

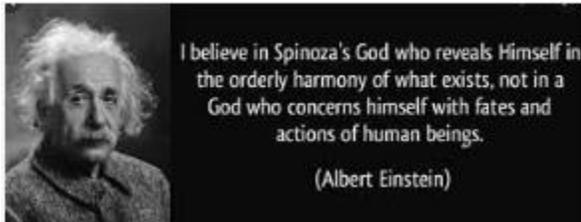


Contents

Intro.....	4
Spinoza and the TAO.....	7
The More You Pay Attention To Something	14
Did Einstein Say He Believed in the Pantheistic God of Baruch Spinoza?	16
Einstein wasn't afraid to question religion as critically as he did scientific theory.....	16
Einstein's poem.....	20
When Stephen Hawking spoke of the mind of God, was he referring to Spinoza's God?	22
The Dilemma.....	24
An Animated Introduction to Baruch Spinoza: The "Philosopher's Philosopher"	25
The wizard of light.....	27
Ladder to the Stars.....	28
This one's for you, dad.....	29
Meditation Magazine's Interview with Neil deGrasse Tyson!	32
Michio Kaku believes in God, if not that God.....	51
Spinoza's Metaphysics & Its Relevance For Science Today	55
Zoran Vukadinovic thinks Spinoza could help us with our enquiries.	55
Two Modern Metaphysical Positions.....	55
Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Outline	57
Spinoza's Monism	58
Substance & Science.....	60
Mind-Body Correspondence.....	61
Conclusion.....	62
Is Karma a Law of Nature?	63
It seems Matthew Gindin is destined to ask, and answer, this question.	63
Karma Stop bouncing the ball.....	64
Dogen, Spinoza, and Whitehead.....	74
ADVAITAVADA VERSUS SPINOZA'S MONISM	86
The more attention you pay	92
The Door Of Life	93
The Field Ripples Everywhere.....	94
The Sculpture	95
A reason to stop worrying.....	97

Who am I.....	98
Time	99
The Floor Drops Underneath You	101
Maya	103
You are the universe	105
What Does Yogananda Think About Spinoza’s Pantheistic Philosophy?	107
Closing.....	110

Intro



"I believe in Spinoza's God, who reveals Himself in the lawful harmony of the world, not in a God who concerns himself with the fate and the doings of mankind," Einstein

During the last couple of years, I have heard this quote from Albert Einstein numerous times. I never understood it because I never knew about the work of Spinoza. He was a 16th-century philosopher whose theories are still alive today.

During my research on this project, I have found many great scientists who believe in this vision that Spinoza had.

When Spinoza was alive, he took the world by storm with his great insight. Both Christians and Jews were angry. What he was saying. He didn't believe that God sat on a throne and ruled with an iron fist.

His insight was similar to the Taoists. He believed the entire universe is conscious and aware. This was a radical idea for its time.

The current situation the world is in is similar to a person sawing off the branch we are sitting on.

We are divorced from nature. We are separate from nature. We live our lives, consuming things so that we can hopefully be happy in the end. Consequently, the world is in chaos.

Spinoza believed that the universe is in harmony yet man is not. When a man is not in harmony, chaos exists. Currently, we live our lives focused solely on me. We don't see the unity behind all things. We were never taught that in Sunday school very

The great scientific minds of yesterday and today embrace the concepts of Spinoza's version of God. That should say something. Yet today poorly anybody knows about this great man.

I'm 70 years old and yet only in the last 2 weeks have I found how incredible! this man was.

He was excommunicated from his Jewish faith. He was considered a heresy. He had to move outside of his country. When he moved to another country that Christians tried to murder him because of what he was saying.

Such was the conviction that he had.

I have been blown away by the similarities between his thoughts and the thoughts stemming from the east.

Most scientists don't believe in God the way most people do. Yet they do embrace the thoughts that Spinoza had in the 16th century.

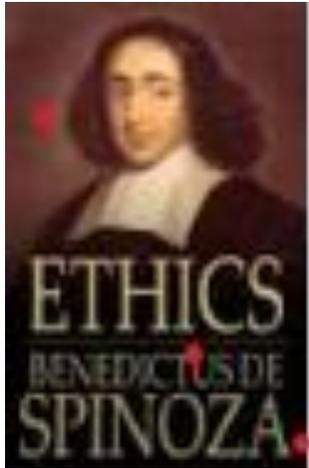
Let's take a ride together and see how amazing this man was. This is quite an incredible journey.



Spinoza: A Complete Guide to Life

Then & Now ✓ 1.2M views

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compare the natural un-tampered with flowing of a stream or river to the nature of a person in harmony with his or her environment—the person is always seeking the path of least resistance or least conflict like a river’s waters flow around boulders or rocks as opposed to through them or against them.

In chapter one of Lao Tzu’s Tao Te Ching, it is expressed that, “The Tao that can be known, is not the eternal Tao.” Basically, Lao Tzu is expressing that the ultimate force of nature is infinite and beyond our capacity to conveniently define. This type of language and expression is similar to Spinoza’s notion of an infinite divine power with infinite qualities and attributes. Lao Tzu makes no claim that the Tao or “The Way” is a deity or not a deity, but rather his poetic, linguistic illustrations suggest that there is definitely an ordered design to the universe and an ordered pattern behind all things created.

Everything that has life seems to live according to its nature in accordance with its qualities and attributes and features. For example, a fish swims and behaves accordingly because it is in its nature to do so and it was created to do so and to expect a fish to live as anything else than a fish would not be in accord with the Tao or with our understanding of nature. We cannot reasonably expect a fish to behave and exist as we would say, a grizzly bear for example. Dictating why a fish is a fish and a grizzly bear is a grizzly bear, is the Tao, according to Lao Tzu—the infinite force of nature.

Lao Tzu is coming at his conclusions in a very simplistic but practical way which reflects a very strong cosmic worldview. His perspective or focus was on the physical world and physical environment around him. His primary concerns were not of the divine or transcendent. While he might have believed in deities or spirits and was aware of local myths and legends, he expressed that the Tao was the ultimate, overarching force of creation and the source of life and death and the directing energy that defined why things existed as they did and why things continue to exist as they do. His philosophy, based on his belief that mankind should strive to be attuned to their natures and in harmony with their environment and the Tao and develop their characters in accordance with that search for all encompassing harmony is based not on abstract theories and concepts or by the progression of logical arguments and premises as Spinoza’s propositions of Rene Descartes’ Meditations, but rather on everyday sense

experiences and observations of un-tampered with nature as they occur in the present.

It is when mankind tries to change the nature of things or tries to tamper with or control something contrary to its design or nature or qualities and attributes, that mankind can expect to see chaos or conflict or disharmony.

With this in mind, we see that both Spinoza and Lao Tzu are expressing a belief in a universal creating force that is ordered, orderly, and all-encompassing and indivisible. Lao Tzu expects mankind and creatures to be in harmony with each other and recognizes that to be in harmony is to be attuned with the Tao—the universal shared guiding and enabling force that made everything what it is. Spinoza claims similarly that what he calls God cannot be divided or separated and that all creation and all that is created shares qualities and attributes of God—that which has infinite qualities and attributes. It is the shared qualities and attributes that connect us with God. It is the notion that only an infinite, singular creative force encompassing all possible qualities and attributes could conceive and create all things that establishes we have no choice but to be connected by virtue of our creation to the force that created us.

Lao Tzu recognizes that free will enables mankind to be in disharmony with the Tao but he never states that there is ever a total disconnect from the Tao.⁴⁴ The implication of the eighty-one chapters of the Tao Te Ching are that there cannot be existence without the Tao's continued, infinite presence. Whether we acknowledge it in our own lives or not, we are infinitely tied to the forces of nature—the Tao. We are subject to them as well as a part of them. We are also able to tamper but never fully control or reliably harness them completely.

These conclusions from Lao Tzu are compatible and are parallel to Spinoza's conclusions about God as Nature. In Spinoza's view, mankind cannot control God or interfere with God's modes or qualities and attributes. We cannot prevent or determine what will ultimately be created or designed through the course of time without acknowledging that even our intent and our attempts and actions towards disrupting God are inseparable from God. The forces that ultimately dictate how things are and why they are will correct and compensate for our tampering and meddling with the ultimate natural force, according to both Spinoza and Lao Tzu. God, like the Tao, can anticipate and restore order when

mankind acts to create chaos. Both Lao Tzu and Spinoza acknowledge that struggles between God and Mankind and Tao and Mankind exist. And how the Tao and God react to Mankind's acts of free will are also similar. Both God and the Tao remain infinite and both share infinite qualities, attributes, and properties to enable and create infinite reactions in a perfect, orderly process to ultimately correct for chaos or imbalances in Nature—possibly at the expense of Mankind if Mankind chooses to continue to act in discord with God or the Tao.

In summary, while Lao Tzu is connecting Tao to the forces of Nature or the forces that enable Nature to act, Spinoza's language and ideas of God depict a divine force or divine nature very similar in characteristics and properties as Nature or as Lao Tzu puts it, the Tao. The end results of Tao in action and inaction are the same results Spinoza has observed in defining what God is and what the divine nature has do

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The More You Pay Attention To Something

I stumbled upon this mantra a few years ago.

It came from the well within.

The more you pay attention to something the more attention it pays to you.

I know this may sound crazy but here goes.

In the beginning, one meditates on God.

After some point in time, God begins to meditate on you.

The more you pay attention to something the more attention it pays to you.

It's like a radio station KGOD.

The radio station has been in existence for eternity.

It has always been broadcasting.

Yet we have forgotten to tune in to that station.

Consequently, we live our lives without tuning within.

When one discovers the station within one begins to tune in each moment to that signal.

That's the signal behind your breath.

It's like a tuning fork.

The more one tunes into this divine station the more body and mind tune into this station.

After some point, this divine station starts to pay attention to you.

Christ and many other great masters demonstrated this to the world.

This radio broadcast exists inside of you.

The universe is singing a love song to each one of us.

It is custom designed.

The operating system, hardware, and software have been there since birth.

The radio station has been broadcasting for eons.

You just have to tune in to it.

The only way is to go within.

You can't listen to this station with your external ears.

You have internal senses that have been lying dormant for many years.

Look at a newborn child and you will see what I'm talking about.

Note this is your true nature.

You are a part of this divine broadcast signal.

Talk to any quantum scientist today and they will tell you the same thing.

You are the universe and you just don't know it.

Roll your eyes all you want but in essence, that is who you are.

We are stuck on a video level of life where we have forgotten our true nature.

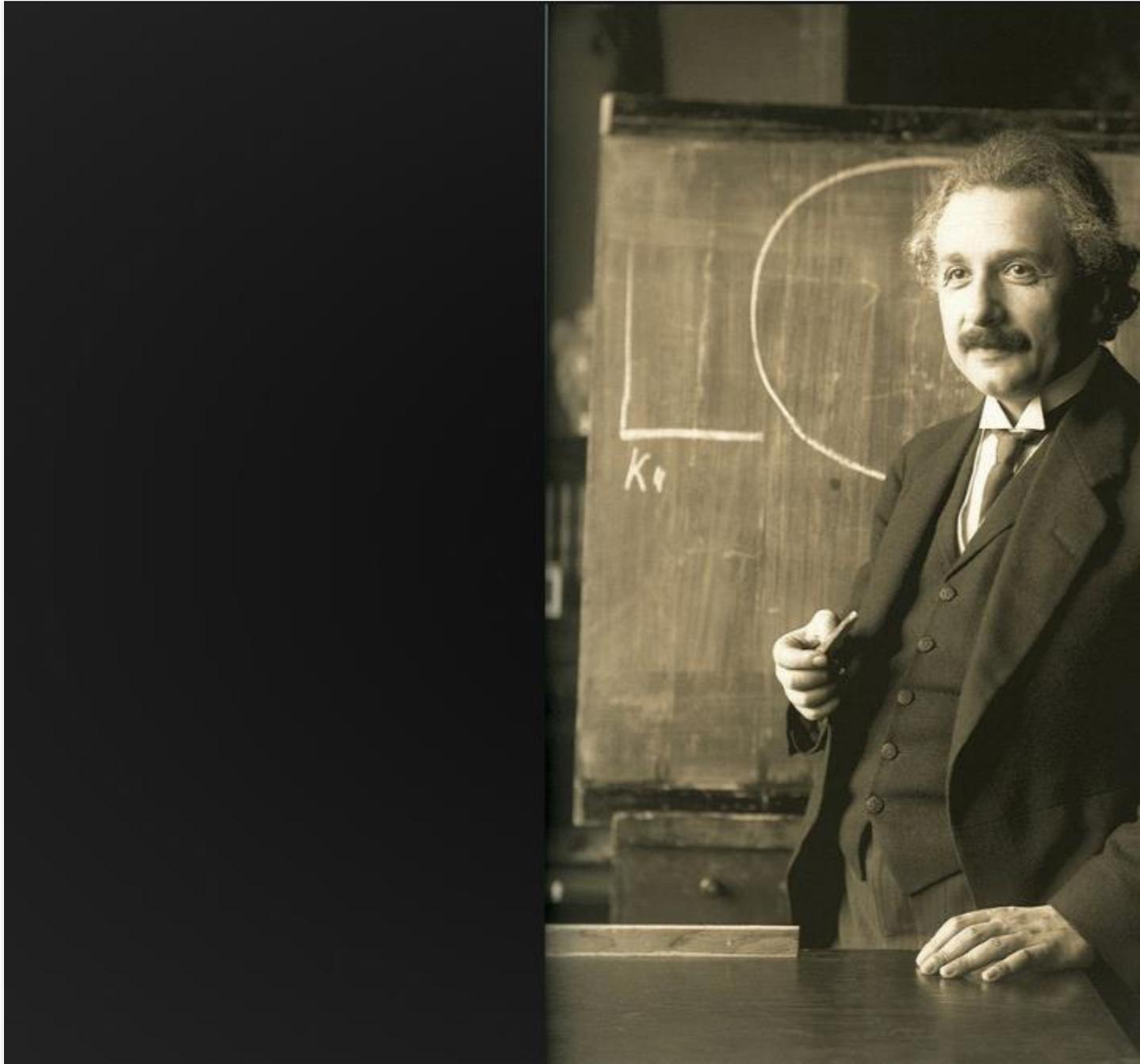
Consequently, chaos is all around.

You can solve this missing piece of the puzzle.

Did Einstein Say He Believed in the Pantheistic God of Baruch Spinoza?
Einstein wasn't afraid to question religion as critically as he did scientific theory.

Madison Dapcevich

Published Dec 3, 2020



Albert Einstein during a lecture in Vienna in 1921. Creative Commons

Claim:

²Albert Einstein said he believed in pantheism, a theological doctrine based on the work of 17th-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza.

Rating:



Correct Attribution

[About this rating](#)

Throughout the course of his life, physicist Albert Einstein, the publisher of the theory of relativity, affirmed his belief in pantheism, a theological doctrine based on the work of 17th-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza.

When **asked** by the prominent American Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein if Einstein believed in God in a telegram dated April 25, 1929, he responded that he followed a different doctrine.

“I believe in Spinoza’s God, who reveals Himself in the lawful harmony of the world, not in a God who concerns himself with the fate and the doings of mankind,” Einstein **replied**.

Generally speaking, pantheism identifies God with the universe or regards the universe as a manifestation of God. The worship is founded on the belief that everything is one and, in essence, admits and tolerates all gods.

“Just like the cells in our bodies, working together as a whole, everything is part of one infinite being. This eternal, single existence is The Living

² <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/einstein-pantheism-baruch-spinoza/>

Universe,” states the Living Universe Church, which abides by the doctrine of pantheism, on its [official website](#).

Einstein’s association with Spinoza and the pantheism [went viral](#) in December 2018 when the famed auction house Christie’s listed “The God Letter” as open for bidding on Dec. 4 and subsequently sold it for nearly \$2.9 million. The celebrated letter was addressed to German Jewish philosopher Eric Gutkind in response to his third book, "Choose Life: The Biblical Call to Revolt," which is described by the auction house as having presented the Bible as a call to arms and argued that Judaism and Israel as incorruptible.

In the letter, written in 1954 shortly before Einstein's death the following year, the physicist outlined his “thoughts on religion, his Jewish identity, and his own search for meaning in life,” according to the [auction page](#). In an [abridged version of the letter](#), Einstein referenced Spinoza but did not refer to pantheism by name. He wrote:

... The word God is for me nothing more than the expression and product of human weaknesses, the Bible a collection of honorable, but still primitive legends which are nevertheless pretty childish. No interpretation no matter how subtle can (for me) change this. These subtilized interpretations are highly manifold according to their nature and have almost nothing to do with the original text. For me, the Jewish religion like all other religions is an incarnation of the most childish superstitions. And the Jewish people to whom I gladly belong and with whose mentality I have a deep affinity have no different quality for me than all other people. As far as my experience goes, they are also no better than other human groups, although they are protected from the worst cancers by a lack of power. Otherwise, I cannot see anything 'chosen' about them.

In general, I find it painful that you claim a privileged position and try to defend it by two walls of pride, an external one as a man and an internal one as a Jew. As a man you claim, so to speak, a dispensation from causality otherwise accepted, as a Jew the privilege of monotheism. But a limited causality is no longer a causality at all, as our wonderful Spinoza recognized with all incision, probably as the first one. And the animistic interpretations of the religions of nature are in principle not annulled by monopolization. With such walls, we can only attain a certain self-deception, but our moral efforts are not furthered by them. On the contrary.

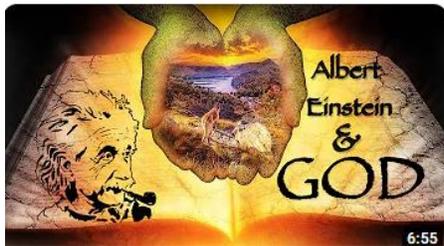
Einstein was known to contemplate the many facets of religion and the concept of God, sometimes as critically as he did science. In a commentary

published on Nov. 9, 1940, in the journal Nature aptly titled “Science and Religion,” the man of Jewish descent posited that he could not easily define the concept of religion, but noted fundamental similarities and differences between it and science.

“If one conceives of religion and science according to these definitions, then a conflict between them appears impossible. For science can only ascertain what is, but not what should be, and outside its domain value judgments of all kinds remain necessary,” he wrote.

“Religion, on the other hand, deals only with evaluations of human thought and action; it cannot justifiably speak of facts and relationships between facts.”

By Madison Dapcevich



Albert Einstein's Answer about God, Pantheism, Baruch Spinoza

8.3K views • 2 years ago



Albert Einstein was a German physicist and one of the most wonderful minds of the twentieth century. He was highly respected ...

