Anil Vem

Two Mystic
Materialist Sketches

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Like, God. Pantheism is negative theology in the sense of Dionysios: God is the unpronounceable, incomprehensible, non-definable. We cannot describe God, we can only experience God existentially as a mystery. The wisdom of the true pantheist: God reveals itself in everyday life. We all have to be gardeners.

But we must not romanticize. Divinity is not good. Good and evil are only created by social interpretations of creation. Divinity itself is beyond such attributes. That's what Jakob Böhme, one of the boldest Christian thinkers, teaches us.

When Böhme says that evil derives from God itself, he doesn't attribute evil to God, but makes us understand that the socially defined evil is as divine as the socially defined good. The importance of this notion lies in its consequence for our ethics: If all was divine, and divinity was essentially good, there'd be no evil. But without evil, there'd be nothing to fight against. We need to fight, however. Mainly against the egomania believing itself above the natural respect for the divine interconnectedness of creation. The good then lies in expressing and defending this respect in everyday action and conduct.

Manichean ethics pose no contradiction to any philosophical pantheism, because, as suggested above, ethics don't originate in divinity, but in its social interpretation. Thus, a Manichean ethic is not transcendentally determined but a practical principle of respect for the diversity and the interconnectedness of creation.

Divinity reveals itself the strongest where there is diversity, and the revelation becomes the more intense the more this diversity is perceived in the context of interconnectedness. We are close to God wherever diversity is preserved and interconnectedness understood.

Today, diversity is replaced by isolation and interconnectedness by totality. "Only a God can help us now."

(2003)

The Militant Mystic: A Sketch

Let's say there is one universe with many worlds.

Any theory starts with a "let's say…". The ones claiming to stand on more solid foundations are an instant and immediate threat, both intellectually and politically.

A world consists of facts, myths, truths, lies, false and accurate perceptions, right and wrong interpretations.

Each world creates its own respective criteria through what has recently been dubbed discourse, or: discursive processes.

See also Wittgenstein's language-game theory.

One world can mainly consist of numbers and statistics, another mainly of ghosts and fairies. Strong epistemological terms as "reality" or "truth" will only make sense within the context of each world's self-definition.

How these self-definitions come about is of no relevance in the context of this essay.

But no two worlds are ever completely separated, nor is one world ever completely isolated. We do share a common universe.

Without this common universe we wouldn't know of other worlds, wouldn't live next to them, wouldn't clash with them. More tangibly speaking, we all breathe the same air and walk the same earth, even if they differ in our respective worlds.

This is also to say that I'm far from supporting any idealistic, leave alone solipsistic speculations here. I think these are rather boring.

A lot of apparent philosophical oppositions or contradictions are hence indeed none: no difference between unity and diversity, subject and object, realism and idealism, absolutism and relativism. Two sides of the same coin.

The side we sense and know is the one defining our diverse, subjective, idealistic, and relative worlds. This is the side we are part of, creating and defining it as much as it creates and defines us.

The other side, the unifying, objective, real, absolute, remains hidden. We never entirely sense it, though the connectedness of our respective worlds assures us of it being there.

I'm not talking of a Kantian Ding-an-sich here. This still seems to be a concept too strong, suggesting a hidden, yet certain truth. The point of the mystic is to reach a comprehension of the truth (the objective, the real, the absolute) being ever uncertain.

It's not a question of whether this is true or false. It just is.

Since we never sense the unifying side, its existence remains its only comprehensible character. The truth in all mysticism is the acknowledgement of the divine, and the concession to know nothing about it.

To pay respect to the unifying and life-assuring forces of the divine is the sole appropriate way of relating to the hidden side.

There are as many ways to do this as there are worlds. Mystics exist in pagan, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and various other worlds. They are all as righteous.

To lay claim on knowing anything about the divine violates the law of the universe that lets us live in the relative only. No man nor woman knows anything about the absolute. In fact, it's a concept alien to our lives, possibly alien to the divine itself whose diverse sides are not separate from but part of it.

There is no self-contradiction in this classical Pyrrhonian observation. This is not an absolute statement. It's a statement being made on the grounds of our diverse worlds — hence, on a level where no absolute exists.

Claims of knowing anything transcending the relative worlds we are part of is the ultimate fascist threat to a content existence celebrating the diversity of the life we are given.

This is the eternal danger of what has been called the Platonic philosophical tradition. See Gilles Deleuze's writings on the history of philosophy to discover its historic opponents.

Modesty and respect for the other and the different are the principal moral guidelines for this celebration. Any intellectual and/or practical attack on these values are a threat to collective happiness. Self-righteousness is the face of evil.

a. *This makes anarchism the force of good. But I won't elaborate on this here.*

years, much more so than the radical pantheistic traditions of the East, Taoism and Zen.

While the latter are hard to sell as easy spiritual escape routes from existential individual void and confusion, the former can serve very well as escapist ideologies. This distinction indicates where the different spiritualistic/esoteric transindividualisms, which are in the best case panentheisms, differ from true pantheism, which is always materialistic.

True pantheism is the realization of the world-immanent divinity that reveals itself in matter as the creator of a diverse reality, and in reality itself as creation. The world-immanence explains that divinity dwells in this world and not in some ontological transcendence. Pantheistic thought and perception is only possible on the basis of a Pyrrhonist understanding of reality: a radical rejection of all dualistic paradogmas introduced by Plato (truth vs. deception, knowledge vs. opinion, idea vs. image, and so forth), while understanding the world as a field of practically undeniable phenomena.

