spirituality, metaphysics, or the praeternatural.

It must ask agreement to sufficient extent to ensure 2PC is taken seriously. We need the new interpretation of QM, which opens the door to the resolution of all 30 problems, including the scientific explanation of consciousness, quantum gravity and the entire crisis in cosmology. Without that there is no viable path forwards, because the whole project will just get sucked backwards into the existing philosophical-scientific stalemate which is the old paradigm.

Bottom line: without 2PC, the NED is impossible to defend, because everybody will just go back to their entrenched old-paradigm positions. The purpose of 2PC is to conclusively and irreversibly end the philosophical stalemate we are currently trapped in.

[dvdjsph](#) 101 May 26, 2026, 11:48am

GeoffDann:

There cannot be a shared epistemic agreement if there is no agreement about the basic structure of reality.

I provided a short list of postulates that constitute a minimal starting point for agreeing about reality to such a degree that we can agree on what needs to be done. It seems your contention is that we must agree on ALL of the points of a metaphysics framework - specifically, yours - before this can be effectively done. That's a nonstarter, and a strategic error, in my opinion.

The key question you should consider: Suppose someone else suggested another sort of “Epistemic New Deal”, and also stipulated that following it would require agreement on what constitutes reality? This would be a nonstarter for you, no? Then what you propose is a nonstarter for anyone else.

[GeoffDann](#) 102 May 26, 2026, 12:02pm

dvdjsph:

I provided a short list of postulates that constitute a minimal starting point for agreeing about reality to such a degree that we can agree on what needs to be done. It seems your contention is that we must agree on ALL of the points of a metaphysics framework - specifically, yours - before this can be effectively done. That’s a nonstarter, and a strategic error, in my opinion.

You are saying it is a strategic error because you are thinking “nobody will agree to this”. I am trying to get you to understand that the very fact that nobody will agree to it *even though it resolves the 30 biggest problems in science and philosophy* IS the problem.

I hope I can just be direct here. I strongly suspect that real problem is that you, personally, aren’t willing to accept 2PC, because it is inconsistent with your own existing metaphysics. If so, then this is just a perfect demonstration of why my task is so difficult. Very few people are interested in the truth, and that includes you. Why am I saying that? Because you really aren’t interested in understanding 2PC – you aren’t interested in understanding why I keep claiming it *must be true*. Every time I say that, you think “How arrogant. He thinks he knows the truth. Why is his truth (2PC) any better than *my* truth? [idealism? panpsychism? I am only guessing...]”.

This is exactly why it is necessary for people to understand 2PC (its basic structure), and why it is necessary for them to accept it as actually the correct answer. Without it, you will continue to believe idealism is true, the physicalists will keep defending physicalism, and we will remain trapped in the old paradigm stalemate.

You interpret this as me being arrogant, stubborn, overestimating my own capabilities, and generally not willing to accept I might be wrong. None of these things are actually happening. The truth is I am defending the only position which can actually unlock the path to the new paradigm. I cannot back down without ruining the only solution which actually works.

The key question you should consider: Suppose someone else suggested another sort of “Epistemic New Deal”, and also stipulated that following it would require agreement on what constitutes reality? This would be a nonstarter for you, no? Then what you propose is a nonstarter for anyone else.

And with that statement all becomes clear. You do not understand my justification for claiming 2PC is the one correct answer, having made no serious effort to understand that justification. You therefore still think in terms of my truth vs your truth vs Christian truth vs physicalist truth. You aren’t remotely

interested in the actual truth itself. **If you were, you would have made the effort to understand my justification for claiming 2PC is true. It would take you 15 minutes to load the entire text into an AI and interrogate it about this, but you have chosen not to do so.**

EDIT: I did not answer your question. Would I accept it? Answer: if their system could solve the same 30 problems as cleanly as 2PC does then I would. However, that is impossible, because there *cannot be two solutions which both solve the same 30 problems.*

THAT is the old paradigm.

I can see no way forwards for this discussion without you engaging properly with the metaphysics and cosmology I am proposing, and understanding why they have such enormous explanatory power: why my position is both original and revolutionary. You just flinch when I say that, because it sounds so arrogant. But you haven't tried to find out why I am saying it.