Einstein's poem

³It is well known that Einstein's religious credo was inspired by that of Spinoza. In his book on "Einstein and Religion", Max Jammer writes:

The philosopher whom Einstein admired most was Baruch (later, Benedictus) Spinoza, the seventeenth-century Jewish philosopher, who was excommunicated by the Amsterdam synagogue and declined the Heidelberg professorship in order to live as a lens grinder, leading an independent life dedicated to philosophical reflections.... Einstein was most influenced by Spinoza's thesis of an unrestricted determinism and the belief in the existence of a superior intelligence that reveals itself in the harmony and beauty of nature.

The earliest recorded reference of Einstein to Spinoza is a poem from 1920. We are not used to think of Einstein as a poet, and one may wonder what triggered his poetic expression in that year. Here I offer a speculation, based on an unexpected discovery made during a recent visit to a little house in the village of Rijnsburg, just outside Leiden.

Carlo Beenakker

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[House in Rijnsburg, near Leiden.](#)



[Spinoza lived here from 1660-1663.](#)



[Spinoza's library.](#)

³ https://www.lorentz.leidenuniv.nl/history/Einsteins_poem/Spinoza.html



Inspection of the book of visitors.



Einstein signed on 2 November 1920.



Was this when Einstein fell in love with Spinoza?

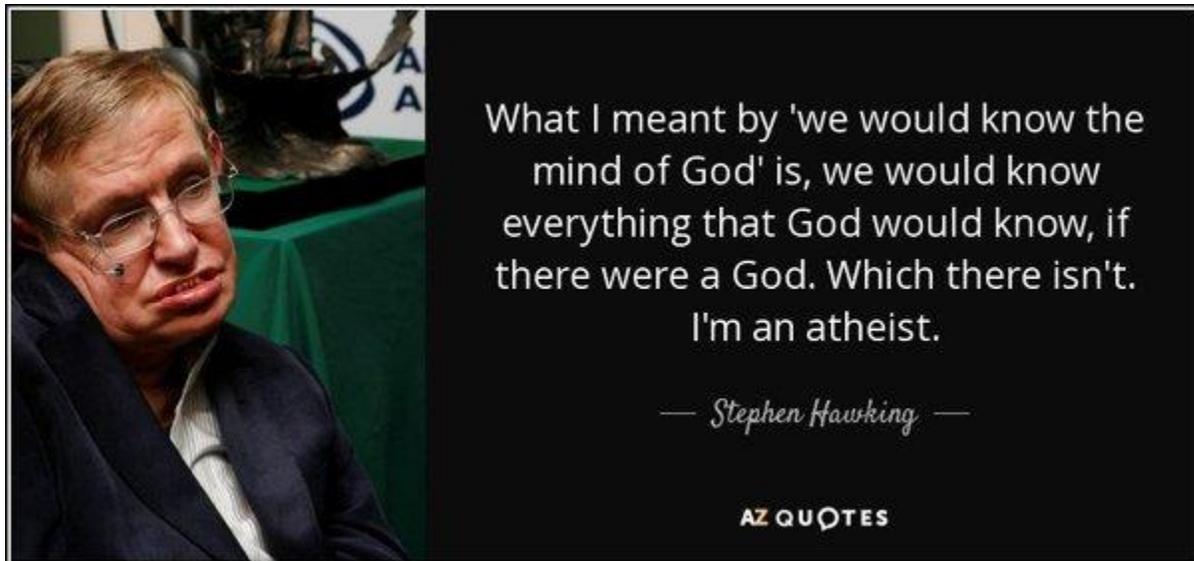
The photographs of the Spinoza house were made by Dick van der Kroef from [NWO](#), on the occasion of a visit by the recipients of the NWO/Spinoza award.

Lees een [Nederlandse versie](#) van dit verhaal.

When Stephen Hawking spoke of the mind of God, was he referring to Spinoza's God?
Answer

Bryan Carl

⁴In a nutshell, Stephen Hawking was using "God" as an illustrative concept to express "all knowing." See the quote below.



Spinoza's God is not far from atheism in many respects. He basically believed that the collective energy of the entire universe is an infinite, impersonal awareness that can be expected to behave exactly as it always has because that's its nature. It doesn't intervene and can't be prayed to, although it can be, let's say, "realized" for lack of a better term. So the reality of life or the universe doesn't change much between Spinoza's God and Hawking's atheism, except that the way Spinoza perceived the universe would have been laced with more mysticism and awe.

Some of the contemporary theories of a universe where all matter harbors its own version of awareness on some level, while blissfully following the laws of physics out of its own nature, are very similar if not identical to Spinoza's god, and are probably the most palatable and logical versions of spirituality that someone like Hawking might be willing to consider. I'm using the term "spirituality" loosely because these ideas don't include the idea of spirit, only matter/energy/awareness—all things we know to exist in the physical universe. But then maybe he did consider that idea—or even believe it—but just did not consider that idea "God." If the universe is not aware of us as a separate being, not personalized, just an essence of "life" that permeates the cosmos, is that really God? Or is it just a property of matter/energy that can lead to complex organisms given the right circumstances? It's a very

⁴ <https://www.quora.com/When-Stephen-Hawking-spoke-of-the-mind-of-God-was-he-referring-to-Spinozas-God>

different paradigm to be sure, but someone could easily believe that and still claim to be an atheist.

I think the lesson here is that it's hard to decipher what brilliant physicist believed about God unless they were very explicit about that, because it's so hard to even agree on a definition of God and how that might fit within the universe we know or can imagine. In all honesty, I don't think all the conjecture about Hawking's or Einstein's religious beliefs would interest them much or they would have talked about it more.

The Dilemma

Here's the dilemma.

The universe is linear or so it seems.

We can travel linearly from earth to the moon.

Everything we do is linear.

We think that God is in heaven sitting on a throne.

We think that angels have wings.

Yet what if God is a multidimensional energy?

A scientist can only see in 3D.

God is beyond 3D.

The creation is 3D yet the creator is beyond 3D.

Your true self exists in both 3D and beyond.

This is a great mystery.

This is the dilemma.

How can something that is 3D find God that is 3D and beyond?

This is the true game of life.

Find out who you truly are.

An Animated Introduction to Baruch Spinoza: The “Philosopher’s Philosopher”

in [Philosophy](#) | January 7th, 2021 t



PHILOSOPHY - Baruch Spinoza

The School of Life 2M views

Spinoza tried to replace the bible with a scientifically-based ethical system. He succeeded in theory – but not in practice. Please...

⁵The so-called [Enlightenment period](#) encompasses a surprisingly diverse collection of thinkers, if not always in ethnic or national origin, at least in intellectual disposition, including perhaps the age’s most influential philosopher, the “philosopher’s philosopher,” [writes Assad Meymandi](#). [Baruch Spinoza](#) did not fit the image of the bewigged philosopher-gentleman of means we tend to popularly associate with Enlightenment thought.

He was born to a family of Sephardic Portuguese Marranos, Jews who were forced to convert to Catholicism but who reclaimed their Judaism when they relocated to Calvinist Amsterdam. [Spinoza](#) himself was “excommunicated by Amsterdam Jewry in 1656,” writes [Harold Bloom in a review of Rebecca Goldstein’s *Betraying Spinoza*](#): “The not deeply chagrined 23-year-old Spinoza did not become a Calvinist, and instead consorted with more liberal Christians, particularly Mennonites.”

Spinoza read “Hebrew, paleo-Hebrew, Aaramaic, Greek, Latin, and to some degree Arabic,” writes Meymandi. “He was not a Muslim, but behaved like a Sufi in that he gave away all his possessions to his step sister. He was heavily influenced by Al Ghazali, Baba Taher Oryan, and Al Farabi.” He is also “usually counted, along with Descartes and Leibniz, as one of the three major Rationalists,” Loyola professor Blake D. Dutton notes at the [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#), a thinker who “made significant contributions in virtually every area of philosophy.”

One might say without exaggeration that it is impossible to understand Enlightenment thinking without reading this most heterodox of thinkers, and in particular reading his *Ethics*, which is itself no easy task. In this work, as Alain de Botton puts it in his School of Life introduction to Spinoza above, the philosopher tried “to reinvent religion, moving it away from something based

⁵<https://www.openculture.com/2021/01/an-animated-introduction-to-baruch-spinoza-the-philosophers-philosopher.html>

on superstition and direct divine intervention to something that is far more impersonal, quasi-scientific, and yet also, at times, serenely consoling.”

One might draw several lines from Spinoza to Sagan and also to Wittgenstein and other modern skeptics. His critiques of such cherished concepts as prayer and a personal relationship with a deity did not qualify him as a religious thinker in any orthodox sense, and he was derided as an “atheist Jew” in his time. But he took religion, and religious awe, very seriously, even if Spinoza’s God is indistinguishable from nature. To imagine that this great, mysterious entity should bend the rules to suit our individual needs and desires constitutes a “deeply distorted, infantile narcissism” in Spinoza’s estimation, says de Botton.

For Spinoza, a mature ethics instead consists in finding out how the universe works and accepting it, rather in the way of the Stoics or Nietzsche’s use of the Stoic idea of *amor fati*. It is within such acceptance, what Bloom calls Spinoza’s “icy sublimity,” that true enlightenment is found, according to Spinoza. Or as the de Botton video succinctly puts it: “The free person is the one who is conscious of the necessities that compel us all,” and who—instead of railing against them—finds creative ways to live within their limitations peacefully.

The wizard of light

⁶I grew up godless. I mean that in the best way possible. My parents were devoutly atheist, my father especially so. Do you know that childhood rhyme, “Here’s the church, here’s the steeple, open the doors and see all the ...” I was well into my 30s before I caught on that it was supposed to end, “and see all the people.” That’s because my dad taught me a different ending: “open the door and see all the idiots.”

My mom was also serious about her godlessness, though she wasn’t quite as dogmatic about it. In fact, she had wanted to be a nun at one point in her life. But living through the ravages of World War II and then realizing all the cruelty that people will do to one another convinced her that there had better be no god — or if there was, god had a lot to answer for.

So this is how I was raised. Godless. Churchless. Creedless. Without spirituality, I would say, except for one thing. Once a week, on Sunday nights, we would make a big bowl of popcorn, flavored with Lowrey’s seasoning salt, and gather on the couch to watch Carl Sagan’s groundbreaking and breathtaking science for the masses series, “Cosmos.”

To say we were fans barely touches it. My parents bought me the hardcover book where I read all the episodes covered and more. We bought the soundtrack — so many Vangelis songs. I even named one of my cats Cosmo later in life, and though I can’t say that’s entirely because of the series, the good feelings I had for the name certainly didn’t hurt.

Sagan, sadly is gone. But [Cosmos is back](#), headed by [Neil DeGrasse Tyson](#). The series has just started its second season with DeGrasse Tyson as its host on National Geographic (in the U.S.), and its first episode has a very special guest. Just having the series back on television makes me sentimental to the point of weepiness, with memories of my parents and I and the closest thing

⁶<https://theamsterdamned.com/2020/03/11/the-wizard-of-light/>

we ever came to sharing spirituality, but add my new friend Spinoza to the mix, and you know I'm a goner.

Ladder to the Stars

One of the great things about Cosmos — then and now — is that it doesn't just talk about science. It also teaches the story of mankind. It deftly tucks in threads of history, weaving together a tapestry of humanity that is full and rich. It was on that program where I first learned about the Great Library of Alexandria, that Christopher Columbus was not the person to discover the world was round (and how the ancients even calculated the earth's circumference), about great minds like Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler, and that people can interfere with evolution through artificial selection.

I'm so glad DeGrasse Tyson is continuing that tradition. Not everyone has a great mind for science, myself included, and sometimes we need to be tricked into the stuff. Disclosure: I loved Cosmos, and because of it, I thought I would love my high school physics class. And I loved the part where we covered the history of it. But the rest of it was a drag and I was glad to scrape by with a low C.

In the first episode of this season, "Ladder to the Stars," DeGrasse Tyson gives a rapid overview of the evolution of the universe from the Big Bang to today with the iconic cosmic calendar, and then a broad sweep of mankind's development from a small tribe of nomadic hunter-gatherers to an overly successful people ready to step off our shores to explore for new lands on distant planets.



Animation of Spinoza on Cosmos ... tell me if you spot the anachronism!

Along the way, though, he talks about some of the scientific pioneers who helped us get here. And he talks specifically about the Dutch Republic in the 1600s, which was open to scientific exploration in a way that few other places in Europe were then, or had been for many hundreds of years earlier. He names Christiaan Huygens. He names Anthonie van Leeuwenhoek. Then he names a third, at around 27:30 (I would have included the video clip if I could have found it).

He was another wizard of light. Baruch Spinoza had been a member of the Jewish congregation of Amsterdam through his teen years, but in his early 20s, he began to speak publicly of a new vision of god. Spinoza's god was the physical laws of the universe. His sacred text, the laws of nature. ...

He went even further, daring to write that the bible was not dictated by god but written by human beings. Spinoza wrote, "Do not look for god in miracles. Miracles are violations of the rule of nature. God is best apprehended in the study of those laws." No one had ever said these things out loud. Spinoza knew he was testing the limits of free thought even for Holland.

To him, an official state religion was more than spiritual coercion. Spinoza regarded the major events of organized religious traditions as organized superstition. In his view, magical thinking posed a danger to the future citizens of a rational, free society. There could be no such thing as a democracy without a separation of church and state. He wrote a book that introducing the ideas at the heart of the American and many another revolution.

[This one's for you, dad](#)

I can't help but think of my dear, blasphemous father, who made an allowance for spirituality only so far as it brushed up against wonder induced by science. I wish he were still around to watch these episodes, to knock around talk about Spinoza and his philosophies, to talk about this crazy election cycle and

the plague that's closing in. Sometimes I just miss him more than others, and Cosmos just brings it out of me.

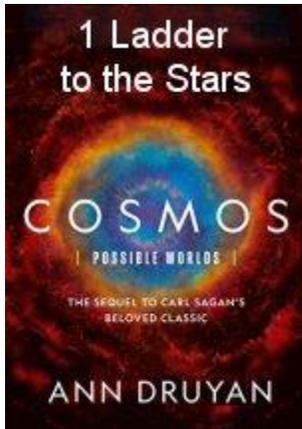


The last photo of me with my dad.

But I'm grateful to DeGrasse Tyson and Cosmos, too. They're introducing a new and younger generation of kids to these big ideas — the exploration of space, the possibility of life elsewhere, the urgent need to preserve it here. Maybe some other young girl is hearing about Spinoza for the first time and wanting to know more, or perhaps the name will just be tucked away in her head, laying dormant until some point in the future when it becomes relevant. I hope the young people watching are picking up an encompassing wonder of it all. And if they stop to think long enough, I hope they find a gratitude for getting to be a part of it.

I owe gratitude to my parents, too, for instilling that wonder in me. Because they cared enough to make that bowl of popcorn every week, and to settle down on the couch and watch a show that opened my eyes to big ideas, and then afterward talked with me about things I could scarcely understand — but talk with me in a way like my thoughts and ideas mattered. I have been so very fortunate.

May the other young people watching this show get to have the same good fortune I did.



Watch free online

Following the wildly successful 'Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey,' Neil deGrasse Tyson returns as host to translate more revelations of science into a lavish transporting experience, taking audiences on a series of spiritual voyages of exploration. The show reveals previously uncharted realms, including lost worlds, worlds yet to come, and the worlds that humans may one day inhabit. Ann Druyan, original creative collaborator to Carl Sagan, whose iconic docuseries 'Cosmos' provided inspiration for this series, serves as executive producer alongside Seth MacFarlane. Episode 1 takes viewers on a wild ride with the Ship of Imagination in an adventure spanning billions of years into the evolution of life. ...

Meditation Magazine's Interview with Neil deGrasse Tyson!



[Mary Grace](#)

September 10, 2022 · 28 min read



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Meditation Magazine: We are now streaming live on Facebook with Doctor Neil deGrasse Tyson, who is a pretty amazing astrophysicist. Neil is an author, one of the most popular scientific advocates in the world today. He studied physics at Harvard, got his PhD in astrophysics from Columbia University, hosted the Cosmo Series, which is a modern reflection of Carl Sagan's older series of the same name, as well as the Star Talk series, which is ongoing. Neil is currently the director of the Hayden Planetarium in New York City, where he's been serving since 1996. Thank you for being here, Neil and welcome to Meditation Magazine.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Well, thanks for having me. I just want to add not that you asked that Hayden Planetarium was where I first discovered the universe when I was 9 years old as a city resident. Resident of New York City where we don't have a relationship with the night sky when you live in a big city with tall buildings and back then, there was a lot of smog, light pollution. So, the sky created for me in the planetarium dome became an indelible force operating on the rest of my life.

Meditation Magazine: I actually can really relate to that. I grew up in Long Island and visited the Hayden Planetarium many times as a child and it really inspired me to be to sort of nerd out about the university.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yeah. It's a nerd safe space. I bet you remember your very first trip there. I bet you remember that.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, I really do. I remember the feeling of awe.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: I think it's many people's first virtual reality experience, because the lights dim, the stars come out, and you're transported in ways that no other thing that you could have done at the time would have enabled. So, I think that's why people's planetarium, first planetarium moments are remembered for a lifetime.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah. I want to get into more of that in a few minutes. I just want to introduce some things here. So, first, for anybody watching, you should know that this interview is, we're going to take excerpts and we're going to use them for the universe issue of Meditation Magazine which is all about our oneness with the universe, our connection with the universe. It's going to be available in thousands of stores, 20 something countries around the world and if you're a subscriber in the US or in Canada, you're going to receive it in October and if another country is probably in November. If you're not subscribed yet, you should go to "Meditationmag.com/subscribe", so that you can get our print magazine.

I'd also like to introduce the thesis sort of that I have that I want to explore during this interview. So, modern meditators, we kind of live at the intersection between science and mysticism. While mystics and scientists may sometimes seem to be at odds with each other, we also have more in common than we may realize. We're all nerds at heart. We look deeply into the universe and the nature of reality and we enjoy these explorations of existence. So, in those ways, we're kind of brothers in arms, mystics and scientists. So, I want this conversation to explore that intersection between science, meditation, and mysticism. Where do we converge in our realizations? Where do we diverge in our epistemologist? But most importantly, let us marvel together in awe at this epic and beautiful universe and hopefully enjoy the ride.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: That's quite a preamble too. But that's a lot to cover in a half hour.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, it is.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Alright, we see how far we get.

Meditation Magazine: So, we'll try to roll quickly. But first I actually wanted to just touch on some recent events before we get into the heavy stuff. The James Webb telescope. I'm so excited about it. I know you're excited about it. I'm going to switch

us into immersive view for a second so we can have a picture of it. A picture of, here you go. Look at that.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: I'm feeling it.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, we're talking the universe.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Well, you're right there too, right. You're on this side of me. There we go.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, you can see me.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: There we go.