The lessons of the Pyrrhonists of the East, the Zen-Buddhists, reveal true pantheistic wisdom: for example, when questions about "the essence of Buddha's teaching", or about "how to truly transcend", are routinely answered with the suggestion to "go and attend to your garden!" This is the materialism of the pantheist: the embrace of the practically tangible as divine revelation.

Pantheism is the wisdom of praxis and no escape from it. It knows no ontological idealisms, opposites, or hierarchies, only diversity. And the unity of creation doesn't consist of any identity but of the interconnectedness of creation's diverse forms which will always be acknowledged and respected in their uniqueness. Unity and diversity are no contradiction in pantheism, but co-dependent. The world of pantheism is the pluralistic-univoque world of the differential relations of matter.

Realizing the divinity of these differential relations happens in the experience of the great mystery of creation. Life is given to us by matter, but why, we don't know. All we got is awe for the great mystery itself.

Mysteries are characterized by an impossibility to be defined, which is why we give them names not really meaning anything.

principle. If we don't want to deny where we came from, what created us, what unites us with all that is, then we have to learn to understand matter in its creative dimensions. Only then we will no longer have to pay the price of destroying creation in its diversity.

Matter is no metaphysical principle, but the concrete principle of life itself. (A principle that can only be denied by abstract Cartesian skepticism.)

Transindividualistic thought means essentially to put the ontological status of the individual in perspective. This notion is of crucial importance in any attempt to overcome the prevailing ontological paradigms (*paradogmas*). Realizing the transindividual character of reality is the first step out of the individualistic ideologies of rationalism and idealism. But it is not enough to get us to where I believe to find the aspired antiindividualistic world-view: in a *radical pantheism.*

Transindividualistic thought leads us away from the secular individualistic ideologies of modernity, but it doesn't automatically lead us to pantheism. For an ontological transindividualism without a materialistic commitment doesn't automatically overcome idealism hostile to matter. If the spirit remains the only essential truth, then the human being remains essentially a purely spiritual being, trapped in its body and either standing in total opposition to matter (absolute idealism) or being far superior in the hierarchy of creation (eschatological idealism); body/matter are, in the best case, inferior forms of reality, in the worst case, the diabolical cause of worldly suffering, and in any case, second to human spirit, without worth or value compared to it, and only an obstacle in the pursuit of truth. Without a materialistic frame, descending into the unity of reality will have to remain an individual attempt of rescue or escape from the world of material suffering. Platonism, Gnosis, Manichaeism, or the Christian Mysticism of the late German middle ages represent the hard varieties of this school of thought, the philosophical systems of a Plotinus, Giordano Bruno, or Nicholas of Cusa, the soft.

As far as Eastern philosophical systems are concerned, it should not be surprising that simplistic adaptations of Hinduism (and, to a lesser degree, Tibetan Buddhism) have attracted a particular fascination in the individualistic Western world over the last thirty

b. *The opposition of good and evil is regarded here as a useful, yet unpretentious model to express our moral evaluations within the realms of our diverse worlds. No general ethical teachings are introduced by the employment of such terminology.*

Maybe the only universal ethical question concerns the one between the self-righteous and the modest, between the ones threatening the joy of diversity and the ones defending it.

This opposition allows us to think of a Manichaistic ethical universe without contradicting our concession of complete ignorance. We are not explaining the universe. We are taking a stand. There's a big difference.

This is where a critique of Pyrrhonism should begin. For premeditated social purposes its adherents turned a revolutionary epistemology into reactionary politics with lame arguments about moral decision-making processes. The desire to eat and the desire to end injustice are much less different from each other than the Pyrrhonists wanted to make us believe. But that's a story to be told some other time.

The good fight for life's freedom and multiplicity. This is their universal ethic destiny.

All other ethical questions — the ones related to defining our moral worlds — are part of this freedom and multiplicity and will be asked and answered — and reasked and reanswered — within the realms of our relative worlds.

To fight deception without knowing what is true, to fight evil without knowing what is right. That's the path of the militant mystic.

(2001)

Materialistic Pantheism: Another Sketch

Three assumptions underlie this paper:

1. We strive for antifascist forms of existence, meaning: lives without hierarchy, authority, and competition, and hence neither need nor possibility for oppression and exploitation.
2. We live in an individualistic society in which personal success is regarded as the existential priority, in this way undermining communal life in solidarity without which antifascist forms of existence must remain impossible.
3. Philosophical theories have inevitable implications for our practical lives.

It is in this sense that I want to introduce a materialistic pantheism as an ontological basis for radically antifascist forms of existence.

What antifascist forms of existence need is an ontology understanding life as a diverse unity of interconnected and interacting forces. An ontology that does not see reality in opposites and hierarchies, but as a web of forms and energies of equal value.

Perhaps most importantly, spirit and matter must not be regarded as contradicting principles. The dichotomy of spirit and matter provides the foundation for the individualistic philosophical systems of modernity (both rationalism and idealism). These systems have to be transcended. We have to realize that it was only by a violent anthropocentric act that spirit got separated from matter.

Matter is not what it is thought of in the spirit-matter-dichotomy. It is not dead but alive, and it does not stand in opposition to spirit but contains spiritual forces. It is the life-spending principle that has created all, spirit included, or simply: it is the source of life. Materialism is a requirement for an uncompromising antidualistic world-view. Not the supposed prehistoric murder of the father is of interest, but the murders of the mother in the history of civilization by the hands of patriarchal powers trying to negate the creative