

How the M5 was built

Over the past few months we have looked at the sheaths or veils that seem to hide our true nature. By calling them sheaths or veils we imply they are something that needs to be removed or got rid of. In fact, we don't need to get rid of them – we just need to see through them. Instead of calling them 'sheaths' we could instead see them as models that our minds superimpose on reality. Often those models are useful, but we should never mistake the model for ultimate reality. The models that come from science are perhaps the best-developed, most consistent and useful. But as Bernardo Kastrup explains, these too tell us nothing about reality:

The scientific method allows us to study and model the observable *patterns and regularities* of nature. For instance, the observation that objects consistently fall when dropped – a *regularity* observed anywhere on the surface of the planet – allows us to infer the law of gravity. ... By observing the consistency of these *patterns and regularities*, we can create mathematical models capturing them, run such models as computer simulations, and then *predict* how similar phenomena will unfold in the future.

But our ability to model the patterns and regularities of reality *tells us little about the underlying nature of things*. Scientific modelling is useful for informing us how one thing or phenomenon relates to another thing or phenomenon ... but it cannot tell us what these things or phenomena fundamentally are in and by themselves. [*Materialism is Baloney*: Ch. 1]

If we want to know about reality we need to start from our raw experience – that is, our direct experience divested of all the presumptions we make about the world which are hidden in the models we commonly apply. To see how this can be done, we'll take Frank's recent question as an example as this brings together much of what we have been discussing in the last two terms:

Q: You say that 'there's no-one moving, doing or orchestrating anything.' But people are doing things all over the world. I can understand that everything is being done by 'imagined selves', but if there is only experiencing, how does anything happen? For example, how was the M5 built? I know it exists because I drove along it to get here. The common-sense explanation is that a committee in Parliament voted for it, the Treasury granted the money, someone designed it, a firm of road-builders was hired to build it and now I am able to drive along it.

From the point of view of a separate self that views itself as existing inside a physical body that lives in a world made of matter, the model underlying Frank's question gives a clear, logical explanation of our experience and can be seen as a reliable predictor of 'future experience'. There's nothing wrong with that model of experience from a practical point of view. But, in common with all models, it is based on a number of presumptions:

1. There is a world outside myself that is made of solid stuff which we label 'matter'.
2. That world contains other people who are separate from me.
3. These 'other people' make decisions or do things which affect my experience in the future.
4. Everything that arises in our experience has a cause – something prior to it, that exists in the past.

So for the moment, let's drop all those presumptions and go back to what we know for certain based on our experience. All we know of experience is thoughts and images, bodily sensations, and sense perceptions – seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling. Therefore, all experience arises in the

mind. Does that necessarily imply it is produced in our minds by a separately existing, external world? Not necessarily. There are two possibilities:

1. Reality exists outside and independent of mind. This is known as '*realism*'.
2. Reality consists exclusively of mind and its contents. This is known as '*idealism*'.

Bernardo Kastrup points out that if we take the realist view, what we are saying is that our experience – everything that arises in mind – is a kind of 'shadow' of ultimate reality. But why assume the existence of a 'shadow universe' of mind when, if we take the idealist viewpoint, we can explain our experience without postulating the existence of anything outside of our experience?

In building a reasonable worldview, we must start from the data that is right under our noses: experience itself. Postulating an entire 'shadow' universe outside experience is only justifiable if we cannot make sense of reality without it. However, as I hope to show, we very well *can*. As such, the abstract 'shadow' world of materialism does nothing but complicate and inflate our models of reality by adding unnecessary, unprovable elements.

Suppose, thus, that we drop such an inflationary notion and reject a 'shadow' world outside mind. What we are then left with is a conception of reality that reflects precisely what reality seems to be: all that which we *experience*. ... When you avoid creating an unnecessary and unprovable 'shadow' of the world of experience, the only world you are left with *is* the world of experience, *the world of mind*.