[GeoffDann](#) 103 May 26, 2026, 12:15pm

dvdjsph,

I know exactly how arrogant and naive you think I am. I am not playing by the social rules you think are appropriate. But from my perspective, it is you who is not playing by the rules. My background is science and analytical philosophy, where truth claims are settled by evidence and reason. If somebody comes along and says "I am proposing a new metaphysical-cosmological system which resolves 30 massive problems" then that is taken as a challenge, and it must be resolved by careful debate. This has become much easier in the days of AI, because you have a machine to help you, and I am more than happy to take on a machine too.

But nobody here is interested in playing by those rules. Instead, I am being treated exactly as if I have made preposterous, unsupported claims, even though nobody has taken up the challenge of actually testing my proposals against science and reason. Instead, almost everybody has simply **assumed I am wrong**, without bothering to find out whether they can actually "debunk" my position (with AI assistance).

This is why I hate postmodernism, and Continental philosophy in general. By dismissing the very idea of a truth worth pursuing, it allowed people to bypass the rules of rational debate, and just say whatever they like, based on nothing.

Geoff

[dvdjsph](#) 104 May 26, 2026, 12:26pm

GeoffDann:

My background is science and analytical philosophy, where truth claims are settled by evidence and debate

Great, then we can cut through the postmodernist BS and stick to empiricism.

Your own text says the framework lacks confident new empirical predictions, is not being presented as a scientific theory, and should mainly be assessed by coherence and explanatory power rather than empirical tests. So the discrepancy is this: the evidential standard appropriate to 'solved' scientific problems is not met by the evidence you provide. Where are the falsifiable claims whose successful testing would distinguish Two-Phase Cosmology from rival explanations?

GeoffDann:

If you were, you would have made the effort to understand my justification for claiming 2PC is true. It would take you 15 minutes to load the entire text into an AI and interrogate it about this, but you have chosen not to do so.

I have in fact done this, but since you're accusing me of writing your ideas off without due consideration, let's do this here and now. Here's a prompt I propose using - any objections?

The attached text lists 30 problems that the theory contained therein purportedly solved. I'd like you to evaluate the text and determine to what degree the problems are actually solved. Analyze the problems and proposed solutions as impartially as possible, aiming only to give an accurate assessment.

[dvdjsph](#) 105 May 26, 2026, 12:31pm

GeoffDann:

Instead, almost everybody has simply **assumed I am wrong**, without bothering to find out whether they can actually "debunk" my position (with AI assistance).

If you're going to make accusations like this, you should provide evidence.

[GeoffDann](#) 106 May 26, 2026, 12:39pm

dvdjsph:

Great, then we can cut through the postmodernist BS and stick to empiricism.

Your own text says the framework lacks confident new empirical predictions, is not being presented as a scientific theory, and should mainly be assessed by coherence and explanatory power rather than empirical tests.

This is not quite true. There *are* new empirical predictions - they just aren't the kind most people are expecting. I make a strong claim that we will never find evidence of life outside of the Earth's biosphere, and another strong claim that the largest component of dark matter will turn out to be the bound state of Dirac magnetic monopoles ("monopolium").

What I am saying in the text is that even if there were no new empirical predictions at all, the framework still resolves a large number of problems that the standard model cannot.

So the discrepancy is this: the evidential standard appropriate to 'solved' scientific problems is not met by the evidence you provide. Where are the falsifiable claims whose successful testing would distinguish Two-Phase Cosmology from rival explanations?

There *aren't* any rival explanations. That is why I am claiming it must be true.

Empirical adequacy must come before the demand for *new* empirical predictions. **The current scientific model is empirically inadequate.** Science cannot explain consciousness, cannot agree on an interpretation of QM, and cannot provide **any** cosmological model which isn't plagued by contradictions, paradoxes, anomalies, discrepancies and unidentified "dark stuff".

We do not have a coherent model of reality. We never have had. 2PC is the first holistic explanation of reality which is consistent with the empirical evidence and reason. There are no other candidates. **It is precisely because there are no other candidates that we are in a situation where everybody is free to believe whatever they like.**

Here's a prompt I propose using - any objections?

That prompt is fine, but you need to show the AI the introduction, and the whole of parts 1 and 3, one chapter at a time (or half chapters in some cases if you use Gemini). If you use Deepseek then you can give it larger chunks, but don't just upload the whole document in one go. It needs a chance to digest the bits. It will also help you to understand the book if you read its summary as you go through the book in order, rather than giving the whole text in one go.

[GeoffDann](#) 107 May 26, 2026, 12:45pm

dvdjsph:

If you're going to make accusations like this, you should provide evidence.

The evidence is right here on this forum. Nobody has tried to debunk 2PC, but everybody is behaving as if I have not provided any justification for claiming it is true.