Meditation Magazine: It's cool, right. I love Zoom. It has all these weird features. But, the universe that we can see through the James Webb telescope, we're now seeing so much more, and in more detail. Like, how do you feel about this? I know you've talked about all the cool things, about the James Webb telescope, but how do you feel about the fact that we can see so much more clearly now.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: So, I'm going to answer it in a way you might not be expecting, right. I would say since the industrial revolution, maybe late 1700s, certainly into the 1800s and then into the 1900s, 20th century. Exploration and discovery and the pace that that has unfolded has basically been exponential. What that means is at any given moment, if you jump into that timeline, at any given moment, everyone is saying, look at how advanced things are. Look at how detailed it is. Look at how far we've come, and that is the hallmark of an exponential curve. Everybody thinks they're living in a special time.

So, correct. I will bask in the majesty of these images. This one is the Karina Nebula which is the infrared capabilities of the James Webb space telescope enables it to peer deep within, I got to use that a deeper voice, deep within, you're going to say that word. You might as well ride it with everything for it. The infra enables you to probe deep into the gas clouds and see stellar nurseries that at this stage of their development are cloaked, shrouded by the very gas cloud that is birthing it. You would not otherwise be able to see that where not for the exquisite infrared detection abilities of this telescope. So, and by the way, just, I guess I can point to it, can I?

Meditation Magazine: Yeah.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Almost. So, the spiky objects are simply stars that are much closer to us in our field of view. Can we see it now? Yeah. It's just right there.

Meditation Magazine: Right here. I'll make you bigger. There you go.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Even bigger? So that one and then there's one above my head there. And there's some over your head as well. Take me down again. I'm too big.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah okay. Here we go. Alright. There we go. Now we're small.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Thank you. So those spikes, they look almost biblical, right. Because as stars are portrayed in frescos. Certainly, the star Bethlehem but that is an artifact of what occurs in the imaging when the starlight enters the telescope, the volume of the telescope, it actually diffracts around what we call the spider mounts of secondary mirrors and tertiary mirrors and this sort of thing. So, as the light moves into the hardware of the telescope itself, if the light is bright, it's susceptible to those artifacts of the telescope and that's why the spikes are in exactly the same place for each object in the image.

So, anyhow, point is, yes, this is amazing and it's beautiful and its way better than the Hubble telescope. This is doing in just a few release images what Hubble like struggled to get to perfect over many, many years. However, when Hubble came out and it was giving us images, everyone was saying the same thing about Hubble. This is my point, okay. Yes, I will bask in the majesty of the data of the James Webb space telescope in just the same way I did when the Hubble telescope was finally fixed and was producing perfect images. Just the same way I did when the 200-inch Palomar telescope in California was producing these spectacular images of galaxies of Nebula. That was back in the 1950s and 60s and early 70s because that's how old I am. So, be glad not simply that you are living in a special time, but that we are living overall in a time of exponential increase in cosmic scientific knowledge broadly especially cosmic knowledge.

Meditation Magazine: Thank you. I'm not even that concerned about whether our time is special or not. I'm more like just, wow, this is awesome. You know what I mean? I kind of like just try to enjoy it as we go along.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: By the way, I'm glad you're using the word awesome in this context. Because the next generation, when you hear them use the word, it was like, it would be awesome if you pass the salt. It's like, no, no.

Meditation Magazine: They are inspired by this passing of salt.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Save it. But when we walk on Mars, alright. Leave some vocabulary for that.

Meditation Magazine: I'm looking forward to that. I've been watching for all Mankind. It's a really good show.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: There you go.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, I don't know if you've been seeing that, but it's great.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: I've saw bits of one, I know all about the series now.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah. So, I want to shift to talking about oneness, okay. The oneness of the universe and this is something that mystics have Talking about for thousands of years. Scientists are talking about it. I want to sort of find the commonalities here. You're a person who is well known for talking about that we are stardust and we are atomically connected to all the atoms in the universe. So can you tell me what you mean by that?

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Sure. So, I think one of the great gifts of modern astrophysics to civilization, was the discovery. This was in a research paper published in the 1950s. So, right midcentury, it was a discovery that the elements that we see on the periodic table, the carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, silicon, iron. You just look at all those. You say, where did they come from? I remember asking my chemistry teacher in high school. 'We find them in the Earth.' I said, 'Well, where did they come from before that?' He didn't have an answer. He should have and could have. He just didn't. I'd later learned, yes, we astrophysicist have figured this out. These elements are forged in the cores of stars. Short-lived stars, that in their fusion, they merge light atoms to make heavy atoms.

The sun is doing this now, merging hydrogen atoms to make helium and releasing energy. Because the helium atom that comes out of it weighs less than all the hydrogen atoms that went in. Where did that mass go? It was converted into energy. And right according to $E = MC^2$. The Einstein equation that we all have heard. So, there's some stars that continue this. Hydrogen to helium, the carbon, the nitrogen and it goes all the way down the periodic table. Then in the star explodes, scattering this enrichment across the galaxy.

That enrichment infuses these gas clouds that are about to make a new generation of stars and planets that orbit them. And the planets are made of these heavy ingredients, and so is life. So, you ask where did we come from? We came from the stars. And for me the most poetic accurate way to say this is not only are we alive in the universe, the universe is alive within us. We we're not just separate and distinct. We are one and the same. So, often people want to invoke the word special for being different.

I'm special because no one else is like me. I have an opposite view. I say, we are all special, because we are one in the same of the stars in the canopy of the universe.

For me, that's uplifting. It is a cosmic perspective that does the opposite of what so many other cosmic perspectives do. Most of them put you in your place. You're not that big. You're not living that long. You're not that. You're not, but really, we are a participant in the great unfolding of cosmic events. And as Carl Sagan wants mused. We might be thought of as a way for the universe to know itself. Because we're not just self-replicating life. We have a consciousness but not only that, probably many animals have consciousness. Surely, most do. But we also have curiosity. About things that go beyond our own survival, and that curiosity takes us into the universe. And upon doing so, we can end up not only asking but answering questions about origins, about fate. about the future.

So, I celebrate this fact. That the powers of human, of the human mind can take us to where we are today, and we're still going. Which is something I look forward to.

Meditation Magazine: Thank you. Thank you for that very eloquent expression of oneness with universe.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: I'm sorry, I'm giving long answers here. You want, I can tighten them up.

Meditation Magazine: We'll tighten it a little.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: I'll tighten it a little, I promise.

Meditation Magazine: I have a lot of questions. Okay, so that was beautiful though. Thanks you. So that's one way, first of all, I love the Carl Sagan quote, "We are away of the universe, for the universe to know itself". It's interesting that Alan Watts, who's sort of mystic, of the last generation, used very, very similar words. I think that, one of them looking through a telescope, and seeing it outwardly, and one of them looking sort of inwardly through meditation, both kind of seeing the same truth. That's something that I want to explore more later in our conversation. But for now, I want to focus on the scientific perspectives on oneness. So, you mentioned the E equals MC squared, that the matter is converted into energy and energy is converted to matter and really, matter is energy, right. Because matter is just energy condensed to a slow vibration.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Well, yeah, not to get pedantic and I hate getting pedantic or semantic.

Meditation Magazine: Pedantic, I love it.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: No, it's semantic is the word, I was looking for. But mass is the fundamental thing, okay. Mass can manifest as matter. Mass can manifest as energy. That's how you would think of that. And so, when we ask what's the mass of that object, you're going to add up the matter content, the particles it's made of, and you're going to end up add up the energy to give you the total mass of what you're describing. So, yes, it manifests and you can convert matter into energy and back and forth. That happens all the time in the universe. Even if it's unfamiliar to your everyday life.

Meditation Magazine: So, if matter and energy are just two forms of mass, right. And they're kind of, this universe is really just one big field of mass, right? Does that make sense?

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yes, manifested in different ways. Creating and destroying within its own volume. So, yes, that's the most oneness aspect of this as you can. If you want to be totally about one, there you have the entire universe is. a matter, motion, and energy. Just manifest.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, matter, motion, energy, and really like you were saying, it's all mass. Is that what you would call? Is that's it's the universe is the mass?

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yeah, it's true but it's not always helpful because when the mass manifests as energy, it does different things than when it manifests as particles.

Meditation Magazine: You can break it down, right. We can break it down into its component part.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yes.

Meditation Magazine: But we could also see it as this oneness. So, we can have both perspectives.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: You can, I guess, scientifically, you want to have a point of view. Point of views are helpful when they give you insights into something you can calculate, something you can predict, something you can understand that has just happened. But to just run around and say, we're all just one thing. It might give you sort of some spiritual fulfillment, but you can't go out and say, okay, I'm going to use that information to land on the moon.

Meditation Magazine: I get you and this is actually a really great point. I mean, maybe there are multiple things that we can get out of different perspectives on the universe, right. We can get, like you said, spiritual fulfillment, you could call it like an emotional kind of connection with the universe by realizing that we're one with it. Not just an emotional, it's kind of like, there's a transcendence there. It's something that makes us feel infinite and it's something that it's a very powerful feeling.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yeah, and provided you not only know it but sort of think about it in a very positive way. There's a lot of energy that destroys things, right. So, I think you want to take the right slice through that pie and reflect on it in ways that do give leave you at the end of the day smiling rather than crying.

Meditation Magazine: So, actually, I wanted to just go into sort of like a little reflection on this. Because I think that we can get so much knowledge from science, but I think also is that that knowledge can inform our meditations. They can inform our reflections on reality when we look inside of ourselves. So, if we didn't know that the universe is one giant field of mass, it takes a while to get to the conclusion that everything is one. Like from the mystic's perspective, it can take years of meditation to realize this through other means. But when we realize through science that it's all one field of mass, then, we can just meditate on that for a moment, and really feel that, really feel that, transcend. Would you want to just close your eyes with me for a moment and just explain that?

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Sure.

Meditation Magazine: Let's just take a moment just to feel the body sitting here. So, you feel like all the sensations in your body from the top of your head to the bottoms of your feet and your palms of your hands. You feel your whole body sitting here and this that we feel as sensations like our arms and our legs, we call them sensations. We're experiencing something. We're experiencing the body. If we just take a moment to realize that this body is mass and the air around us is mass. And everything around us and the whole universe is mass. We can feel where does the edge of me end, and the beginning of the universe begin? We can feel that we are just part of this infinite, or gigantic field of mass. Just sitting here experiencing that.

Well, it's one thing to know it. It's another thing to feel it. And that's why I like to bring these realizations of this. We are part of this field of mass that we call the universe, to bring it into that feeling space and just feel it. Just blinking our eyes back open, coming back here into this conversation.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: So, I like the idea that, well, where do I end in the universe begin? There are other factors here by the way. There are gravitational fields, there are

electric fields. The fields is an idea put forth by Michael Faraday in the middle 1800s because think about it. You can't see a field. You can see what the field does and we all did this as children. You'd sprinkle iron filings on magnet and you can see the iron filings line up. Well, how do they know what's going on? So, the fields exist and they're real and we have gravitational field, not external to our body, it actually permeates our body. So, this idea that where do I end in the universe begin? I'd like that concept just meditatively, I think it's a powerful idea.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, and I think that just when we bring like these realizations into just closing our eyes and just feeling it, it can really enhance our appreciation for these scientific discoveries. The same way that the scientific discoveries can enhance our meditations. It kind of goes both ways. You know what I mean? That's why I say that mysticism and science can go hand in hand in certain ways. So, I wanted to shift into the spirituality of science. I feel like we've kind of covered this actually, but spirituality is a word in its own. Like mysticism is one thing, but spirituality is another thing. Do you feel like there's a certain kind of spirituality that can be felt through this, the practice of science?

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Let me answer that in a reverse way, right. So, I spent a lot of my time in graduate school, ascending mountain tops, okay, where the telescopes are. Why do astronomers go to mountains? Because that's where the telescopes are. Who's the guy who robs banks? Why do you rob banks? Because that's where the money is, right. There're certain blunt, true answers and often it involves what was felt like almost a pilgrimage because the mountains are not nearby. There's certainly not near cities. So, you have to some place and then take a bus and then at some vehicle up the mountain, then, you have to, this is in my day, things are a little different today. But in my day, then, you'd have to flip your living so that you go nocturnal. Then, you have this relationship with a telescope.

It's you, this eye to the universe, and the universe. And you collect data on not digitally, in modern times, of course, it's done digitally. Then you go like, go back home with this like, pack, this, this disc of data and then you decode the operations of nature. What I can tell you is when I'm on the mountaintop, especially on some occasions where clouds roll in and if the mountain's high enough, it's above the clouds, right. And if the moon is out, the moon is illuminating the tops of the clouds. So, it's you, the tops of clouds, the moon, and the rest of the universe. It's like you're on Mount Olympus or something. Where you don't even know if there's an earth below you. You're just floating. And having been a fan of the universe since I was 9 to be in that moment. I don't know how else to describe it, other than it being intellectually spiritual.

In the sense that, I wasn't thinking, well, these, how many stars are there? What are they made of? It wasn't so analytical as much as it was emotional. Of course, people have their own way. They use the word spirit and like I said, I don't like arguing word definitions. But I think spirituality, which has historically been, been owned by organized religion. In recent decades, I think, has escaped that boundary. Now, people will say they're spiritual, but not religious. Because I think they have some feeling of their place in the universe and from that feeling, and from those thoughts, they derive pleasure. So, I'm happy to think of the word Spiritual, in that context and in that context, I can say without hesitation, I have felt that about the universe.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, that's a very beautiful. Thank you for sharing that. I want to go into some questions like deep questions about the universe, which we can hopefully, do like, a sort of quick, like, lightning round kind of questions.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: I'll keep shortening my answers. Okay, sorry.

Meditation Magazine: They're beautiful.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: You can't come to 30-minute conversation and have 80 questions, right.

Meditation Magazine: I know, but I have so many questions for you, Neil. Do you see the universe as finite or infinite?

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yes. So, I follow where the evidence takes me. So, it's not what I believe to be true is what is the evidence say. Our horizon is finite in the same way, a ship at sea can only view to its own horizon. But if it keeps traveling, it sees a different horizon than it did a few moments ago. so, does the person in the ship say, wow, it's ocean in every direction. The ocean must be infinite. They think there might be land. Okay fine. Do they say, I see a horizon in every direction? Is that the end of the ocean? No, they're not saying that if they have any experience at all. We do not know how big the actual universe is, beyond our horizon. Could be infinite. For all we know. But two-hour horizon. Light has been traveling since the Big Bang and the light we see is nearly 14 billion years old. So, the universe is itself like a time machine.

Meditation Magazine: So, I like that you have that agnostic view where we can see to where we can see and then who knows maybe after that it's infinite. We don't know.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yeah, of course. That's right.

Meditation Magazine: So yeah, I appreciate the agnosticism as like a skeptic myself. So, I wanted to ask you another question. So, we talk about the Big Bang being 14 billion years ago. And that it has been expanding since that whatever. So, this is the theory, the theory of that we use in cosmology right now. But where did the Big Bang come from? Why did it happen instead of nothing? Why is there anything instead of nothing?

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Well, I'm happy to answer that. We don't know. That's the answer. It's one of the great frontiers of modern cosmology and there's some good reason to think that the Big Bang might be one of multiple bangs that unfold out of a multiverse. That's where the multiverse is this collection of universes, ours, among them. And if that's the case, it just really shifts the question, what started the multiverse, right. I mean, this as the and all answer, I'm saying, the beginning of our universe, even if known, one day. Just pushes your question back a notch.

Meditation Magazine: That's true.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: So, these are frontiers of research.

Meditation Magazine: It's an infinite regression, right.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Well, we don't know. I don't know.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, we don't know. I don't know. There's that mystical thing of it's turtles all the way down. I don't know if you've heard that story.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yeah, of course.

Meditation Magazine: So, yeah, it's very difficult for us to contemplate it. Maybe, science will figure it out. Maybe it won't.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yeah, I don't have. I mean, all frontiers are difficult. That's why they're sitting on the frontier and unsolved. But I don't fear those answers or those questions. It's very natural. By the way, you know what began Earth. Well, we know how Earth formed. But there was a day, that was a big, was the Earth always here? Or did God make it in 6 days? You know, what?

Meditation Magazine: That's true. Yeah, you're right. Maybe just the way we...

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Origins is actually been a very fertile path of investigation in modern astrophysics. We know the origin of Earth and our sun. And James Webb is

going to help us get the origin of galaxies, right. And so, these origins question are challenging as it is not intractable.

Meditation Magazine: Right, but we can know the origin of the Earth because it's a part of the universe. It's come like and we can maybe know the origin of the universe maybe even.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: It's part of the multiverse, yes.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, but what about, yeah, at the at the end of that regression, right. At the, the foundation of reality, we say, okay, what started anything? Why does anything exist? Maybe we don't know that now. Maybe science will figure it out eventually. But there's this sort of ancient mystical perspective which I think is at the foundation of what Abraham saw when he talked about one God and what Buddhist saw when they talk about oneness. What I think that is that foundation and, we won't use the words God or things like that to label it. But is that there must be some aspect of reality, some law of nature that allows for anything to exist at all. Maybe that's the most fundamental law, because the Big Bang couldn't happen if there wasn't a law of reality that allowed for anything to exist in the first place.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Based on my read of the history of science, I will never use the word Must, in trying to understand a cosmic frontier. Because you're putting a bias on it. You need to have some prime force to begin things. In order for you to feel comfortable about your philosophy of how the world works. I have divorced myself for such requirements. Maybe the universe always was. Maybe the death of a universe births another universe so that it's cyclical. And if it's cyclical, then it was always cyclical. It could be any of those. I will never say it must be one thing or another.

Meditation Magazine: But in either of those scenarios if everything has always existed or in a cyclical universe like Roger Penrose talks about the cyclical universe theory or whatever cyclical cosmology. In any of those cases, there has to be some nature of reality that allows for things to exist, right. Because if there wasn't, then nothing would exist. It has to be a fundamental law.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Okay, so you get into a good old problem here, where can a system of laws exist as a contained unit describing everything within the system without some system of laws outside of it giving meaning and purpose and existence to those laws themselves. So that's an interesting sort of philosophical.

Meditation Magazine: Well, I don't know if it has to be outside of it.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Well, it could also theorem, it has to be, you have to come in from the outside and say, here. It's a throw down. It's a mic drop. It's here. This is what start with this and then everything can work within the system. The system cannot define itself without a completely arbitrary declaration from the outside, saying what those laws need to be. So, this is the Goodell incompleteness theorem. I paraphrase it for this example, but you can go there. I'm just saying I'm not requiring that of the universe. That's all. I'm letting the universe be how it reveals itself to us. By the way if you there are people who say, well, God did it. And well, say, well then, who created God? And somehow, they're completely content with the answer God always was.

Meditation Magazine: But see, that's what I'm saying is that when people say God did it, right. If they created, basically, God that people think of nowadays, often, is like this sort of old man in the sky, right.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: The monotheism God, yeah.

