

How Both Science and Religion Get “It” Wrong

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How Science Gets It Wrong

If science follows its declared principles, it can get it right. “It” being understanding the nature of human consciousness and humankind’s participation in both the objective and subjective dimensions of reality. Science recognizes that its understanding of any phenomena at any one point in time is incomplete. It never has THE answer; it is always on the hunt for the better, more accurate, more complete solution. Theory is not law; it is just the best statement of system understanding that we have at the time. In this context, it is always the case that there are phenomena that are anomalous, that are not adequately accounted for by theory. It is these anomalies that force the search for a more complete theory. This is the principle within science that requires scientists to always be open-minded, open to change, open to the better explanation.

Theories in science are housed within paradigms, larger frameworks that contain the similar underlying assumptions of many theories. Theories nest within these larger paradigm frameworks more and less comfortably depending on the extent of the anomalies that pertain and how challenging these anomalies seem to be to the assumptions of the paradigm. This is basic philosophy of science stuff, and all scientists and the research they conduct are supposed to subscribe to this policy perspective.

Now comes the reality. Scientists get attached to their theories and especially to the paradigms within which their theories reside, and if their theories and paradigms are challenged, the research they generate from within these theories and paradigms can be diminished and come under threat for its adequacy. So, scientists, who are supposed to be open-minded and to expect change, in fact often deny the challenge of anomalies and resist change. Caution in science is a virtue, but it can be a fine line between appropriate caution and self-serving obstinance. Science can go wrong if it entertains obstinance, and it is unfortunately the case that the human factor of self-serving denial not infrequently carries caution to obstinance. And very often it is opinions offered by scientists on matters very much outside of their own research domains where obstinance rears its ugly head. The history of the theory of human evolution is the poster child for this problem since it is the place where religious beliefs about the origin of humankind meet the conclusions of science head on. Once the utterly confirming results of DNA evidence

appeared, the field of evolutionary biology solidified in its unanimous support of the theory of evolution. The specialists who know the most about the subject are convinced, but scientists in other fields, some of whom are religious believers, permit themselves to do what they would never allow in their own fields of study – to deny the overwhelming conclusions of the experts. This is to put “faith” in belief above the evidence of science, something no scientist can permit in himself or others. And yet it happens all the time, because scientists are humans and humans are inconsistent – sometimes rigorous observational scientists and sometimes believers “on faith.”

Of course an entire scientific field can get it wrong, but if debate on the issue is not significantly present in the field of study itself, we need to be especially circumspect about what amount to the “opinions” of outside scientists. Opinions are not science since there is no requirement that opinions accord with either scientific theory or the preponderance of the factual evidence. And there are a lot of scientists who are allowed to get away with offering what amount to opinions about results in domains of study where they have little experience or expertise. And because they are scientists with Ph.D.s and because the media often does not make proper distinction as to what scientists are qualified in relation to the issue under discussion, the views of these outside scientists are often accorded equal status with the true experts.

Now for the case in point in this discussion. Study of the Paranormal [Psi – telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and psychokinesis] has a long history beginning in most ascetic traditions where these phenomena are encountered with regularity during individual spiritual development. The nineteenth century saw the spiritualist movement in Western countries, which attracted a lot of charlatans and professional illusionists who, when exposed, tarnished the view of the legitimacy of paranormal phenomena more generally. Psychological Science and modern Parapsychology in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries struggled to return the study of the paranormal to scientific respectability. In the latter part of the 20th century, after much debate and review of the research evidence, the major professional organization in the area of psychology in America [the American Psychological Association] recognized Parapsychology as a legitimate subdivision of consciousness and psychology study and research. The association essentially determined that the evidence for the existence of psi phenomena was sufficient to acknowledge the scientific study of the phenomena as worthy of both recognition and pursuit. The association was doing what science requires: recognizing the anomalies [human behavior and capability lying outside the standard theory, and in this case, outside of a major paradigm] when the evidence for this behavior becomes substantial, even

when the implications for existing theories and paradigms within the field are made uncomfortable by this recognition.

The study of paranormal phenomena still lies at the margins of psychology and consciousness research, and the nay-sayers and skeptics are many, but importantly, most of these deniers are amateurs or professionals in fields other than psychology, consciousness study and parapsychology. In short, it is those who have less knowledge and expertise in the relevant field of study and who have conducted no research on paranormal phenomena who are the loudest critics. These skeptics take the usual tack of pointing to weaknesses in individual scientific studies and reports without considering the evidence as a whole. These deniers set up a straw man condition of perfection that no scientific study or report is able to meet since no study is without data limitations and potential methodological flaws. What these skeptics will not respect is both the collective research evidence and these two facts: 1) that paranormal phenomena are reported in every culture worldwide throughout history and 2) that a great many of these cultures have created special roles for the more skilled practitioners of these abilities [shamans, mystics, seers, artists, sorcerers, healers, inventors, etc.].