[dvdjsph](#) 108 May 26, 2026, 12:50pm

GeoffDann:

There aren't any rival explanations. That is why I am claiming it must be true.

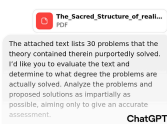
Okay, since you make this additional claim - that your theory is in a class of its own - I included some rivals in my prompt. Here's the prompt I used (which is obviously biased in favor of your theory because it uses the specific 30 problems you listed as a basis for comparison)

The attached text lists 30 problems that the theory contained therein purportedly solved. I'd like you to evaluate the text and determine to what degree the problems are actually solved. Analyze the problems and proposed solutions as impartially as possible, aiming only to give an accurate assessment. Across a set of dimensions that determine how well solved the problems are, compare the attached theory with the theories of:

- bernardo kastrup
- donald hoffman
- steven wolfram
- thomas campbell

Comparison with Kastrup, Hoffman, Wolfram, and Campbell

Dimension	2PC / attached theory	Bernardo Kastrup	Donald Hoffman	Stephen Wolfram	Thomas Campbell
Problem coverage	Very high	Medium	Medium-high	Medium	High
Mind-body clarity	High	Very high	High	Low	Medium-high
Quantum measurement account	Medium	Low-medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Cosmology anomaly coverage	Medium	Low	Low-medium	High	Low-medium
Formal/mathematical development	Low	Low-medium	High	Very high	Low
Empirical testability	Low-medium	Low	Medium	Medium-high	Low
Parsimony	Medium	High	Medium	High	Low-medium
Risk of ad hoc rescue	Medium-high	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



[See what this chat's about](#)

Open this chat to take a look.

Final judgment

The attached theory "solves" perhaps 6–8 of the 30 problems in a meaningful philosophical sense, partially reframes another 10–12, and does not solve the remaining physics/cosmology problems in the sense that working scientists would recognize.

The strongest genuine contributions are:

- connecting consciousness and collapse into one explanatory pivot;
- treating the present, memory, agency, and value as structurally linked;
- offering a non-physicalist account of why mathematics, meaning, and subjectivity are central rather than accidental;
- making at least one risky empirical claim: independent conscious extraterrestrial life would strongly undermine the model.

The main failures are:

- no quantitative cosmology;
- no derivation of constants, Λ , H_0 , S_8 , dark matter abundance, baryon asymmetry, or galaxy formation statistics;
- no Born-rule derivation or relativistic collapse model;
- frequent reliance on "selection from Phase 1" where a mechanism is needed;
- some "solutions" are explicitly non-falsifying, especially dark matter;
- several explanations work only after accepting the whole metaphysical system.

So the fairest conclusion is:

2PC is a bold, internally suggestive metaphysical synthesis. It is not yet a solved theory of the 30 problems. It is strongest where the problems are philosophical or interpretive, and weakest where the problems require quantitative physics.

[dvdjsph](#) 109 May 26, 2026, 12:52pm

GeoffDann:

The evidence is right here on this forum. Nobody has tried to debunk 2PC, but everybody is behaving as if I have not provided any justification for claiming it is true.

This is a very Postmodern standard of evidence: it's true because you feel it's true. Evidence means providing examples of this having happened that can be verified by others, not just by you according to your private standards of satisfiability.

[dvdjsph](#) 110 May 26, 2026, 12:57pm

GeoffDann:

I make a strong claim that we will never find evidence of life outside of the Earth's biosphere

So if we find something that looks like life outside of our biosphere, then this would be evidence against your theory.

Here is peer reviewed research that has been replicated that seems to provide evidence against your strongest empirical prediction:

[Unexpected patterns in historical astronomical observations - Stockholms...](#)

[GeoffDann](#) 111 May 26, 2026, 1:35pm

dvdjsph:

Here is peer reviewed research that has been replicated that seems to provide evidence against your strongest empirical prediction:

OK, to be clear. You are citing that article as evidence of alien life??

Last time I checked, the clear scientific consensus was that there has never been any decent evidence of any sort of life beyond Earth. If the events you are citing here are of real significance, why doesn't anybody mention them when the Fermi Paradox is discussed?~

There is endless speculation, and hyping of marginal evidence. Collectively we clutch at every passing straw – at least once a month there is a story about how X “might at last be evidence of alien life”, and on each occasion it is people desperately trying to find hope, because their model of reality implies that life should be abundant, and that we ought to have found it by now.