Meditation Magazine: So, who created that? Okay, so that still lends itself to, but said the old man in the sky is sort of you're seeing it as separate from the fabric of reality itself.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yeah, except they should respond to the question who created God. And their answer in every time I post that question is God always was. So, they're completely content. With saying God always was. But not content in saying the universal always was. And that's not fair.

Meditation Magazine: Right, I agree with you and I think that's why there are mystics within even religions that see God as synonymous with the universe. I'm not just talking about [INAUDIBLE 33:00].

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yeah, Spinoza for example. And, and by the way, Spinoza's God, if you want to refer to it that way, was the laws of physics, and the laws of nature, are the manifestation of a cosmic God. Not the bearded man in the sky, not the one who cares who you sleep with or what Supreme Court does. It's the laws of nature as we discover them are the manifestations of a divine presence. And that by the way is completely compatible with science. Whatever science says you're happy that's that God, we're cool here. It's when God starts becoming a little more participatory in your own life, life's conduct, that things get really messy and one group wants to create rules that constrain the freedoms of another group who don't believe the same thing.

Meditation Magazine: I 100% agree with you.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: So, that's where things get really weird.

Meditation Magazine: No, I totally agree with you, but let's not get into that because that's a whole can of worms. But I love what you, that you brought up Spinoza. I actually have a quote from him that I wrote down, that what he described as God is the indwelling and not the transient cause of all things. So, not some God that Just created the universe and then grabbed some popcorn to watch the drama unfold. But the basically the fundamental laws of physics like you're saying that allows for all of this to exist. That's kind of what I'm talking about with that fundamental law of reality. I think that allows for anything to exist. I think that's what Spinoza saw as God. And I wonder, I think that to me that's something that must be there but I guess I do appreciate your agnosticism about that.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Well, our version of that would be the unified field theory. So, all laws of nature that we have discovered here on Earth which have experimentally been shown to apply across space and across time. Because as I said earlier, as we look out in space, we're looking back in time and we see the same laws of physics manifested. All our thinking today suggests that in the very first moments, after the big just at the beginning, all forces of nature were one. And as the universe cooled, these forces of nature separated out. Until today, we have count them four forces of nature. But you go back in time, it was three, then two, then one. And that one force of nature would be the unified field theory, which is the holy grail for many physicists. I think that comes closest to what you're describing.

Meditation Magazine: Thank you, yeah, thank you for putting that into context in the scientific terminology, I appreciate that. So, I know we only have a couple more minutes. So, I just wanted to end on something that I think is really important for the spiritual community.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: I'll give really short answers if you want to squeeze in some more questions.

Meditation Magazine: Okay, great, great.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Go.

Meditation Magazine: This is really important for the spiritual community. I've heard physicists talking about how some people in the spiritual community or the mystical community, whatever. Misuse quantum physics and maybe misstated or misunderstand it. I wanted give you an opportunity to, maybe, do you have any, can you think of any examples of that, that you would like to, try to, not refute, but at least clarify in for our readers?

Neil deGrasse Tyson: So, I think what's going on here, is quantum physics, which is one of the most successful theories of the universe, ever discovered. By the way, we are in the centennial anniversary of the Discovery of Quantum Physics. Most of it happened in the 1920s. Nobel Prizes all around for each little bit of discovery that contributed to this whole understanding of the universe. Quantum physics has really weird, wacky, spooky things that are real but completely defy anybody's common sense, anybody's classical understanding of how the world works or how the world should work. But it's true nonetheless, experimentally verified. So what has happened is you get people who see the spooky stuff in quantum physics. Which we don't have a classical explanation for. We just say, oh the particle pops into existence. And it pops out of existence. We know the frequency with which that happens and how it happens and how much energy it has, but we can't predict exactly that particle.

The mysteries there. There are people who take those mysteries and staple them to other mysteries and then declare that they've actually solved the problem. And so, that's not how no, no. And we don't fully understand consciousness. So, there's something else we don't understand. They say, well let's explain that with conscious, but you don't understand either. So, to take one to explain the other and bask in this is really tentative grounds to try to base a foundation of reality on.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, there's a specific thing that I think people often use in the spiritual community. The Heisenberg Uncertainty principle. They use it to say that because when we measure a particle it affects the particle. It actually changes what you're seeing, the measuring affects the measurement, that therefore, mind controls the universe or controls humanity.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Right, so that's another example of consciousness and quantum physics, putting them together to try to come up with an explanation. Let me put that to bed quickly, okay. This is called the observer phenomenon. The particle is doing something when you're not looking at it and then you look at it and it does something different. So, that's been misunderstood and misapplied and misused, but I can clarify it very easily. people say you're does it. So, therefore, your consciousness affects the universe. So, no. Unfortunately, no. So, what's actually happening is, how do you know the particle is there? Well, so you look at it. But still, no, no, how do you know it's there? Some light has to come from the particle to your eye or to your camera, to your detector. Because otherwise, you have no information about it. It's completely dark, okay.

So, I turn on the lights to take a picture and for all enough particles, it kind of happens for us, but we're too big for it to be measured, make us really, really little, so that with just particles. Turn on the light in the room, the light hit, because you want to take a picture, the light hits the particle, and kicks the particle into a new state. And so now,

you want to look at the particle, it was there before you turn on the light, and now it's doing something else. It has nothing to do with consciousness. And everything to do with, you don't know what the particle is doing until you shine light on it. So, it's a matter of, and you need the light for your eyes, you need the light for a detector, you need the light for any measurement. So, that's what's going on. And that would happen with or without your brain.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, that's awesome. Thank you for clarifying that. I think that's a really important thing for people to understand in the spiritual community because I think that it is misunderstood in a lot of circumstances.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Deeply misunderstood.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah. So, here's my last question because we have to wrap this up and it's really coming down to, where do we diverge the mysticism and science. I wonder scientists often think that we can know everything, right. Like you said in Russell Brand's Podcast.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: You don't leave any stone unturned. Russell Brands Podcast.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, systemology right here. So, you said on Russell Band's podcast, the history of what it is to know stuff does not support the contention that there are things that are unknowable. Which I love that. I love that quote.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yeah, we're going to repeat that even now.

Meditation Magazine: But, but couldn't this all just be a dream? Couldn't this whole thing that we're talking about and measuring and doing science about, couldn't we all just be doing this in the dream world?

Neil deGrasse Tyson: In whose dream?

Meditation Magazine: In the kind of dream world?

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Whose dream.

Meditation Magazine: Who knows? My dream, your dream, the universe's dream, some collective dream.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Okay, so this is the difference between establishing what might be your personal truth, okay. You feel someway about something. Jesus is your savior. That's your personal truth. Mohammed is the last prophet on Earth. That's this

other people's personal truth and then there's an objective truth. An objective truth is what science is in the business of determining. An objective truth is, I make a measurement and I get an answer. You're my competitor. I don't trust anything you do. I'm going to build a better apparatus and you do it and you get the same answer. And then someone on another side of the world with a different electrical current out of their wall in the machine, they get the same answer. Then you realize, oh my Gosh, we're onto something. We have a new emergent, objective truth about how the world works.

Those truths are true independent of who measures it, what you think about it, or what your belief system is. Hence the quote, science is true, whether or not you believe in it. It's not all science, on the frontier science is very contested. But once it moves its way into the experimentally verified realm, it is true and your opinion and your thoughts won't matter. E equals MC square goes into bombs and weapons.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah. I know, I love that.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: By the way, it's not just somebody's dream.

Meditation Magazine: And that's why I love science so much because it is objective. It helps us get to Mars. It helps us create internet. It makes it helps us do all these things. But what if all that stuff is happening in some sort of collective dream or like the [INAUDIBLE 43:05]

Neil deGrasse Tyson: We've already been there. What you're talking about is we're living in a simulation. There's some nerd alien in his parent's basement hasn't moved out yet, who program our world. If that is the case, they programmed our world with rules. Conservation of momentum. A particle count, the energy equals MC squared. And we're discovering the rules that this not knows alien put into our universe. And maybe they can hit delete. And then we all just disappear tomorrow. Sure, that can happen. I cannot rule that out.

Meditation Magazine: Okay, great.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: I can say it's a fascinating universe, the alien created. It does.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, I know. Definitely. So, in that case, we're discovering the rules of this sub universe that's, that's within the universe of the alien that created it.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Correct and we're a simulated universe in that computer. Correct.

Meditation Magazine: And then could we ever know the nature of the reality of, of the universe that the alien is in?

Neil deGrasse Tyson: So, this is the Truman Show, right. So, you'd ask, what happens if I keep this world that I'm in that the alien created, and then I get to like an edge. It's like, wait a minute, there used to be stars here. Now, there's like a cardboard, 2x4 and a thing and maybe this could happen intellectually, even spiritually. Do you reach a limit to what the universe is giving you and then you can say, okay, I've overdone this, I've completed the simulation, alright? Because the alien didn't program beyond my curiosity, and that would be quite the day.

Meditation Magazine: That would be a day.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: That would be a day. It's like the Truman Show. He goes out on the boat and he gets the edge of his universe. That would be signal a change in the human condition that I cannot foresee or imagine.

Meditation Magazine: That would be pretty epic. So, thank you so much for joining us today.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: I'll just leave you with a thought. In this, if they find entertaining. It could be that they created Earth as a literal terrarium aquarium to put life forms and just sit back and watch it all happen. Maybe they get bored every now and then. They got bored with COVID. They say, throw in monkey pox, okay. That's my best evidence that we're just entertainment for some.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, that's God sitting up there with the popcorn.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Yeah, I'm not calling the alien in the basement God, okay.

Meditation Magazine: Yeah, we can get trouble with that, so let's not do that. Thank you so much for joining me today Neil deGrasse Tyson. It has been a pleasure and an honor to speak with you. And this the quotes from this interview and excerpts are going to go be in the universe issue which is coming out soon.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Excellent. Thank you. I have a book coming on around then. It's called Cosmic Perspectives on Civilization. A lot of this point of view is like, what does our behavior look like if you kind of step out to the moon and look down on it. Alright? And if you're scientifically literate. What are people doing that where they don't even know there's deep consistencies in it. So, it's exploration of our mysterious ways as human and how some form of scientific cosmic enlightenment can make a better world.

Meditation Magazine: That's amazing. So, yeah, I guess they'll probably be in Barnes and Noble. Barnes and Noble at least at around the same time or in October.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Oh, possibly on this. Next to your magazine.

Meditation Magazine: Yes, awesome. So, everybody go out and buy those two things and you'll be internally enlightened. They get that. Thank you so much for being here.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Excellent. Thanks for having me.

Meditation Magazine: Have a good day Bye.

Neil deGrasse Tyson: Bye.

Michio Kaku believes in God, if not that God

It's been said that string theory physicist Michio Kaku believes in God, but the truth is it depends on what "God" means.



(AFP)

Robby Berman

⁷Co-founder of [string field theory](#) and physicist [Michio Kaku](#) made waves last year — or at least seemed to — when it was reported that he'd proven the existence of God.

The [Geophilosophical Association of Anthropological and Cultural Studies](#) quoted Kaku as saying, "I have concluded that we are in a world made by rules created by an intelligence. To me, it is clear that we exist in a plan which is governed by rules that were created, shaped by a universal intelligence and not by chance."

Reacting to that public comment, [Kaku said](#): "That's one of the drawbacks of being in a public sphere: Sometimes you get quoted

⁷<https://bigthink.com/culture-religion/michio-kaku-believes-in-god-if-not-that-god/>

incorrectly. My own point of view is that you can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God.”

“Science is based on what is testable, reproducible, and falsifiable,” Kaku says. “That’s called ‘science.’ However, there are certain things that are not testable, not reproducible, and not falsifiable. And that would include the existence of God.” He’s noted that discerning whether you live in a *Matrix*-style construct or not would be another such ‘non-falsifiable’ problem.

[\(David Becker\)](#)

Part of the problem, of course, is that “God” has different meanings to different people, and in discussing It/Him/Her, there’s apt to be confusion. And yet believers continue to ask scientists this question, perhaps seeking scientific confirmation for their faith. They want to know if Kaku’s an atheist, but when we can’t agree on what God is, “atheist” has even less meaning.

[Scientists use laser beam to divert lightning strikes](#)

In any event, when asked about God, Kaku is likely to quote Einstein’s suggestion that there are two types of god: “One god is a personal god, the god that you pray to, the god that smites the Philistines, the god that walks on water. That’s the first god. But there’s another god, and that’s the god of Spinoza. That’s the god of beauty, harmony, simplicity.”

It's that second "God" to which Kaku is drawn. He tells [innovation tech today](#) that the universe *could* have been random, but that instead "Our universe is rich; it is beautiful, elegant."

He's stuck by what he sees as its exquisite simplicity, pointing out that all of the laws of physics could fit on a single sheet of paper, and, "In fact, what I do for a living is to try to get that sheet of paper and summarize it into an equation one inch long." He asserts that with his string field theory, he had that one-inch explanation of everything, but that with new developments in membrane theory, he needs a little more room. For now.

Still, Kaku says, this *will* happen. Physics is the opposite of most other fields of study, he says: With every new advance it gets simpler, and in that lies his sense of wonder. "So, that's the God of Einstein. The God of beauty, [the idea] that says that the universe is simpler the more we study it."

Kaku recounts:

"When scientists use the word God, they usually mean the God of Order. For example, one of the most important

revelations in Einstein's early childhood took place when he read his first books on science. He immediately realized that most of what he had been taught about religion could not possibly be true. Throughout his career, however, he clung to the belief that a mysterious, divine Order existed in the universe."

That other kind of God clearly has less appeal for Kaku, as it generally does for physicists and other scientists, including [Neil DeGrasse Tyson](#), [who says](#) that believers he talks to tell him that God is all-powerful and good, but when he looks at "all the ways Earth wants to [kill](#) us," he just doesn't see how both could be true.

So when Kaku asserts that the goal of string field theory is to "read the mind of God," it's important to remember he's talking about Einstein's God of Order. To "read the mind of God" would be to find that (one-inch) equation that explains everything in the cosmos. Bearing in mind the continual game of leapfrog going on between math and physics, and that the latest leap is physics' string theory, which requires a new type of math, Kaku mischievously suggests that the ultimate solution to the schism between physicists and mathematicians could be that God is a mathematician. And, he says, the mind of God — the explanation of Order — may turn out to be string field theory's "cosmic music," the resonating of strings through 11-dimensional hyperspace.



Michio Kaku: The Mind of Einstein's God | AI Podcast Clips

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This is a clip from a conversation with Michio Kaku from Oct 2019.
New full episodes once or twice a week and 1-2 new clips or a new...

Spinoza's Metaphysics & Its Relevance For Science Today

Zoran Vukadinovic thinks Spinoza could help us with our enquiries.

⁸Baruch Spinoza was a Seventeenth Century Dutch philosopher of Portuguese Jewish descent, and a lens grinder by trade. Though mild-mannered and agreeable, he was excommunicated by his community for his 'abominable heresies'. His most important book *Ethics* (1677) is concerned with presenting the implications of God's nature for human happiness. It might surprise you if I said that this work is quite relevant for our time, and that it may even help us understand some perplexing issues in contemporary science, but this is precisely what I will argue in this article. Specifically, I will try to show that Spinoza's metaphysics, as well as being a good system through which to understand the behavior of elementary particles as described by quantum mechanics, also allows us to demystify the mind-body problem in cognitive science.

Two Modern Metaphysical Positions

The branch of philosophy known as metaphysics is not easy to define, but we can say that generally it is concerned with the basic categories or ideas that underpin reality. It deals, for instance, with substances, causality, identity and emergence, and it relies on our ability to reason about things that cannot be directly observed or measured. In modern science there is a great emphasis on observation and measurement, which unfortunately tends to obscure the importance of theory in science. The discipline of metaphysics can help us make our worldview more comprehensible by integrating insights from science into our overall understanding of reality, which cannot rely on observation alone.

https://philosophynow.org/issues/117/Spinozas_Metaphysics_and_Its_Relevance_For_Science_Today#:~:text=In%20summary%2C%20modern%20science%20provides,are%20intimately%20bound%20and%20inseparable.⁸



Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677)

Two influential contemporary metaphysical views are *scientific reductionism*, which is essentially a materialist position, and *mathematical idealism*, which holds that the basis of space and time is not subatomic particles, but rather, certain mathematical truths. Both positions derive from long traditions in Western thought, and both have merits. Scientific reductionism derives its force from the successes of modern science, which is itself largely a reductionist enterprise – meaning that it tends to explain the complex world in terms of layers of increasingly basic constituents. Mathematical idealism is inspired in particular by the successes of computer science in generating mathematically-based models of worlds; in fact, so successfully that the idea that our universe is itself a computer simulation produced by an advanced civilization has entered the mainstream in philosophy (see ‘Are You Living In A Computer Simulation?’, *Philosophical Quarterly*, 53(211), Nick Bostrom, 2003).

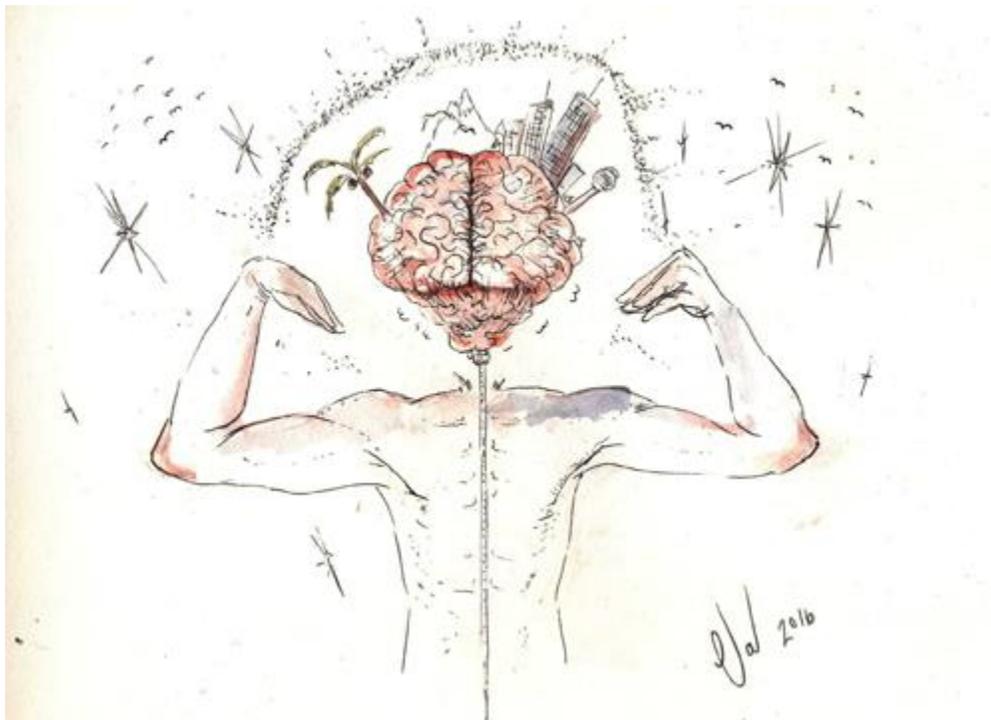
However, both positions are ultimately unsatisfactory. For example, it’s not clear that the qualities of our experiences can be entirely reduced to or expressed in terms of physical things. And if the world is composed from mathematical truths, the question then arises, how we can have any knowledge of these truths, given that they are outside space and time? Furthermore, if we suppose that these mathematical objects are mental in nature, we could end up with a circular argument: if, as the reductionists suppose, the mind can be reduced to the activity in the brain; and the activity of the brain can be reduced to interactions between nerve cells; these cellular processes to interactions between molecules; molecules to atoms; atoms to subatomic particles; subatomic particles to space-time points; space-time points to sets of numbers; and finally, sets of numbers to the mathematical laws relating them – which some would argue are essentially mental entities – this then loops us right back to where we started (see *Reality: A Very Short Introduction*, by Jan Westerhoff, 2011).

Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Outline

Yet before we abandon the metaphysical enterprise to the skeptical view that what underlies the world we experience is essentially unknowable (or worse, uninteresting), let us consider Spinoza's thought, which, as you will see, is surprisingly compatible with modern science.

Spinoza held that nature – which he equated with God – is absolutely perfect, determined, infinite, and timeless. This infinite 'God or Nature' (*Deus sive Natura*) is all-encompassing. We are all part of it and there is nothing outside of it. We human beings have access to two attributes of this infinite Being – extension and thought – both of which express its infinite essence, and they correspond with each other, because they are expressions of the same reality. Besides thought and extension there are infinitely many other attributes of the infinite Being, to which we do not have access but which are nonetheless expressions of the same Being, which is, moreover, unconstrained by time.

To appreciate how novel this thinking was, it is worth remembering that during Spinoza's time the predominant view of the universe in Europe was still the medieval notion inherited from Aristotle and Ptolemy of a finite cosmos. As Joseph Ratner points out in *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (2014), Spinoza's vision of the universe not only surpasses this 'pent in' medieval universe, but also the predominant contemporary view of the universe as a purely physical system. So let me elaborate a little on Spinoza's metaphysics and present some examples that illustrate why it may be inspiring to anyone who is perplexed by our relation to the universe.



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Spinoza's Monism

Spinoza's *Ethics* is divided into five parts. The first two concern metaphysics, and discuss God and the mind-body relationship respectively. In Part One, Spinoza equates God with the one infinite and unique substance that underlies all of reality. Please note that what is meant here by the philosophical term 'substance' is an integrated whole that cannot be directly experienced by us.

Some of Spinoza's contemporaries and near contemporaries held that there are several substances. Most famously, René Descartes (1596-1650) argued that there are two substances, mind and matter, which have the distinguishing qualities of thought and extension respectively. He further claimed that each individual person is a somehow-interacting union of these two substances. In contrast, Spinoza held that there is only one substance, because it is infinite and all-encompassing, and that, because it is not only infinite and all-encompassing but also creative, is to be equated with God. In the rest of *Ethics*, Spinoza unfolds the implications of this view for understanding the relationship between the mind and body, and subsequently for our understanding of emotions, knowledge, and ethics.

One of the aims that Spinoza outlines in the opening pages of *Ethics* is to provide an explanation for the very existence of things. For example, one might ask whether the cause for the existence of existing things is within them or outside them.

Spinoza begins to answer this question by stating that the definitions of entities usually do not include the specific number of individuals of that type that exist. For example, there is nothing within human nature, or in the definition of 'human', that specifies that there must currently be seven billion of us. This suggests that the definition of 'human', and so our essence, does not determine how many individual humans there will be. Therefore, our existence as individual entities is determined by an entity greater than ourselves. Spinoza then generalizes this observation to postulate that if there are multiple individuals of a type of thing, then the cause of their existence cannot be within them, and therefore that their essence does not involve existence. In other words, it is generally not part of the definition and essence of things that exist that they *necessarily* exist. This then invites the question: What is the ultimate cause of all the diversity and complexity that we encounter in nature, if it is not those things themselves? Spinoza's response is that the ultimate source of all existing things – which contains all the other existing things, and without which they would not exist – must be something whose essence *does* involve existence. And because the definition of this entity therefore involves *necessary existence* (because it is of its *essence* to exist), not only does it necessarily exist, it cannot involve any negation to being. This means that this Being is unconstrained, all-encompassing, infinite and eternal. These are the defining characteristics of the cause of all that exists.

This leads to Spinoza's definition of substance as "that which is in itself and is conceived through itself" (*Ethics* Part 1, Definition 3). Put another way, substance is that part or aspect of nature that is self-creating (*Spinoza and Spinozism*, Stuart Hampshire, 2005). To use Spinoza's terminology, substance is active nature, or *Natura naturans* ('the nurturing nature', or perhaps, 'nature naturing') – which he thus equates with God. Moreover, as its very definition involves necessary existence, we

cannot deny that this entity exists. And because it is infinite and all-encompassing, there can only be *one* substance.

Proposing that there is a self-creating aspect to nature is not foreign to the modern mind familiar with Big Bang theory, and we might even say, with the theory of evolution. However, accepting that there is only *one* such self-creating process (which by reason of its uniqueness we can call God) is more difficult. Moreover, because this entity is absolutely perfect and unique, the term 'process' to describe it is not entirely appropriate, since that term entails something that's developing. 'Substance' is a more appropriate term to describe an entity that is not lacking in anything, and thus whose very nature is unchanging.

The human intellect grasps Spinoza's substance through its two attributes of extension and thought. That is, we can appreciate substance either by contemplating the infinitely-extended physical universe, or else by considering the infinity of ideas possible within it. Reality is for Spinoza both a system of objects, and a system of ideas or representations. Human beings, for example, are bodies composed of physical parts, but are also representations, which constitute human minds. As I mentioned, for Spinoza substance also includes an infinite number of other, unknowable, attributes in addition to the two we can know. In a way, these attributes are what makes something real, distinct – they are the means through which one finite entity may be distinguished from another. In Spinoza's terminology, each individual in nature is a mode of the one substance.

For Spinoza, thought and extension are conceptually and causally independent of each other, but at the same time correspond to each other, or are 'mapped onto' one another. This correspondence of causally and conceptually distinct attributes is known as *parallelism*, and will be important when we consider the mind-body relationship.

Please note that for Spinoza mind is not the cause of the physical universe, nor is the physical universe the cause of mind. Rather, Spinoza holds that the force behind the existence of corporeal nature and behind the workings of the mind is the same unique and all-encompassing substance, which has both attributes equally.



Substance & Science

So God is an entity that exists necessarily, or by definition. It is the self-creating aspect of nature, and is the cause of everything else that exists. The next question is, why is God/nature, as defined by Spinoza, relevant to us today? The answer is that this idea provides a view of the world that is surprisingly consistent with contemporary science, which still lacks a metaphysics that can accommodate its perplexing discoveries.

The first example of its perplexing discoveries is quantum mechanics. It has become a cliché that no one understands the strange behavior of the elementary particles that quantum mechanics describes. For example, how can an unobserved electron be in an infinite number of places at the same time? Or how can a particle of light – a photon – ‘sample’ all of space to ‘select’ the fastest path between two points in space, as Richard Feynman’s interpretation of quantum mechanics would say? One common theme in quantum mechanics is precisely this ‘unconstrained’ behavior of particles. This is consistent with the notion that there is a boundless or infinite aspect in nature underlying the reality we experience – which is precisely Spinoza’s view of substance.

Another theme in quantum mechanics is that the answer supplied by an experiment often depends on the question the experiment is asking. For example, elementary wave-particles can be seen to behave as either waves or particles depending on how an experiment is set up. Furthermore, it seems that observation is required to give quantum entities a determinate form. These two features of quantum mechanics suggest that there is a very close relationship between intelligence and corporeal nature in the universe, just as Spinoza supposed. To put it in Spinoza’s terms, intelligence and the material quantum events that intelligence observes are inseparable because they are two aspects of the same unique and boundless substance.

The anthropic principle in cosmology refers to the striking observation that the cosmos in which we live appears as if specifically fine-tuned to allow life to exist. A number of very basic facts about the Universe, such as the strengths of certain forces (for example, the nuclear forces inside atomic nuclei), and the masses and charges of certain subatomic particles, are of the precise values required for the development of intelligent observers such as us. As the physicist John A. Wheeler summarized in 1986, it appears that “a life-giving factor lies at the center of the whole machinery and design of the world” (see Wheeler’s foreword in *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* by J.D. Barrow and F.J. Tipler, 1986). That description could aptly apply to Spinoza’s conception of *Natura naturans*, nurturing nature.

In summary, modern science provides support for Spinoza’s monism by indicating that there is an unbounded and creative aspect in nature, and also that intelligence and corporeality are intimately bound and inseparable.

Mind-Body Correspondence

Next, let’s turn to one of the most important logical consequences of Spinoza’s monism, namely, the doctrine of mind-body correspondence.

In the first paragraph of Part 2 of *Ethics*, dealing with the mind, Spinoza makes clear that his conclusions about the mind emanate from his view of God: “I pass now to an explanation of those things that necessarily had to follow from the essence of God, or, an eternal and infinite entity.” As we have seen, God or substance is the self-creating aspect of nature which, because it necessarily exists, cannot be limited by anything, and is, therefore, infinite.

For Spinoza, a human body has the attribute of extension, and a human mind the attribute of thought, or representation. Moreover, the mind and the body are parallel expressions of the one underlying reality; or we could say that the mind and the body are the same thing (substance) considered under different attributes. In language that Spinoza inherits from Descartes, an idea is a representation of the thing of which it is an idea. This leads Spinoza to his famous conclusion that *the human mind is equivalent to the idea of the human body*. Spinoza’s parallelism also means that every change in the human body has to be accompanied by a change in the human mind: “Whatever happens in the object of the idea constituting the human mind must be perceived by the human mind... That is, if the object of the idea constituting the human mind is a body, nothing can happen in that body which is not perceived by the mind” (Part 2, Proposition 12).

This doctrine of mind-body correspondence is relevant to contemporary cognitive science, where there is increasing recognition of how intimately cognition and embodiment are related. We might say that Spinoza’s argument, put in modern neurological terms, implies that the total representation that constitutes each individual human mind is equivalent to the total activity of that individual’s nervous system, and each operates or functions in parallel with the other. So Spinoza’s metaphysics shows how mind and the nervous system relate. This approach to the mind-body problem is appealing also because it suggests that the mind is not extrinsic to nature, but is one part of an integrated whole. For Spinoza, the double aspect of things (that is, the parallelism) applies to

everything in nature, and therefore, everything in nature has a mind of sorts. Human beings do not occupy a metaphysically special place, except in so far as the human body is the most complex thing in nature, and therefore, its representation, or the human mind, is the most sophisticated mind in all of nature. Or as Spinoza says: “to the extent that some body is more capable than others of doing several things at the same time, or of being acted on (that is, suffer) at the same time, to that extent its mind is more capable than others of perceiving several things at the same time” (Part 2, Proposition 13, *Scolium*). In other words, the sophistication of the human mind corresponds to the complexity of the human body.

Conclusion

According to the contemporary spin on Spinoza’s theories that I have attempted to articulate here, the infinite self-creating aspect of nature underlies (1) the unconstrained behavior of particles in quantum mechanics; (2) the very existence of a world that supports intelligence; (3) the emergence of life forms through evolution. Moreover, all these phenomena that emerge from the one substance are interrelated: there is no intelligence without embodiment; there is no increasing complexity of embodiment without evolution; there is no evolution without a unique universe that allows life to emerge; and finally, as both quantum mechanics and the anthropic principle teach us, there is no observed material universe without intelligence within it. The existence of the universe and of intelligence within it are ultimately expressions of the one substance. The attributes of thought and of extension cannot be reduced to one or the other, but both point to the same infinite and eternal Being. The same boundless power expressed by the complexity of the human body is also expressed by the powers of the human mind. The same power that is behind the unconstrained behavior of particles in quantum mechanics, and expressed by the sheer vastness of the cosmos, also underlies the continual development of human knowledge. There cannot be anything more life-affirming than this. This is what makes Spinoza most relevant to contemporary thought.

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Is Karma a Law of Nature?

It seems Matthew Gindin is destined to ask, and answer, this question.

⁹Karma is the concept that, eventually, 'you get back what you give'. The idea that karma is an observable type of causality, just as gravity or the laws of thermodynamics are, might strike some as far-fetched. Isn't karma a mere piece of wishful thinking or grim moralising which asserts, against all evidence, that the universe is just? Yet a careful perusal of the doctrine, at least in its elaboration in the early texts of Indian Buddhism, yields a thought-provoking picture which might contribute to our own thinking about ethics.

The source of the concept of karma appears to be the idea of *karman* in the Hindu scriptures the *Vedas*, where it refers to ritual acts. If the ritual gestures (*karman*) are performed correctly, the future is bright. It was the *shramanas* – countercultural philosophers, including the Buddha and Mahavira, the founder of Jainism – who transformed the idea to refer to human action in general.

For the Buddha, karma, which literally means 'action', was part of the compound idea of *karmavipaka* (action and result), one of the key aspects of his teaching. The Buddha taught that *karma* was *cetana* – action was intention – and that the intentional quality of actions determines their results: whether they lead to well-being or to suffering. Thus, for the Buddha, it is the quality of character, of the life of one's mind, that determines one's future. (This is reminiscent of Heraclitus's dictum that *ethos* is *telos*: character is destiny.) The Buddha taught that intentions rooted in greed, hatred and confusion lead to suffering; and those rooted in non-greed (for instance, patience, calm, generosity), non-hatred (goodwill, compassion, empathy), and non-confusion (knowledge, clarity, rationality), lead to well-being. This will probably make a general kind of common sense to most people. But is it a principle worth elevating to the status of a law of nature?

Buddhist tradition indeed sees the 'law of *karmavipaka*' (as it is commonly called) as a law of nature. However, in the *Sivaka Sutta*, an early Buddhist discourse, the Buddha denies that karma is a *total* explanation for what happens to a person, stating that other factors also play a role. Later commentaries talk of five natural laws: the laws of physics, biology, karma, psychology, and *dhamma-niyama*, or the truths taught by the Buddha. These are all seen as being utterly dependable natural laws which operate without recourse to a deity or any other metaphysical grounding. Does this make any sense with regards to the idea of karma?

A first objection might be that the idea that nature organizes itself according to human moral laws stretches credulity. The rejoinder would be that actually it's the other way round: human moral intuitions are based on centuries of *Homo sapiens*' observations of the patterns of life and our physiological and psychological adaptations to it. There is no more (or less) reason behind hatred causing suffering than heat causing water vapour: it's just the way it is, and our moral intuitions reflect this reality in a way similar to how our physical instincts favor withdrawing our hand from a

⁹ https://philosophynow.org/issues/132/Is_Karma_a_Law_of_Nature

flame. This also helps to explain the tendency for fundamental moral intuitions to be universal, since it indicates an adaptive advantage to adhere to them.

A second objection would be that the claim that somehow greedy intentions (for example) regularly provoke suffering down the line, fails through having no way of showing how the law works or is applied. What mechanism connects cause and effect? This challenge also fails, however, since no mechanism can be shown for *any* cause and effect relationships, even physical ones – as Hume pointed out long ago. Why does gravity pull one object towards another? Why do positive and negatively charged particles attract each other? What causes *these* relationships to be regular across time and space?

There are two further objections to the idea of karma as causal law that are not so easy to deflect. The first is that karma is believed to apply not only within this life but beyond it, yielding results in future lives too. In principle there is no reason to deny that karma could operate on this scale, providing one believes in reincarnation. For those who don't so believe (and there are of course good reasons to be skeptical about the doctrine) then karma could still be regarded as functioning within this lifetime.

The second problem is the claim that karma operates as an absolute law. It is hard to believe that this is the case. But consider again the example of gravity. Gravity is indeed in a sense an absolute law; but many kinds of other laws interact with it, mitigating its effects. You cannot be certain that if you throw a piece of bread into the air it will land on the ground: there may be a crow in the vicinity. It also seems reasonable to see karma as one of many laws – which the Buddha himself suggested, as we've seen. This would also imply (*contra* the opinion of some Buddhists) that although karma is an absolute law, it is mitigated and modified by the operation of other laws. So although karma exerts an influence over all things, it does not provide a guaranteed Cosmic Justice.

In terms of ethics, the idea of karma can offer a workable theory of morality. Good and bad are, as Spinoza said, not transcendent categories, but simply names for whatever brings us well-being or suffering. There is a regularity to the causality wherein acting on certain mental states generally either brings weal or woe. It also provides some succor for those of us who wish to see wicked people get their come-uppance. They generally will, although not in every case, and not in ways we will necessarily see as proportionate.

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[Karma Stop bouncing the ball](#)



This was an absolutely incredible session on karma. It was probably the most simplest and practical solution that I have ever heard. She was amazing in her presentation.

Karma has always been somewhat of a mystery to me. I never knew exactly what it was and the mechanics of how it operated.

Yes, I know the theory for every action. there is an opposite and equal reaction.

I know about good karma and bad karma.

But the process to stop karma in its tracks and eliminate karma is another subject altogether. Mind you I have been studying this for over 50 years now. This presentation gave me more incredible insight into karma and how it works.

The teacher gave a great analogy. Suppose you have a ball that you are bouncing. Imagine every action you take you are bouncing the ball. You take an action and you bounce the ball automatically whether you like it or not. The ball will bounce back.

That statement alone is incredible that you are responsible for the bouncing of the ball. Nobody else bounces your ball.

She goes on and says that the bouncing of the ball has been occurring for thousands of years. We are on a treadmill that isn't going anywhere.

To stop this she simply said stop bouncing the ball. When one stops bouncing the ball, the ball doesn't react. When you stop bouncing the ball it will take a very short time for the ball just to sit on the ground and do nothing.

I also like the fact that she said karma is not conscious and aware. If it was we would be in serious trouble because we would have a God that judges us for every action we take.

Fortunately, karma the ball is not aware and it's just simply a force of the universe that can be overcome in one's life.

The goal is to stop bouncing the ball and at the same time be in a state of self-realization within. I give the analogy of being in the center of a hurricane. Humanity is living like leaves blowing in the wind.

Karma is chains that bind us. It doesn't matter if the chains are made of gold or some simple metal material. Either way, the chain will bind us.

The more one stops bouncing the ball the greater the realizations will be. One will live in the center of the hurricane and understand the great mysteries of life. When one learns to live in the soul, one truly becomes a human being.

We were never taught this in our schools. maybe the Jains have, but we most definitely didn't learn that.