According to materialism, the tables, chairs, walls, windows, computers, books, floor, etc., which you are experiencing right now are not really the real things, but merely hallucinated copies inside your head. The real world is some abstract realm of interacting electromagnetic fields that you cannot even visualize. According to idealism, on the other hand, the tables, chairs, walls, windows, computers, books, floor, etc., are all the real deal. You are not hallucinating anything, but having direct access to what is truly real. If the book or electronic reader in your hands right now feels real, it's because it *is* real, not the brain-constructed copy that materialists would have you believe. [*Materialism is Baloney*: Ch. 3]

As we look more and more deeply into the commonly-held materialist view, it begins to seem less and less plausible. How does mind, consciousness, arise out of a collection of interacting neurons that are themselves composed of elementary particles. Can feelings of joy or sorrow really be defined by or deduced from the mass, charge, spin, or momentum of a collection of particles located in the brain?

If we take an idealist view, it becomes clear that the first two of our presumptions are untrue. The third and fourth presumptions rely on the more fundamental presumption that time has real existence, independent of consciousness; that time is not simply a construct of the mind. This was discussed in the previous paper *20160324 Time, Memory and Causation*.

From an idealist perspective, our experience is entirely real, it is only our conceptualisation of it that is unreal. As soon as mind is engaged we have 'time' and we have 'objects'. Although we can ask the question with the mind – and if the question is to be asked, it can *only* be asked by the mind – ultimately we have to acknowledge the mind's inability to answer it. As Rupert explains:

By reading these words, we are, consciously or unconsciously agreeing to accept the validity and, by the same token, the limitations of the mind.

We are giving the mind credibility in spite of its limitations. We are acknowledging its ability to play a part in drawing attention to that which is beyond itself or outside the sphere of its knowledge.

It would be disingenuous to use the mind to deny its own validity. Our very use of the mind asserts its validity. However, it is a different matter to use the mind to understand its own limits.

It may well be that at the end of a process of exploring the nature of experience, using the full capacity of its powers of conceptual thinking, the mind will come to understand the limits of its ability to apprehend the truth of the matter and, as a result, will spontaneously come to an end. It will collapse from within, so to speak. [*The Transparency of Things*, p13]

This is the process of 'higher reasoning' which was discussed in the paper *20160121 Behind the Veil of Reason*. Its purpose is to bring about this collapse and it is this collapse that reveals a new possibility:

This possibility cannot be apprehended by the mind because it is beyond the mind. However, the obstacles to this new possibility are revealed and dissolved in this investigation.

They are dissolved by our openness to the possibility that in this moment we actually experience only one thing, that experience is not divided into 'I' and other, subject and object, me and the world, Consciousness and Existence.

We are open to the possibility that there is only one single, seamless totality, that Consciousness and Existence are one, that there is only *one* Reality. [*The Transparency of Things*, p14]

If we provisionally drop all four of our presumptions, our original question collapses. But the mind rebels because it justifiably feels that it is being left out of the enquiry and has not been given an answer to its original question. What does it do now? How is it to make sense of the experience of driving down the M5? The best we can do is to provide the mind with a metaphor, and the metaphor I have found most helpful is Rupert's metaphor of Martin and James¹ which is described in the paper *20160107 Approaching Reality*.

Martin, infinite consciousness, is asleep in bed in Wales and dreams that he is James, a separate self, driving down the M5. From James's point of view, time and space are real, and more specifically the M5, the car he is driving and the body/mind driving it are also all real. James *knows* that someone must have built the M5 because his experience has always conformed to that pattern: at one time a large object such as a building or the M5 isn't there, then when he goes back sometime later he sees people building it, and later still when he goes back again it is finished. But from Martin's point of view, time and space don't exist and nor do the M5, the car or James. Or if we prefer, we could say that all these exist in and were built by Martin's infinite mind.

So if Martin is pure consciousness and James is an illusory separate self, does this mean that enlightenment, the knowing of our own being as pure consciousness, is like living in a world of nothingness? Or is it OK for James to arise in Martin's mind as long as James knows that he is really

¹ These names have been changed at the request of a group member to avoid negative connotations associated with the names Rupert generally uses.