Paranormal experience is universal in humans, and like any other ability, different cultures foster it and different individuals have access to it to varying degrees. Looking at paranormal phenomena in the big picture, while scientific caution is appropriate in investigating it, overall denial of the existence of the phenomena carries caution to the point of obstinance. Unfortunately, the predispositions of individual cultures can encourage the tendency to obstinance, and when it comes to the paranormal, western culture can be almost an obstinance cheerleader. And this is the case despite this same culture's tolerance of fundamentalist forms of religion where the paranormal is applauded in the miracles of "saviors" and commonplace among many ministers and practitioners.

Why is the paranormal important? Put simply, because it is the evidence in the everyday world for the existence of intuitive competence in humans when they engage the subjective dimension of reality. It is the confirmation that while the objective, rational view of the world is of great value, it does not reveal the extent of human ability or provide the exclusive window on what constitutes reality. The paranormal is the bridge between the objective and the subjective, between the material and the spiritual perspectives. It brings the fruits of subjective awareness to objective reality where the option exists for its practical use. For empiricists, it is the TEST zone for proof of the subjective, for proof that human experience and awareness can transcend the objective limitations

of time and space and that material translocation and transformation are possible under certain conditions.

Study of the paranormal, and the intuitive human competence that underlies it, represents the opportunity to reincorporate the subjective [the human spirit] into the modern concept of reality without needing to credit any accompanying religious baggage – no religious dogma or institution. It is the evidentiary zone for one of the greatest potential paradigm shifts of modern time. Given the opportunity, one would think that scientists would be flocking to parapsychology instead of just tolerating it. It is not true science that stands in way. It is the objectivist bias of our culture that obscures the path and that lends support to those whose opinions sustain obstinance.

This is how science foregoes its ideals and its informing policy and how it largely fails to investigate one critically important area of human capability and behavior.

Human Capability and the Objective – Subjective Reality Continuum

Like objective reality, subjective reality is a constant presence, an essential part of the unbroken continuum of the reality that humans are built to perceive and engage. Inherent limitations of humans as a species mean that the full extent of reality is far beyond human perception or conception. Utilizing all of their capabilities, humans still only perceive and engage a small part of the full reality continuum. Within the portion of reality that humans can access, different states of mind open different access ports. Everyday mind is characterized by objective and subjective ports both being open but to different degrees depending on the task. The empirical tasks of biological survival, technical manipulation, and scientific inquiry require dominance by the objective, rational mind, while the leisure activities of play and social celebration open more to the subjective and enlist the intuitive and the rational operating in tandem, while the artistic and spiritual activities rely more exclusively on the intuitive and allow the individual to engage more completely the subjective dimension of reality. Science pursues understanding and manipulating objective reality relying on the mental faculty of intellect, while Religion pursues understanding and utilizing subjective reality relying on the mental faculty of intuition. When humans regard either intellect or intuition or the portion of reality that one or the other accesses as exclusive, they are biased and myopic. And such claims only limit human potential. Humans need to recognize, utilize and develop every reality access mode they have since even with all capabilities enlisted, developed and engaged, it is a narrow band of reality that humans can experience.

At a fundamental level, Science and Religion both go wrong when either denies the significance of the dimension of reality to which the other is associated and claims primacy for its mental modes, perspective and utility in addressing human need and meaning in life.

The Many Ways Religion Gets It Wrong

As we have seen, Science can go wrong within its own domain when its practitioners fail to live up to its declared ideals and informing policy, a failing that is especially important when it comes to exploring the human behavioral interface or bridge between objective and subjective reality. Likewise, Religion can go wrong in many ways, due to both internal and external factors. Unfortunately the combination of these failings result in most religions being so far off base that I find it useful to distinguish at the outset between Religion and Spirituality. I posit Spirituality as the essential perspective that emerges when human intuitive competence engages subjective reality. It is from this essential base that all religions derive and from which nearly all go astray. I will use this distinction between Religion and Spirituality in the remarks that follow.

Human intuitive competence provides access to the spiritual perspective, the subjective dimension of reality, the human experience of this reality, and the awareness and practical consequences that result from this experience. And certain states of mind accommodate intuitive competence and its development and utilization. The meditative state is one of these mental states in which the rational mind is held in suspension allowing the intuitive to manifest in a purer form, which accommodates the spiritual perspective and access to the subjective dimension of reality. Meditation in its several forms – which can include prayer – is the practice that promotes this consequence. Meditation is a vehicle, and once the vehicle is mastered, access to a relatively pure form of the intuitive can be achieved directly without having to rely on this vehicle per se. Merely the “idea” of Meditation can become the trigger for shifting to emphasis on the intuitive channel in the individual. And in those fully mature in access to the intuitive, there is no need for a vehicle or a trigger at all because the intuitive channel is held open all the time. Meditation, like all forms of art and ritual – when properly understood and utilized, is a means, not an end. It is the awareness that can result when we use the tool to explore the subjective that is important once we get there, not the particular access tool that we use to open the door. There can be an infinite number of different access tools that take humans to the same place. Using a different metaphor, it is getting to the “party” and discovering and utilizing the fundamental connectedness of the world when we get there that counts, not the particular brand of automobile that brings us to the “dance.”