This course has made me more subtle in my practice. It truly is fine-tuning the guitar of life. Every action we take karma is taking place and yet we are oblivious to it.

We strive for happiness in our life. We think a great job, a mansion, and a yacht are the secrets to a good life. We never realize that even by acquiring these, we still have golden chains bound to our souls. Ultimately, that will never make us happy.

I'm quite impressed by the Jains who discovered this thousand of years ago. Can you imagine coming up with such a great realization and then putting it into such sublime words?

Future generations could use the road map for their own liberation. I find that extremely daunting and incredible to see.

We can learn from the wise men of the past. Unfortunately, we are so blinded that we truly can't believe something like this even exists.

Every day we moan and groan about the circumstances in our life. We don't realize that we are responsible for what comes our way. Curve balls will be thrown at you. That is the fact of life. Everything morphs and changes. I mean everything.

When one understands that life is like a merry-go-round. It goes round and round and round. When a person gets tired of this ride he wants to get off the ride.

The only way to get off this ride is to press the red button inside of you and stop the merry-go-round inside of you.

When one leaves the merry-go-round one lives in his true essence.

You are the universe and you just don't know it. We live our lives thinking this is the ultimate reality. We are merely skimming the surface of the ocean of life.

This may seem like an esoteric subject, which it isn't. This is the basic foundation of your life. We are talking about you and how you can understand your true nature.

The wise men of old have studied this for thousands of years. They have great instruction manuals for you to read and implement in your life

What good is a driver's manual if you never drive your car?

You have a car that has been sitting in your inner garage. The garage door is closed. The car is full of cobwebs and spider webs.

One may have faint glimpses that the car exists inside. The goal of human life is to take that car out for a spin on the freeway of life.

You were meant to drive that precious car. That car is your true existence. That freedom that you seek. That happiness that you seek. That joy that you seek. It all lies inside of you.

That car is who you truly are. One has become so identified externally that we have forgotten our true nature.

I would highly advise if you want to have a happy life to try this in your life

Maybe the next time some instances come your way and you could get angry. about the situation, just hesitate and don't react at all. Practice that over and over again. You will see that situation no longer bothers you at all. In fact, by not responding at all, you remain calm. Calmness is your true nature. Getting flustered and angry is not your true nature.

Even if something good comes your way. Do the same thing. You will see that you are been driven by your emotions and mind.

When you experience positive emotions, life is good. When you experience negative emotions, life is a drag and a burden.

We live our entire life this way. We blame others for our mistakes. We think that we have done something wrong. We think other people's lives are better than ours. We have all these different feelings about how life is treating us.

We can get off this bandwagon and experience life as it truly is. Life is absolutely incredible. Life is full of joy. , love and creativity.

We should be like a surfer taking off on the wave of a lifetime. One is in the zone. One is not thinking about making the wave or wiping out.

A surfer is in the flow with the wave of life and becomes one with it. He knows he doesn't have to do fancy tricks or try to outmaneuver the wave. He doesn't get into the contest of life and see who's the better surfer. I lost this heat by less than one point. He doesn't get into the competition side of surfing

Surfing is an art and it allows one to be in harmony with the universe and nature.

We are all surfers. That wave exists inside of you. You can learn how to surf the wave and be in clarity every moment in your life

One who learns how not to react to any given situation is truly a wise man. A wise man simply smiles at life. He has nothing to say or prove.

Unfortunately, we have plenty to say and prove. If someone doesn't think the way we do well let them have it. We will tell them they are wrong and I am right.

My religion is better than your religion. My ideas are better than your ideas. Wars have been started this way.

When one lives in the scattered winds of the mind chaos occurs. We have seen this going on for thousands of years with no end in sight.

To make this world a better place, you must make your inner world a better place. For peace on earth to occur, you must establish peace inside of you.

There is a battle going on inside of you. The mind is constantly biting you. It's like a mosquito bite that gets agitated over and over again. At times the mosquito bites seem to go away and then for some unknown reason they start biting you again. You itch and can't quite find out how to stop the itching.

I remember for around 20 years even when I first started meditating my stomach was never truly settled. It always had a tinge of anxiousness to it. Meditation makes one aware of your inner feelings.

Yet one day I woke up and it never came back again. Meditation and contemplation is the way to remove issues that have been hiding inside of us.

Each one of us has different issues to deal with. Each one of us has different karma that affects us.

For your own mental happiness, I hope maybe you might take this to heart. You might see that externally if I pay focus only to that that I will not change for the better. I will continue to go on this. merry-go-round.

Granted you may obtain all the goals that you want externally. You may have all the money in the world. You may be able to travel wherever you want whenever you want and for as long as you want. But tell me does that make you truly satisfied?

Only a wise man who has conquered his mind was truly satisfied. The only one who discovers how to live in the center of the hurricane is satisfied.

You can own the entire world, yet you're still living like leaves blowing in the wind.

Alexander the Great conquered much of the world yet he was completely unsatisfied. He even said I come into this world empty-handed and I leave on my deathbed empty-handed.

I say the spiritual path is the most practical path. One must have his feet on the ground and his head in heaven.

We can go on forever bouncing the ball of karma. We have been doing this for eons as it is. We have the opportunity for this message to truly sink in and at the same time to go in one ear and out the other.

The mind can say you don't want this. You like life as it is and you don't want to change at all. Well, that's okay. We're not here to change you. You must change yourself.

All we are saying there is a road that you can travel on inside of you. You are born a traveler.

Currently, you are a wanderer. A wanderer doesn't even know that he has a true home. We wander aimlessly in this world. We are searching for something externally when all we have to do is look inside for the answer. It's as simple as that.

Somehow we think the spiritual life is for those who have high intelligence. My intelligence is average. I couldn't even answer one single question. during this Jains lecture series.

But did that stop me? No, it didn't. I knew the next day when I got up. If I went over the material and wrote what I discovered, I would understand what they were talking about.

This path is a path meant to be pondered over. One must contemplate and ponder over life to understand life.

The chains have been on us for thousands of years. Even in my early days of meditation, I didn't understand the true meaning of pondering. I didn't understand the importance of why one should ponder.

I see these young incredible kids presenting short introductions to each class. Some are only 10 years old and already have such great wisdom.

You are the company that you keep. These kids have incredible mentors like their parents and grandparents. They have their aunts and uncles and friends.

When I was in India I heard many stories in which they said you are the company that you keep[.If you keep company with a band of people that love to steal items from others, then you will become a thief.

We emulate our external surroundings. I grew up in Newport Beach, California, and the culture around me was high-class and refined.

The people there are great and I loved growing up. I still have many of my friends today yet somehow I knew that I had something inside of me that I could not tap into externally.

I must admit I'm not conventional at all. At times I am an outcast. I bucked the system. I knew that no matter how incredible my life was up to that point, there is something inside that was so much more than I can ever imagine.

I knew that there were five senses. We live that way our entire lives. Yet I knew we had five internal senses. These are doorways to the soul.

Going back to the bouncing ball. The deeper one understands his true nature the easier it will be to stop bouncing the ball.

Even if one doesn't have a great meditation practice. one can learn to consciously stop the urge to react.

Yes, this will take practice. Rome was not built in a day. It must go from your conscious to your subconscious. Currently, 95% of your subconscious is running the show. Yet you can overcome this by your will.

They say a wise man s sets his mind in motion by his will, not the other way around.

We live our lives with the mind commanding us what to do. We are not in command of our minds. That is a major difference.

The Jains are incredible psychologists and we are barely skimming the surface. The majority of our minds are unclear and experience so much internal stress and chaos.

We have not been trained on how to have a healthy mind?

Yet unfortunately, we think there's nothing wrong with me. I love my lifestyle and what I can do with it. Look at my life. No matter how much glamor and glitter one has one must understand that the jewel exists inside of you.

There is a video game going on. You are a part of this game. They're an infinite amount of levels to go through. For thousands of years, we have just been on level 0. This is the most basic level where mankind fights with one another. We have slogans like the '80s where wall street would say greed is good.

We have mass shootings at schools.

We refuse to have gun laws because it takes away our freedom. I can go on and on and on.

We are responsible for the world externally. We can make this world a better place.

A wise man understands that he can stop karma in his tracks. By doing so, he fulfills his piece of the puzzle in life.

You can do this if you like. Our world would be in a better place if we all simply did this in every moment of our lives.

Our lives would be so much richer and grander than our current state of existence.

We can truly solve all the world's problems. Can you imagine if you discovered your true secret, the universe could provide answers to all our problems in life?

We would not have the junk food industry which is causing disaster in our bodies all around the world. I find it amusing that they know their food

makes people addicted and yet they still do it because it makes them great wealth.

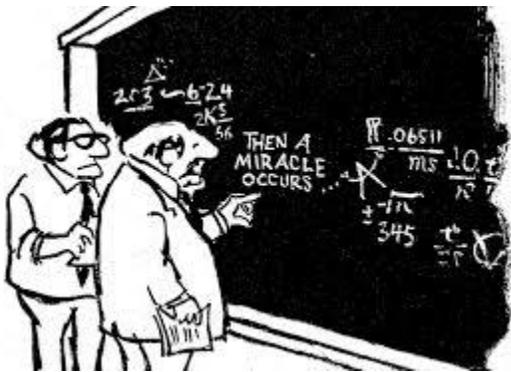
No wonder they call this the age of darkness. Common sense is uncommon.

Going back to karma again. I would like to thank the teacher for presenting such an awesome subject in a way that I truly understood. She made it so practical and at the same time, I could understand what I can do practically to stop karma in its tracks.

I apologize to anyone if I have said anything that may continue misinformation.

world. Science was the place to go for answers. At the age of thirteen I gave up thoughts of becoming a rabbi and decided to become a scientist instead.

But science has its own limitations. For one thing, science is unable to tell a coherent story of how consciousness fits into the material world. Scientists tend to believe in physicalism, the belief that the world is only made of one thing — physical stuff. Where does consciousness come from? Consciousness is said to be the product of the integral activity of the brain. And how does consciousness arise from the brain? We have to wait for that answer. Science has only been studying the brain for a relatively short time, and the brain is very, very complex. But don't worry. Science will provide a full account of consciousness once it better understands the brain. When that happens, consciousness will be revealed to be—*tada!*—an "emergent" process.



Emergence is the idea that as systems become more complex they display novel properties which couldn't have been predicted from their simpler components. A typically given example is that oxygen and hydrogen atoms lack "wetness," but when combined to form H_2O , *voilà!* — *wetness* "emerges." It's always been unclear to me why this is considered to be a good metaphor for the emergence of consciousness. What does the fact that water, oxygen and hydrogen become liquid at different temperatures have to do with "emergence?" *Wetness*, on the other hand, as opposed to liquidity, is a phenomenological property, a *quale*, a conscious experience that derives from human-chemical interaction. It isn't a property that inheres to H_2O itself. I'm not sure what's emergent about wetness, either.

A better example of "emergence" involves insect colonies. Individual insects go about their business without any intention of serving a "higher purpose" in the colony or comprehending their role within it, nevertheless, the aggregate sum of their individual actions creates an emergent hive society, much as human free market economies emerge under the aegis of Adam Smith's "invisible hand." Similarly, simple electrical circuits, each of which are "dumb" in their own right, yield "smart" calculations when aggregated together in computers. Intelligent behavior arises from components which lack intelligence on their own. These are much better examples of "emergence," but the premise that *intelligence* may be emergent is not the same thing as *consciousness* being emergent. Intelligence is an adaptive response to

environmental circumstances, whereas consciousness is a felt experience. What the metaphor of emergence doesn't do is offer any insight as to how non-conscious neurons, silicon chips, or any other non-conscious material, can produce the raw feel of consciousness. The experience of "redness" arises when humans interact with certain wavelengths of light, but there's no raw feel of the quality of "redness" within the brain itself. When you look inside the brain, all you see are moving electrons and secreted neurotransmitters. Computers can calculate, but they aren't conscious. Brains aren't conscious either; we are. This explanatory gap between non-conscious brain processes and conscious human experience is what philosopher David Chalmers has anointed "the hard problem." Now, there are some philosophers who don't think this explanatory gap is as unbridgeable as I seem to think it is. They don't see it as being "the hard problem." Either there's something they're not getting that seems intuitively obvious to me, or there's something I'm not grasping that seems obvious to them. Maybe the unbridgeable gap is not in the brain at all, but between us. In any case, I find "emergent" arguments for consciousness singularly unpersuasive. Emergence is a metaphor that gives the outward appearance of solving the problem of consciousness without really solving anything at all.

But there are more problems with the physicalist model than just the "the hard problem." First, the standard neurological model also treats thoughts as the mere effluvia of neurological happenings, and since "mental" events can never have an impact on "physical" events, thoughts can never play a causal role in the physical brain. All the causal work is done by physical processes, not by thoughts. Thoughts, then, are something extra, like legs on a snake; they serve no identifiable purpose.

Second, the physicalist model is deterministic. Every brain event is determined by a prior chain of physical causes, so that the appearance of "making a choice" is illusory. Given a particular chain of circumstances, one can never behave any differently than one does. It's meaningless, therefore, to assign credit for blame for behavior, or to ever employ the conditional tense.

Third, science holds that while things happen due to causes, they don't happen for a reason. There is no meaning inherent in things, no ultimate grounding for human values, morals, or aesthetics other than in human preferences. While what you do may matter to you, it doesn't matter to the indifferent universe. Today many people in advanced societies accept this notion that the universe is devoid of inherent meaning and that meaning is a human invention. Since Jean Paul Sartre, it's been a basic existentialist premise — although Sartre, unlike physicalists, believed in the reality of human freedom and choice. But the reader should be aware that the meaninglessness of the universe is a metaphysical proposition, and that there's no empirical evidence either for or against it.

Now, it's all well and good to assert that consciousness is epiphenomenal and that choice is only apparent. These are defensible metaphysical propositions. Not provable, but defensible. The problem is, try living your life as if they're really true. Try living your

life as if you don't have the power of choice, and that your thoughts have no causative power. Just try it. These propositions violate our deepest intuitions, and while it's possible to verbally attest to them, it's impossible to authentically live as if they were true. In addition, the scientific process itself *requires* scientists who are conscious and make decisions. Science presupposes consciousness and choice, then turns around and questions their existence. Can any determinist, epiphenomenalist philosophy truly be "adequate?"• If the story the physicalist model tells us about the world isn't adequate, what would be?

In the past six months I've been reading writers who tell a very different story about the universe: Eihei Dogen, the thirteenth century Japanese Zen monk, Baruch Spinoza, the seventeenth century Dutch Jewish philosopher, and Alfred North Whitehead, the twentieth century British-born mathematician and philosopher. Each of these original thinkers challenges the standard physicalist account of reality in his own unique way. While there are profound differences between them, there are also threads of commonality. I intend to focus on those threads, but first I need to describe their individual metaphysics.

Eihei Dogen



Eihei Dogen (1200-1253) was not what we in the West would call a "philosopher."• He was a Buddhist monastic devoted to the training of Zen monks, and his interests were matters of practical soteriology. He wasn't interested in creating a metaphysics, and he interpreted the philosophy he drew upon from its Chinese *T'ien T'ai* and *Hua-yen* sources in his own unique way. He was a conjurer of words, and his metaphysics has to be wrestled from his difficult, enigmatic, and densely poetic prose.

So what is Dogen's metaphysics like? As I've described in a [previous post](#), Dogen's universe is one in which space and time is fully integrated, and where every point in space and every time is immediately and intimately connected with every other. It's

a *chiliocosm* — a multiverse of infinite Buddhas and infinite worlds, even within a single atom or blade of grass. It's a universe that makes no distinction between animate and inanimate, where mountains "walk"• and walls, fences, tiles, and pebbles endlessly teach the *Dharma*. It's a universe where all things are in a constant process of change and derive their being from their interrelationship with everything else. It's a universe where all things conspire to encourage us to wake up and recognize our true nature: our non-dual, compassionate relationship with all of reality. There's no God in Dogen's world, but there are an infinite number of Buddhas. His multiverse is co-extensive with Buddha Nature, all of reality the Buddha's *dharmakaya*, or "truth body."• Dogen's universe is an integrated, benevolent, purpose-laden home for human beings.

Baruch Spinoza



Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) lived in an entirely different culture than Eihei Dogen, and in an entirely different historical era with a different set of concerns. Spinoza was a Sephardic Jew who was born and lived in Protestant Amsterdam at the dawn of the modern scientific revolution. Although they neither met nor corresponded, Spinoza and Isaac Newton were contemporaries, and the nature of physical laws, cause-and-effect, and the relationship between mind and matter were topics of intense interest and debate.

Spinoza wrote his *Ethics*, in part, as a reaction against Rene Descartes' claim that the world was divided into two substances, *matter* which has extension in space, and *thought* which has none. Spinoza thought there was only one substance in the universe, and that the one substance had both material and mental properties, which he called "attributes."• In Spinoza's system, everything has both a material and mental side to it. You can describe events in physicalist language (e.g., as events occurring in the brain), or in mentalist language (e.g., as thoughts and experiences) but you have to stay consistent within whatever language frame you start in. Physicality and mentality are two poles of the same process described in different languages.

It's "easy" to talk about the dual physical and mental properties of matter when we're talking about the human brain, but what is the mental process of a rock like? We don't know how it is to be a rock, but we can say that rocks, like living organisms, change in responsive ways to their environment. If we throw a rock, for example, its atoms and electromagnetic fields realign themselves to changes in gravitational force as the rock rotates through space, and its potential and kinetic energy undergo momentary changes throughout its arc of flight. There's a lot going on. The rock isn't inert. It responds in some genuine way to the world. It's possible that these physical changes in relationship to changing external circumstances are in some way meaningfully analogous to whatever physical changes are occurring in our brains when we "have" experiences. Or maybe not. When we speculate that electrons, atoms, molecules, inanimate objects, and one-celled organisms have "experiences," a question arises about whether we're stretching the meaning of the word "experience" beyond recognition.

Spinoza's universe was a true "uni"-verse. His "one substance" was identical to what he called *Deus sive Natura*, or "God or Nature." Spinoza's "God or Nature" was very different from the Abrahamic God. Spinoza's "God or Nature" manifests everything imaginable out of His/Its infinite potential, the appearance of the many out of the one. "God or Nature" is infinitely creative. Everything that exists is perfect, since "God or Nature" is perfect, and He/It has no choice but to cause everything to be exactly as it is. Everything that is follows the laws of nature by inexorable cause and effect. God is as bound by the laws of causality as humans; neither have free will.

Spinoza's "God or Nature" is not a supernatural Being. The natural universe in Spinoza's system, depending on how you interpret his writings, is either coextensive with "God or Nature," or resides within "God or Nature," but "God or Nature" is immanent in the world, not transcendent to it. God is the *logos*, the underlying order of the universe, the generative force behind it. We are natural expressions of God's infinite, endless creativity.