Martin? In other words, is it OK to think in terms of people, cars, the M5, the streets of London etc.? Here is Rupert's reply to that question:

James is the *agency* through which Martin, fast asleep in Buckland Hall, knows the streets of London. So James is not a *mistake*. James is the *agency*. Martin, fast asleep in Buckland Hall cannot know the streets of London. He can only know his own infinite, indivisible mind, in the context of the metaphor. But if he wants to know something other than his own infinite, transparent, empty, indivisible mind, he has to fall asleep. He falls asleep and dreams that he is James. It is through James that Martin is able to know the streets of London. In other words, James is the *agency* through which Martin knows London.

Now to translate that: the finite mind, the separate self, is the agency through which Consciousness knows something that seems to be other than itself, such as a world. Consciousness by itself – infinite, transparent, empty Consciousness – cannot know anything other than itself. So if it wants to *manifest* something, if it wants to know manifestation, it has to consent to forget itself. It has to divide itself into a subject and an object, and then seem to become the subject of experience. It's only from the point of view of that subject that Consciousness can know an object. Therefore, in order to bring manifestation, which means objectivity, into apparent existence, Consciousness has to forget its unity and divide itself into two.

So Martin forgets his unity and divides himself into two parts: one, called James, the subject, and two – London – the object. From James's point of view, what's inside of him is made out of *mind*, and what's outside of him is made out of *matter*. But that's just a reflection. The division of experience into mind and matter is a reflection of James's limited point of view. It doesn't tell us about the nature of the world. It tells us about the nature of James's mind. So, don't see the mind as a mistake or a problem. It is the agency through which consciousness manifests itself as the world. And there is a sacrifice involved. Because although Martin, as it were, gives birth to James and the streets of London within his own mind – James and the streets of London actually take place within Martin's mind. However, from *James's* point of view, the streets of London take place *outside* his mind. So, although all of this is in fact taking place in consciousness, from the point of view of the separate self, the subject of experience, consciousness, seems to be *inside* the body, and the world seems to be *outside*. In other words, the self seems to be an object *in* the world.

Just like when a spider spins a web out of herself and then becomes entangled in her web, consciousness gives birth to the world inside itself but then seems to become a self *in* the world, from whose point of view, the world seems to be known. That's the only way manifestation can take place, it has to take place in duality. So there is this collapse – although everything is *in* consciousness, in order to manifest and know the world, consciousness has to become *in* the world. Instead of the world being in consciousness, consciousness has to become a self in the world.

The self in the world, the separate self, always feels 'something is missing – I've been cut off from something that I know is truly mine'. ... What they are seeking is to remember who they truly are. They think they are seeking happiness in objects. No, what they are really seeking is to be divested of their limitations. James is wanting to go back to Martin. But in fact, James is not really James. There *is* no real separate self. James is just an apparent limitation of Martin's mind. The mind of James is the mind of Martin. Martin is the only one who has a mind.

There is nothing wrong with Frank's 'common-sense model' of how the M5 was built as long as we don't confuse the model with ultimate reality of our experience. The separate self is not something we have to get rid of – we just need to recognise that it has no real existence. Martin's dream can become a *lucid* dream. Martin doesn't need to forget himself, but he still has to take the point of view of James's body.

Rupert continues:

[when this lucid dreaming arises] ... there's the feeling/understanding that the knowing with which I know this experience is not limited by, is not conditioned by the limits of this body. Although my *experience* is limited, what it is made out of is not. That's all that's necessary. To hold in our minds and our hearts that the stuff that our experience is made of is infinite, in other words, is God's infinite being. As the Sufis say: 'there is only God's face'.

So I've given you a kind of rational explanation for how that process takes place, but that's not really important. What's important is to *feel* that everyone and everything that we come in contact with is God's infinite being.

[Transcript from dialogue on 2/12/2015 at Buckland Hall]

Contemplation

Just as the screen is not made of anything that appears in the movie, but everything that appears in the movie is made of the screen, so I, Awareness, am not made of anything that appears in experience, but whatever appears in experience is made of Me.