[GeoffDann](#) 112 May 26, 2026, 1:37pm

dvdjsph:

This is a very Postmodern standard of evidence: it's true because you feel it's true.

No. It is true because nobody has made any effort to debunk 2PC. You cannot demand I prove a negative (prove that nobody has made such an effort). If you think they have, then you need to provide a link to where it happened. What was the problem they identified?

Evidence means providing examples of this having happened that can be verified by others, not just by you according to your private standards of satisfiability.

And how do you think I am supposed to prove a negative?

[GeoffDann](#) 113 May 26, 2026, 1:54pm

OK. This is a misleading summary, because everything spins on the sentence “does not solve the problems in a way working scientists would recognise”.

That is true, but entirely misses the point of 2PC. Working scientists all assume physicalism is true, and the problems in cosmology (two thirds of the 30 problems), are caused by a metaphysical mistake. 2PC solves them by changing the metaphysics, not by doing any new science. So this is an unfair demand: I never claimed 2PC can solve problems *in the way the scientific community will accept*. I am very explicitly saying that their unwillingness to consider that physicalism might be the problem, and that the solution is to change their metaphysics instead of trying to fix their broken physicalist models, is exactly the problem. 2PC *does* solve these problem, but it does so in a way that requires a major philosophical revolution. It requires working scientists to replace the assumption that physicalism is true, with a quantum neutral monism. Are they going to be willing to do this? No, of course not. They will use all of their authority and power to resist it, because it makes nearly all of them look like a load of dinosaurs. Paradigm shifts don't work by solving problems the way that people are expecting. That's the whole point. Did your AI not read Chapters 3 and 4?

In other words, your AI summary makes the fundamental mistake of judging a new paradigm by the standards of the old. **It is directly equivalent to analysing Copernicanism and then saying “this new solution does not solve the problems in the way working scientists would recognise! Where are the epicycles?”**

[dvdjsph](#) 114 May 26, 2026, 1:55pm

GeoffDann:

OK, to be clear. You are citing that article as evidence of alien life??

That's one possible explanation that may fit the data, but not the only one. What is yours? Or do you simply ignore evidence that doesn't seem to match your theory?

[dvdjsph](#) 115 May 26, 2026, 1:57pm

GeoffDann:

In other words, your AI summary makes the fundamental mistake of judging a new paradigm by the standards of the old. **It is directly equivalent to analysing Copernicanism and then saying “this**

**new solution does not solve the problems in the way working scientists would recognise!
Where are the epicycles?"**

You make yourself both the defendant and the judge so no evidence can be brought forth to prove you wrong, then you complain about the lack of real engagement with your ideas.

[GeoffDann](#) 116 May 26, 2026, 1:59pm

dvdjsph:

That's one possible explanation that may fit the data, but not the only one. What is yours? Or do you simply ignore evidence that doesn't seem to match your theory?

You are now arguing in bad faith. If you go and ask any AI "Is the Fermi paradox solved" every single one will say "No."

There is no accepted evidence of alien life. Is that the best objection you can do to come up with to 2PC? That it predicts no aliens and we have decent reason to believe in aliens??

This is not a serious discussion.

[dvdjsph](#) 117 May 26, 2026, 2:01pm

GeoffDann:

No. It is true because nobody has made any effort to debunk 2PC.

I provided you evidence from a peer reviewed journal for alien life, or some other phenomenon that COULD be alien life. Alien life is a rival hypothesis among other possible alternatives. If the other alternatives are ruled out by a high evidentiary standard (which they are, if you'd bother reading the article and not dismiss it outright, which is what you keep claiming others do), then you'd see this.

So I hope you stop making this claim, that no one has provided any counter arguments. Your one strong empirical claim is predicated on the data in the peer review article I provided being explained in some way other than alien life. So, what is your explanation that is more likely?

[GeoffDann](#) 118 May 26, 2026, 2:03pm

dvdjsph:

You make yourself both the defendant and the judge so no evidence can be brought forth to prove you wrong, then you complain about the lack of real engagement with your ideas.

Again, you are arguing in bad faith. I am not making myself a defendant and a judge. I am explaining why your AI analysis was misleading. It stated that 2PC doesn't solve the cosmological crisis in a way working scientists would recognise and *I never claimed that it did*. The very fact that you are raising that as an objection simply demonstrates that you don't understand the argument.

2PC is *metaphysics*, not science. I must have said this 100 times on this forum, and it is repeatedly emphasised in the text.

I ask you respectfully to debate in good faith.