The reason why it's uncertain whether Spinoza's "God or Nature" is fully coextensive with the universe is because Spinoza defines "God or Nature" as having an infinite number of attributes, whereas Spinoza's universe has only two: extension and thought. This leaves Spinoza's system open to the possibility (although he does not say so) that our universe is one of an infinite number of possible universes, some of which might have more or different attributes, however unimaginable they might be. Spinoza's universe, like Dogen's chiliocosm, is friendly to speculative physics about the universe's being a multiverse.

Spinoza's "God or Nature" is not a God of love, however, and the universe wasn't created with us in mind. God is indifferent to us, caring neither more nor less for us than for viruses or tornados. The universe wasn't created for humankind's benefit, but out of God's infinite imagination. Nevertheless, Spinoza says that the person who is wise will love God and seek to gain adequate ideas about Him/It. Adequate ideas give us the

power to overcome our passions, thereby increasing our ability to maintain and enhance our being. According to Spinoza, increasing one's power to maintain and enhance one's own existence is the prime directive of all being. Ethics flows from it as a consequence, since maintaining and enhancing our existence depends largely on optimizing our relationships with other people.

Alfred North Whitehead



Writing early in the 20th Century, at the dawn of the age of relativity and quantum mechanics, Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) wanted to create a metaphysics that was compatible, not only with newly emergent scientific facts, but with the things human beings are most certain of: that we have conscious experiences, that these conscious experiences have causal efficacy, and that we make meaningful decisions in the world. Whitehead wanted a metaphysics that found a place for consciousness and choice within the very heart of reality.

Whitehead's philosophy shares certain features with Spinoza's. Like Spinoza, he believed that mentality inheres in matter, and in the necessity of a God whose creative force is immanent in the world. But there their similarities end. Spinoza's world is a deterministic one running entirely on a chain of causation, whereas decision and choice are real for Whitehead.

Whitehead's philosophy is often called "process-relational" because it holds that the world isn't made of substances, but of processes and relationships. Everything interacts with everything else in a constant process of transformation, only the "things" that are interacting aren't really "things" at all. "Things" are abstractions from temporal slices of ongoing process. The "thing" we happen to designate a "flower," for example, is an abstraction from a process occurring over time: seed becoming seedling, seedling becoming flower, flower becoming compost, compost becoming soil, *ad infinitum*. This beginning-less, endless process occurs within a web of mutually unfolding relationships with other processes, solar, meteorological, geological,

ecological, and atmospheric. The flower's existence is unfolding process and relationship. The same is true of everything without exception, from the smallest elementary particle to God Himself.

Whitehead was also a *pan-experientialist*. Not only does process and relationship go all the way down and all the way up, but every event within a process is also a "drop of experience."• Even elementary particles have experiences of some kind, whatever they might be. The future, in Whitehead's view, does not yet exist. Unlike deterministic philosophies that decree the future a forgone conclusion given the constellation of causes set in motion at the moment of original creation, Whitehead's future remains unwritten. Processes draw on their past experiences and their experience of current influences, but use them to creatively generate the next moment.

Complex processes have more choices in generating the future than simple processes. Humans, for example, have considerable choice; elementary particles, only a little. The reason why the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle accurately characterizes the quantum world, according to Whitehead, is that elementary particles, in some meaningful sense, "choose"• their location within their probability matrices. In Whitehead's language, all processes "prehend"• their past and the ways the world impinges on them to create the future out of the array of relevant options. We, and everything else, are forever at that moment of creation when past manifests as present.

Whitehead saw the necessity of including God in his metaphysical system. Like Spinoza's God or Nature, Whitehead's God is neither supernatural nor anthropomorphic. For Whitehead, God is that which transforms creativity and infinite potential into something concrete and definite, giving value and organization to an otherwise inchoate set of indeterminate possibilities. He is a kind of anti-entropic force encouraging greater complexity, interrelationship, and creativity. He is a patient persuader, guiding us towards love and mutuality. Whitehead calls him "the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness."• He co-experiences the experiences of all processes, past and present, "the great companion; the fellow-sufferer who understands."• He provides the universe with an Aristotelian *telos*, a general direction for the course of its unfolding evolution, as He gently nudges it in the direction of greater freedom, complexity, creativity, and mutuality.

While Whitehead's evolving universe bears some resemblance to the Jesuit theologian Teilhard de Chardin's (1881-1955) evolving universe, de Chardin's universe evolves toward a final, fixed end, whereas Whitehead's universe evolves as an undetermined, open-ended process. Although Whitehead's God co-experiences all the experiences of all processes past and present, he isn't omniscient. He doesn't know the future, which remains uncreated possibility. Since He dwells in time, His co-experience of all experiences past and present changes how He meets the future. In a universe that's process-relational all the way up and all the way down, God changes us, and we change Him. God and the universe co-evolve together.

Threads of Commonality

There are four crucial ideas expressed in Dogen's, Spinoza's, and Whitehead's writings that hold my interest. The first, found in both Spinoza and Whitehead, is that of *panpsychism*—the idea that experience and materiality are both attributes of the same substance or process. The second, found in both Whitehead and Dogen, is *process-relationality*—the idea that reality is woven out of processes and relationships rather than out of "substances"• and "things."• The third, found in Whitehead and Dogen, is the idea that values are inherent in the universe and not merely projections of the human mind. The fourth, found in Spinoza and Whitehead, is the idea of the existence of something that may best be labeled "God."

Panpsychism

I'm intrigued by descriptions of reality that find mental activity woven into the essential fabric of being and becoming. That's not to say that Spinoza's and Whitehead's "panpsychist"• or "pan-experientialist"• views aren't problematic. The strengths and weaknesses of these views are a matter of active debate by contemporary philosophers like Galen Strawson, David Chalmers, and their critics. Panpsychism's first problem is the fundamental unknowability of what the experience of elementary particles, nonorganic processes, plants, and simple animals such as protozoa are like. Second, there are explanatory gaps in how one gets from the proto-experience of elementary particles to the consciousness of human beings, or how human beings develop a unified consciousness when all of their cells and elementary particles are busy having their own experiences. Despite these significant problems, there seems to be something intuitively appealing about rooting consciousness deeply into the warp and weft of the world. In a way, there shouldn't be any mystery to consciousness. It's what we know best about the world; we understand embodied consciousness from a more intimate perspective than we understand anything else. We know what's it like to be conscious; it's a matter that's opaque and mysterious.

As a lengthy aside, it's unclear how Dogen would weigh in on this controversy. Buddhism's metaphysical stance on the ontological status of mind and matter is both complex and confusing, tending to muddy the waters rather than resolve problems. While the particular rabbit hole Buddhism goes down is slightly different from Descartes', it's a rabbit hole nonetheless. Buddhism views consciousness and physical form, under "usual" circumstances, as two tightly interacting, mutually affecting streams of momentarily arising processes. There are times and instances, however, when these mental and material processes separate out, e.g., during the formless *jhana* meditative states, in the "formless realm"• where subtle mental beings reside, in the "astral"• travels of the "subtle body,"• during the *bardo* states and process of rebirth, and through the mind's ability to manifest simulacra of the body (*manomayakaya*) in space. Dogen inherited this tradition and did little to question or clarify it. While Dogen makes frequent use of the Japanese word *shinjin* ("body-mind"•) which implies a body-mind unity, it's unclear what the deep ontological underpinnings of that apparent unity are.

The best one can say is that Western ontological categories are completely irrelevant to Dogen's soteriological project.

Process-Relational Metaphysics

I'm strongly drawn to process-relational descriptions of reality that clarify our mutual interdependence with all things. The crises of our era are essentially crises of failures in relatedness, whether with our biosphere or with our neighbors as we tribally-oriented humans— in other words, all of us—are necessarily confronted with the difficulties of living cheek-to-jowl with strangers-turned-neighbors in the global village. Beyond that, process-relational thinking helps us to understand identity and personhood in ways that accord with fundamental Buddhist insights into the nature of selfhood. Whitehead's process-relational thinking precisely mirrors Dogen's metaphysics of impermanence and radical inter-relationship. In Mahayana Buddhism, all *dharmas* (phenomena) are not only *anitya* (impermanent) but also *ōnyūya* (empty), meaning lacking in "inherent self-existence"• and deriving their momentary being from an evolving flux of inter-relationships. This is what Mahayana Buddhists call "dependent origination."• This natural affinity between Whitehead's philosophy and Sino-Japanese thought is one reason why there is a growing interest in Whitehead's philosophy in contemporary China.

The Value Laden Universe

I'm charmed by descriptions of reality that have moral and aesthetic values baked in from the get-go, and that argue for a universe that's not morally or aesthetically neutral, but naturally inclined in the direction of goodness and beauty. Whitehead believes God moves the universe towards greater beauty, while Dogen believes the fabric of reality encourages us to realize our Buddha nature and awaken together with all things. The idea that in maximizing the good, the true, and the beautiful we're living more in accord with reality, helping things to flow in their intended direction, makes for a wonderful story. Much nicer than the story that it's a dog-eat-dog world and that we're either sharks or sardines. Much nicer, also, than the story that nothing matters, so we can do whatever pleases us. I'm not sure I buy these nicer stories; there are plenty of reasons not to. But I find myself increasingly willing to at least consider them.

Spinoza, on the other hand, isn't a member of the Inherent Values Club. He's the father of our modern hard-edged "realism."• He denies the universe is flowing towards greater perfection; it's already perfect — meaning the only way it can be — as it is. "Good"• and "bad"• are just categories the human mind projects onto nature:

"After men persuaded themselves, that everything which is created is created for their sake, they were bound to consider as the chief quality in everything that which is most useful to themselves, and to account those things the best of all which have the most beneficial effect on mankind. Further, they were bound to form abstract notions for the explanation of the nature of things, such as goodness, badness, order, confusion,

warmth, cold, beauty, deformity, and so on; and from the belief that they are free agents arose the further notions of praise and blame, sin and merit.

But:

....things are not more or less perfect, according as they delight or offend human senses, or according as they are serviceable or repugnant to mankind. To those who ask why God did not so create all men, that they should be governed only by reason, I give no answer but this: because matter was not lacking to him for the creation of every degree of perfection from highest to lowest; or, more strictly, because the laws of his nature are so vast, as to suffice for the production of everything conceivable by an infinite intelligence... — Spinoza, Ethics

God

Which brings us back to the start of this post — my inability to believe in God. I could never believe in a supernatural, anthropomorphic God, an omniscient autocrat standing outside of creation, judging it, and miraculously intervening in accordance with our prayers and petitions—in other words, the kind of God that Whitehead describes as having the attributes of “a Caesar.” • “God talk” • doesn’t interest me or turn me on. As I’ve mentioned in [another post](#), when I hear “God” • mentioned in a *Dharma* talk, my mind wanders off. But how different — *really* — are Spinoza’s and Whitehead’s naturalistic, creative, immanent Gods from Dogen’s understanding of the *dharmakaya*? How different is Whitehead’s God who experiences the experiences of the world and nudges us towards love and beauty from Dogen’s compassionate *Avalokitesvara* who hears the cries of the world and awakens us to wisdom beyond wisdom? Even if one dispenses with Gods and Buddhas, if mentality, morality and aesthetics can be features of reality right down to the bone, why can’t reality also include some non-supernatural “spiritual” • dimension as well? Some beneficial principle that encourages us and the world towards greater love and compassion, beauty and understanding, and our own best selves? I’m not convinced, like Whitehead and Spinoza, that God is either necessary or tenable, but I’m more open to consider it than I once was. That’s why I’m an agnostic rather than an atheist; it’s what keeps me from joining the secularist camp.

Final Thoughts

Of course, metaphysical speculations like these lie well beyond the realm of proof or falsifiability. They’re not scientific questions. That’s why they’ve fallen out of favor in contemporary philosophy. But to say they’re unprovable is different from saying they’re meaningless or useless. They’re stories, narrative devices, that help us to organize our behavior and orient us towards the future. They have their own realms of utility.

For a moment, let’s look at this from the Jamesian pragmatic perspective: Which description, if tentatively adopted as-if-true, would most likely enhance human

flourishing? Where does a deterministic, physicalist, purposeless universe take us, and where does a pan-experiential, process-relational, value-laden world take us? I invite you to take some time and try to imagine the moral and social consequences of each.

It's possible that a physicalist framework might be more useful for the purposes of certain scientific investigations, but that a pan-experiential, process-relational, value-laden perspective might be more useful for rearing children and good citizens, organizing social, political and economic relations, preserving the planet, and cultivating the beautiful and the good. And it just might be — it's possible— that there are even certain scientific questions — ones related to ecology or quantum events, for example — where a process-relational perspective might prove more fruitful.

It's something worth thinking about.

Many thanks to cosmologist, cousin, and Whitehead scholar Matthew David Segall who kindly reviewed an earlier draft of the Whitehead segment of this post and helped me avoid some errors. Any new errors in interpreting Whitehead that crept into this essay during the revision process are solely my own. Thanks also to Bob Brantl who commented on an earlier draft and helped this to become a better essay than it otherwise would have been — although I suspect he will still not be happy with what he considers to be my caricature of theism in the opening paragraphs. Thanks also to Susan Mirialakis for her many helpful suggestions to improve the readability and flow of this dense essay.

ADVAITAVADA VERSUS SPINOZA'S MONISM

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Abstract

¹¹It is to be noted that both Brauch Spinoza and Shamkara of Advaitavidins have talked about the Reality to be One. Spioza called it Substance whereas Shamkara called it Brahman. According to both all other things fall into this one real entity. Everything emerges from that reality and returns to that reality. We are all temporally real, but Substance or Brahman is really real. Just as the waves are temporary truth amidst the eternal expansion of ocean. The Advaitins have termed us, the creation of Brahman as Maya and Spinoza termed us as the Modes or modifications of Substance. The Advaitins add that during modification we have become unreal, as per Shamkara although Advaitavadins Ramanuja consider us as Real. Sree Ramakrishna Paramhansa states that we are like those stairs which help us to reach the roof-made up of the same components of roof yet not roof. Both Advaitavadins and Spinoza would agree that we are nothing but the parts of the One whole, or its reflection. Advaitavadins further believe that the same Brahman is present in all of us unanimously, so does Spinoza accord that thought and extension the two Attributes of the Reality is present in all of us. If that be the case then we must forget about the differences amongst each other and live in peace and harmony only to make the world a better place to live in.

Index Terms- Brahman, Modes, Maya, Substance

¹¹ <https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR1807235.pdf>

INTRODUCTION

The world is made of different categories (Padārthas), among which Dravya or Substance is one which is considered to be the container of all ‘qualities’ and ‘actions’. And such Dravya / Substance had been widely discussed in both East and West, in the World of Philosophy. But the philosophers differ in their opinion in admitting their numbers. Descartes the father of modern philosophy believed in two Substances—Absolute and Relative. Spinoza, another rationalist believed that Substance has to be that which embraces all perfections and discard any imperfection. Thus to him “Existence” an important essence of perfection should be attributed to the definition of Substance. Once it is done then there is no need to accept other substances which also exist, as in that case all such existing substances would possess the same essence of ‘existence’ and therefore we would fail to differentiate one from another. Thus Spinoza admitted of One Substance which should be complete, all perfect hence would form the Ultimate Reality—which he termed as God.

The Advaitavādins while discussing the ultimate truth of this creation from which everything else was created, to which everything else returns—had also considered of only one reality (as two would frustrate the notion of ‘Ultimatum’)—and that they termed as Brahman. So like Spinoza, the Advaitavādins of the Indian soil, some thousands of years ago had already spoke of only One Ultimate Substance called Brahman. To them the rest of this creation is Māyā or illusion which is nothing but modification of the Brahman. According to Brahmavivartanavāda (Śamkara) due to Evolution or several process of changes True Brahman has become false Jagat but to the Brahmāpariṇāmavādins (Rāmānuja) the world is as true as Brahman, as it is the effect of Brahman1 .

Spinoza in West also thought on those lines that apart from the Ultimate Substance God, the rest is His modification thus he termed us (His Creation) as modes which are temporarily real (if not false) whereas God is Really Real.

Such a similarity between AdvaitaVedāntins; and Spinoza’s Substance is quite intriguing indeed to draw a comparison amongst their thoughts.

- Neither Brahman nor God: are affected by the ‘temporary’

We the creation of Brahman, termed as Māyā by the Advaitavādins is not false but Māyā hides the reality. Similarly modes as accepted by Spinoza are not false but they also guard the true nature of the Ultimate Substance—God. As the magician does not get fooled by his own tricks, similarly God is not affected

by His temporarily real creation; just as Brahman, as the Vedāntins believe does not get affected by Māyā although Brahman is its creator.

- Guṇas of Brahman, Attributes of God—Subjective as well as Objective
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- The Guṇas of Saguṇa Brahman are there in Brahman but we also have a role to acquire them, depending on our samaskāras. In other words how much or how accurately can we derive the guṇas of Brahman depends on us to a great extent. The more we obtain knowledge of Brahman, closer can we come to it and more would be the expansion of sat, chit and ānanda in us (which are also guṇas of Brahman). Similarly the attributes of Spinoza’s God (the Ultimate Substance) are not merely objective but also depends on the subject modes for their complete manifestation. Just as a red band of police cap has a component in it which can illuminate but it would shine only when external light would fall on it.
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- 3. The Māyā or mode merges with Brahman or God in the end
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- The Vedāntins gave the analogy of Ghatākāśa which is the empty space remaining bound by the ghata but once the ghata is broken the limited ākāśa gets out and mixes with Bibhu ākāśa. This analogy was given to compare the Jivātmān remaining bound in the finite body, but once the body is perished in death then that ātmān has the potency to merge with Brahman (the pure form of infinite and eternal consciousness). Similarly Spinoza believed that after completing their journey the modes also merge with the Ultimate Substance from which they emanate.
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- 4. Brahman as well as God give shelter to evil
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- Like Brahman, Spinoza’s Substance—God also gives shelter to both good and evil (as both are one complete reality, hence they must entail in them both good as well as evil, as found in the creation) but neither Brahman nor God has imperfection or impurity or any negative potency as their essence. Giving shelter to evil and being evil himself— are two different things. Like a man who is pure and saintly can give shelter to criminals at his house even without being affected by any of their evil potencies.
- 5. Brahman or God – Inactive, Ísvāra or Infinite Mode Active
- The Advaitavādins have accepted not only of Brahman but also of Ísvāra² who unlike Brahman is active. Similarly God (the Ultimate Substance of

Spinoza) is passive, He does not have to work towards completing an action but such acts are performed by the Infinite Modes—a layer admitted by Spinoza between the Ultimate Substance and the finite modes. But the question arises, how can Brahman or God be inactive even after being complete and the world of illusion or modes be active even after being incomplete? The answer would be that Brahman or God wills and the action is completed, they do not have to work for its execution unlike us.

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- 6. Māyā or Mode are qualitatively same but quantitatively different from Brahman
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- Spinoza has admitted that qualitatively God and modes are same; as modes are nothing but modifications of God so their quality cannot change but quantitatively they differ as the modes can only accommodate in them the two qualities among many of God (i.e., thought and extension—termed by Spinoza as ‘attributes’). Finite minds are modes of that One Substance God under the attribute of thought and Finite bodies are modes of God under the attribute of extension³. The Advaitavādins at the same breath state that qualitatively the Brahman as well as us are similar (Tat Tvam asi) but the sat (existence), chit (consciousness) and ānanda (bliss) of Brahman are quantitatively much more in expansion and are never limited but such guṇas in us get destroyed with or even before completion of our present life. Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa who was an Advaita Vedāntin, states that the roof and stairs both are made of same components such as bricks, cement and sand but both are not same, as there is a difference of expansion (that is of quantity if not quality).
- 7. Māyā or Modes: required to reach to Brahman or God
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- One thing we must remember that the stairs are very important to reach the roof, similarly modes or Māyā (Jagat) are equally important for reaching to the Ultimate Substance or to Brahman respectively. Thus they also play an important role and their worth cannot be discarded by labeling them as ‘false’ or ‘unreal’. They are ‘Temporarily Real’ and God or Brahman is ‘Really Real’. Just as the waves of sea rise and fall being ‘temporarily real’ but not false as they do exist even if for sometime, whereas the sea is found at all times, existing eternally—an analogy given by Erdmann to differentiate, at the same time bind the two.
- 8. We are free yet not so according to Advaitavādins as well Spinoza
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- Regarding freedom of will Spinoza states that modes are functioned by the strings pulled by the Ultimate Substance – God⁴ . Thus any of their personal efforts would go in vain. It is something like before a surgery the patient is subject to anesthesia and while receiving it, many put efforts to hold back their consciousness in the fear of losing it. If we say at that juncture that the patient has free will then his will would work well only up to that point where he poses his efforts to sustain his senses but ultimately the will of the doctor endures. But we have to remember that both the doctor as well as God has plans which would fetch ultimate good results, but their means seem to be hard (that is, surgery in case of patients and sufferings in case of modes for their Vikarmas). The Advaitavādins also maintain a similar stance. Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa gave the example of a cow who can freely circumbulate only up to a particular space beyond which it would feel the pull of the rope tying it to the tree. Brahman can give us sufferings but they are like punishments of teachers and guardians given to children to make them walk in the right path of life. Both God and Brahman are all powerful and benevolent too, then can they not remove our sufferings; when they are said to love us unconditionally—the question can come to our minds. It is seen from lives of many saintly people that by loving Him or following instructions of God or Brahman (from scriptures) their sufferings have been lessened or even removed as by the will of almighty everything is possible because He is the one who makes, breaks and amends rules in the entire creation.

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- 9. Duality— Leela of Brahman, pleasure of God
- In Pantheism where Substance is said to be in Himself (Natura Naturans) in Spinoza’s language as well as in His creation (Natura Naturata)—[Just as water is found in it and everywhere around it when a pot is completely immersed in pond]; here when everything can be reduced to one entity then why did creation with its manifold diversities appear at all—the question might arise. This is, what according to the Indian 614 Philosophers (Advaitavādins) is “Leela” of the Brahman and Spinoza would call it as ‘Joy’ of the God. To discard the sense of solitude and mundanity Brahman or God decided to create the world with multiple entities—each species differing from the other. The sufferings or evils were found as by-products created due to the misdeeds of these entities. But once these entities who traverse in this world for lives after lives can overcome their Prarabdha Karma and Sanchita Karma of their past lives by facing them and can continue with Nishkāmakarma (not having desire to enjoy the fruits of actions), it is only then they can be one with Brahman—as believed by the

Advaitavādins. Spinoza also believed that the modes were created by the God spontaneously (just as a river flows spontaneously from the mountain top without any conscious effort of the hill) for His own necessity to enjoy the glory of His creation. The creator derives joy from his creation thus duality was required. Hence Sādhaka Ram Prasad in one of his songs praising the unconditional love of the Divine mother stated that ..Ami chini hote chai na, chini khete chai.(I do not want to be sugar myself but want to taste its sweetness). But both the Advaitavādins as well as Spinoza knew that such a duality is Adhyāsa or our temporary ignorance.

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- 10. Both sacrificed many at the cost of One
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- Last but not the least both the Advaitavādins as well as Spinoza sacrificed many at the cost of One (which like a vacuum cleaner absorbs all and reduce them to it). And such Ultimate One and only One Reality is termed as Brahman by the Advaita Vedāntins and known as God to Spinoza.

CONCLUSION

Thus both talk on same lines making us wonder whether the Dutch philosopher Brauch Spinoza of 17th century had been inspired by Advaitavāda (400-450 C.E) of Indian philosophy and then formulated his Pantheism. The answer is not known to me. But if this simple philosophy of oneness is understood by all, then the world would no more remain a turbulent place to live in.

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[4] Della Rocca, Michael 2008 Spinoza , Routledge P.33

The more attention you pay



One of my favorite mottos is the following. The more attention you pay to something, the more attention it pays to you.

Most of us live our lives 24 hours a day and only focus externally. We never think what is the purpose of life. We simply just go on living life as usual.

At some point in your life, you realize it is transitory. It is impermanent. Usually, this happens on your deathbed.

The wise man prepares for his death. Even long before he dies he realizes that life and death are the same things. Physical death is a rebirth and going back home. This is the purpose of life to realize your true essence while you are alive.

This may seem like a broken record because your mindset is not used to it. We don't have a proper understanding to realize the sacredness and holiness of this human body. We take it for granted.

The Door Of Life

Don't shut the door of life.

It was meant to be open.

Unfortunately, man has closed the door to life.

What is beyond the door?

You are the universe you just don't know it.

You are the sun, moon, and stars.

You are the great mystery.

Only you can open the door within.

The Field Ripples Everywhere

Did you know there is a field of life that ripples everywhere?

It ripples faster than you can read these words.

It is felt instantaneous all across the universe.

How about that?

We haven't even developed anything near the speed of light.

Yet the field transfers information instantly.

Do you see how your actions affect the universe?

Did you ever ponder that over?

Your anger ripples across the universe.

Is it worth it?

Now is the time to change.

Be kind.

Your kindness will ripple everywhere.

Your light will shine everywhere.

You can be a true beacon.

You have no idea how grand you are.

The universe is rooting you on.

You have a grand part in this play.

You are the main actor.

Ponder these words.

The Sculpture

One of my major goals is not to be rattled by life.

It is extremely difficult.

Sometimes we can hit a curve ball out of the park.

While other times we strike out.

We are constantly learning in this adventure of life.

Nobody gets a free ride.

Even Christ had to work on himself/

Once upon a time, I heard a story about the Dalai Lama.

Every night before he goes to bed he goes over all of his activities of the day.

He sees where he can improve in each and every situation.

It's the small changes that matter in life.

We are all divine sculptures.

Nobody can change us.

We have to change ourselves.

The world would be a better place if we all did so.

It's not easy yet ultimately it's our destiny

We are the universe.

We just don't know it.

Just think even scientists know that our bodies are made of stardust.

We came from the stars.

The Indians say this world is an illusion.

It's like going to the movies.

We get sucked into the drama.

Yet just turn your head around and you will see light streaming from the
projector/

The light hits the screen and creates a moving picture.

Ponder this over.

You are a sculpture.

A reason to stop worrying



A Reason To Stop Worrying - Watch This Whenever You're...

Pursuit of Wonder • 9M views

New Pursuit of Wonder book:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08D4VSD88> For some reason, you...

My wife yesterday stumbled upon this YouTube video. Entitled a reason to stop worrying.

I found this video to be extremely full of wisdom. It was also extremely funny and showed how sucked in we are to this external existence.

Years ago I saw graffiti at Buffalo State University, which I still remember to this day. It said there is no gravity the world sucks.

This YouTube video should help you if you want to see a whole different perspective on who you truly are. We place such an incredible amount of energy on worrying. We are missing the picture.

Instead of looking at the projector of light, we instead place all our attention on the movie screen. Consequently, we get sucked in.

It doesn't matter if it's a good scene or a bad scene. The result is still the same. We get sucked in and think it is so real.

Who am I



Who am I? Man has been asking this question for thousands of years. Yet are we getting closer to answering this question? All the wise ones from the past said the answer lies inside.

I say this a lot. You are the universe. You just don't know it. Most people roll their eyes when I say this.

Michio Kaku said the following.

In string theory, all particles are vibrations on a tiny rubber band; physics is the harmonies on the string; chemistry is the melodies we play on vibrating strings; the universe is a symphony of strings, and the "Mind of God" is cosmic music resonating in 11-dimensional hyperspace.¹²

I love this example from Paramahansa Yogananda¹³

Another time I was sitting in a movie theatre watching a movie on a screen. And then I looked into the projection booth. I saw that the projectionist was not interested in the movie, because he has seen it over and over again. Instead, he was reading a book. The projector was doing its job: there was the sound, and the beam of light was casting realistic images on the screen. And there was the audience caught up in the drama.

Note the wise men of old and the quantum scientists are both talking about the same thing but there is a huge difference. The quantum scientists look external while the wise man looks within. The sages throughout time would talk about our true nature yet the majority of people rolled their eyes when hearing about this.

This book goes through all sorts of angles for you to ask yourself these basic questions on life. If you can try to have your heart open. We are thinking outside of your box. There is a part of you the heart knows when love wants to open the door inside of you.

¹² https://www.azquotes.com/author/7702-Michio_Kaku

¹³ <https://sites.google.com/site/theselfawareness/section-5/life-is-a-dream-yogananda>

Time

Time is so elusive.

When I was in second grade that summer seemed like it lasted forever.

Today summer passes like a thief in the night.

Yesterday I had to go to the bathroom 3 minutes before the alarm was going to go off.

I knew I didn't have enough time to go to the bathroom and come back in time before the alarm would go off.

Mind you my wife was in a deep sleep.

I didn't want the alarm clock to rattle her out of her sleep.

Those three minutes seemed like an eternity.

I even remember looking at the clock about three times and couldn't believe how slowly time passed.

I can meditate for hours and time has passed by in no time.

I think that the body and mind are the foundation of time being slowed down or fast.

There is even a point where time simply doesn't exist.

Wise men say there is only the now.

The past and future simply don't exist.

Yet we grow old and die.

Life is a grand illusion.

I love the analogy of going to the movies.

Most people see the images on the screen and get sucked into the drama.

A wise man turns his head around and sees there is a projector of light bouncing off the screen and creating the picture.

In the quantum field, there is no time and space.

There is only the now.

Mystics have known for thousands of years there is only the now.

They were the modern-day scientist of their times.

One who tries to be conscious of the power behind the breath in each and every moment will understand this riddle.

The external world, body, and mindset determine your passage of time.

The same external event will be a different sense of time for each individual.

Each person will experience time differently.

As Ram Das once said, "Be here now".

The Floor Drops Underneath You

My twin brother and I went on this ride called the Whirl Pool at POP.

Imagine a simple ride where you are on a wall and they start turning the wall.

It goes faster and faster.

When it first started spinning around my brother and I looked at each other and thought what a corny ride this was.

We had no idea what was going to happen next.

At some point, the floor dropped underneath you.

It was terrifying.

This ride used the science of centrifuge forces in a so-called mundane ride.

This was a science experiment performed right between your eyes.

It was such a simple ride yet it blew our minds.

How fast is Earth moving?

At the equator about 1,037 mph.

Wow, what a ride we are on.

Yet we are texting on the freeway of life.

The greatest amusement rides are all around us.

We are alive and oblivious to our true nature.

You are the universe.

You just don't know it.

A wise man once said to go within and let the floor underneath you fall.

You will experience the secrets of life itself.

We are all interconnected.

There is no separation between us.

Ask any quantum scientists.

They will tell you the same.

Turn around in this movie of life.

You will see a projector shining a light on the screen of life.

This will show you your true nature.

It's so easy to get sucked into the drama of the movie.

When you see the light within the drama of life slowly fades away.

Maya

I first encountered this word in India fifty years ago.

It means illusion.

Illusion means the appearance may seem real but in reality, they are not.
Modern day scientists and the wise men of old are talking about the same thing.

The whole world is an illusion.

When I was 18 years old I read the autobiography of a Yogi.

One of my favorite parts was when Yogananda went to a movie theater.

The audience was captured by the movie.

Yet what was causing the movie to be a movie.

There was a projector sending light which hit the screen and created the illusion
of a movie

Well, the wise men of old said the same thing about this world and the universe.

Quantum scientists have come to the same conclusion.

Yet despite this, we are still living in the Newtonian era.

We focus only on the external.

A wise man focuses on both the external and internal.

Humanity sees only one percent of the light spectrum when looking external.

There is so much which we don't see.

We have the hardware, software, and operating system to see the source of all.

Maya is sometimes defined as a web of illusion.

Mankind gets trapped into it.

Mind you we don't even think we are trapped.

That's called the ultimate illusion.

We are so trapped that when someone says we are trapped we simply roll our eyes.

Somehow we are living in a state of apathy and are quite content with it.

Today fiction is truth and truth is fiction.

As a nation, we aren't in an uproar about this.

We are complacent.

By bending the truth it has become the norm.

When morals and ethics go out the door in everyday life the world will become more chaotic.

Chaos comes from a mind that has no discipline.

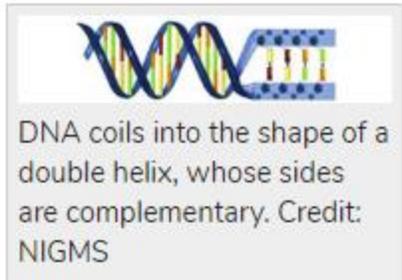
A disciplined mind is a mind that is in harmony.

To go beyond this illusion is the purpose of life.

You can solve this puzzle.

You are the universe

6



That's how many feet long the DNA from one of your cells would be if you uncoiled each strand and placed them end to end. Do this for all your DNA, and the resulting strand would be 67 billion miles long—the same as about 150,000 round trips to the Moon

One of Little Ricky's favorite mottos is you are the universe and you just don't know it.

He has said that numerous times in his life.

Little Ricky is almost 70 years old. In fact, in only a few weeks he and his twin brother John will be 70 years old.

Both of them are quite active today and researching how to become better human being at all levels.

They are fascinated by life and death. Many moons ago. They would never approach the subject of death. When they were young, death was a word that you did not use in everyday life.

As they get older, both of them consents death someday will be knocking on their door.

They knew this quite young and that's why they wanted to know the mysteries of life and death.

This human body contains the mysteries of the universe. Behind your breath lies the secret that is keeping you alive.

When you take your last breath you will no longer exist. Has primm Rawat sad recently you can't even take your name when you die

Just think Even the universe goes through the same life and death process that we do.

Everything gets created an ultimately everything gets destroyed.

Nothing external last forever.

Meanwhile, we still love to text on the freeway of life and our oblivious to the universe that lies within.

What Does Yogananda Think About Spinoza's Pantheistic Philosophy?

April 15, 2020

Question

What were Yogananda's views on the pantheistic God of Baruch Spinoza's philosophy?

—Niraj, India

Answer

Dear Niraj,

¹⁴First of all, Spinoza was a philosopher. He based his understanding on his mind and on his intellect. Yogananda would immediately tell him to meditate, because the mind will never be able to grasp or explain God.

About his philosophy: Spinoza equates God with nature. Yogananda would have quite a discussion with Him: God is Pure Consciousness which *produces* nature, but He isn't that product. That product is *maya*, an illusion, a creation made of thought, energy, and matter. It is not God.

<https://www.ananda.org/ask/what-does-yogananda-think-about-spinozas-pantheistic-philosophy/>¹⁴

Spinoza eliminated the duality between God and nature, which is correct: everything is God, also nature, including you and me. But the situation is very different, for Yogananda, from what Spinoza thought. Nature and its mechanics are not God. They are only His play, His “cinema”, his thought in manifestation.

To be more clear: Spinoza believed that God is “the sum of the natural and physical laws of the universe and certainly not an individual entity or creator”. Yogananda would definitely disagree. God *created* these laws, but He is not defined by them.

Spinoza says that “God is the sum of all the substances of the universe.” God, for Yogananda, is not any created substance, but is pure Consciousness: *Sat-chid-ananda* (existence-consciousness-bliss, or, in Yogananda’s translation, “ever existing, ever-conscious, ever-new bliss”).

“Everything is part of God,” Spinoza declares. Yes, that is true, Yogananda would answer, but as His manifestation. Again: anything created is not what God really is. The film is not the filmmaker, just as the dream isn’t the man who dreams it.

So no, for Yogananda God is not pantheistic, he is ONE. Once He creates, He plays a triple role (remaining always ONE throughout): SAT, TAT, OM, which means God as transcendent Consciousness, God as immanent Consciousness, God as Cosmic Vibration which creates everything.

In short, Yogananda would tell Spinoza: “God is not His creation.” And again, he would tell him to meditate and find out for himself, in deep silence. Only there can God be found. Yogananda talked from inner realization, Spinoza did not.

True, even Einstein believed in the pantheistic God of Spinoza, not believing in a personal God who concerns Himself with fates and actions of human beings. Again, with all due respect to Einstein, Yogananda would disagree with him on that point. God is personal (as

well as impersonal) and He takes loving care of every human being. He guides them, loves them, and invites them back to His Eternal Cosmic Consciousness.

All the best,
Jayadev



Gurudev paramhansa yogananda
rare video

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Paramhansa yogananda

Closing



I had an incredible time researching and writing this book about Spinoza.

It seems to me the world would be a better place if humanity wasn't divorced from nature.

This seems to be one of the main problems of this world today.

We live in an egocentric world where consumerism is the name of the game.

We firmly believe that indigenous people are primitive. Yet they have been custodians of the land for thousands of years.

They believe in being custodians for future generations

They believe in living a lifestyle that is in harmony with nature and the universe.

Unfortunately, most of the civilized world hardly pays any attention to the grandeur of the universe.

We go on texting on the freeway of life.

We place so much more interest in our cell phones than in nature and all its glories.

We are oblivious. Miracles are all around us and yet we ignore them and don't see them.

I find it fascinating that most scientists embrace Spinoza's philosophy of God.

In my small opinion, there's no right or wrong

One can meditate for a trillion years and still recognize that it's a small drop in the infinite ocean

Personally, I love to live my life in awe of nature, the universe, and the jewel within.

Man tends to have blinders and only sees the external world and his problems.

He is constantly striving to find happiness in a world where happiness does not exist.

Spinoza tries to make sense of the mess that we have created.

He had a great man for his time. The Christians and the Jewish people had a hard time with his ideas.

She got excommunicated from his Jewish faith.

He was an innovator for his time.