The first major misstep that Religion makes is to focus central importance on the vehicle and so to diminish the core opportunity for the individual and society to achieve sophisticated spiritual awareness at the dance. All systems of religious beliefs and rituals are means, not ends, but most religions make commitment to their specific beliefs and rituals the primary concern of the devotee as well as the exclusive screen for interpreting the meaning of all experience that occurs when the devotee engages the subjective or spiritual realm. When religions interject priests and their ilk as necessary human intermediaries into this focal belief and ritual framework, both contact with and interpretation of the experience of the subjective becomes essentially “fixed” and the potential liberating awareness of the spiritual perspective through the exercise of human intuitive competence is severely curtailed, if not entirely suppressed.

The spiritual is the core of all religions, and human intuitive competence is what makes access to the spiritual perspective possible, but nearly all religions fail both to sustain this core and to promote a liberated form of this human competence. These are huge failings. While these failings may be understandable in the framework of a 12th century worldview – the worldview in which earth is the center of the universe and humans the pinnacle among God’s creations, to continue to tolerate these failings given our modern understanding of humankind’s minuscule position in a virtually infinite universe is inexcusable. To persist in tolerating these failings, we are harboring the basis for large scale and potentially devastating societal conflict as a result of competition among absolutist religions. And we are simultaneously smothering spiritual awareness and intuitive competence under this erroneous religious umbrella at the same time that the obvious excesses of the religious representation of the spiritual encourage science to reject the legitimacy and value of the spiritual itself. This is a double whammy. When Religion goes wrong, it really goes wrong, creating the conditions that significantly limit humankind’s opportunity to fulfill its potential and that can carry all of modern civilized humanity into the muck and the mire.

While Religion fails at the institutional and political levels for important reasons with critical consequences, it also fails at the fundamental level of interpreting the core religious experience of unification. Unification occurs when the individual discovers through access to the subjective realm the essential connectedness of all things and the identity he or she shares as a participant in this infinite condition of interconnectedness. At the extreme subjective level, all things, which seem separate in the objective reality, dissolve into one thing – the ALL where there is but one identity shared by everyone and everything across all time and space. To experience self as All is the unification experience, the core experience to which all religious ritual is supposed to lead.

To be “Born Again in the Spirit” is one way within Christianity to describe some level of the individual having this unification experience. Ecstasy is the emotional and conceptual effect of having this experience of oneness since in experiencing the shared identity of total interconnectedness, the individual is entirely confirmed – filled with the Love of essential and infinite connection.

It is in the religious interpretation of this unification experience that Religion goes wrong and “loses it.” Instead of encouraging and guiding the individual’s independent development of his or her intuitive competence into sophisticated understanding and use of the subjective reality, virtually every religion captures this universal human experience in its dogma and interprets this positive experience as proof of the absolute and exclusive truth of its particular set of beliefs and rituals. The significance of subjective reality is thereby reduced to a narrow set of literal beliefs and their required rituals which totally circumscribe and define the “meaning” of the unification experience and all subsequent exploration of the subjective dimension of reality. Instead of being liberated to pursue and develop within subjective awareness for him or herself, Religion posits a whole horde of intermediaries between the individual and access to the subjective [gods, ancestors, saviors, spirits, saints, etc.]. Placating these intermediaries becomes the focus of attention for Religion rather than assisting individuals to develop intuitive competence, to become more and more aware of the nature of the subjective realm, and to learn how to make use of being present within subjective connectedness. Instead of promoting free access to the subjective, Religion greatly restricts and confines this access and defines the function of the subjective as supporting the validity of the belief system itself. And through the introduction of both conceptual supernatural intermediaries [gods, saviors, ancestors] and social human intermediaries [divine kings, popes, priests, shaman, monks], most religions further restrict access to the subjective to the privileged few who benefit from the accreditation the belief system offers to their positions of social, economic and political power. In this way through religion as a social institution the subjective reality is made to conform to and support the objective economic and political reality. At this point the subjective has been all but converted in effect to the objective.

Each religion reduces the universal unification experience to support its belief and ritual system as defining the absolute truth regarding the nature of the subjective reality and humankind’s relationship to it. Many different religions, all claiming to reveal absolute Truth invites competition and conflict across social groups of differing beliefs. This, in spite of the fact that all religious belief systems carry their devotees to exactly the same place with exactly the same core results. In this way the universal subjective experience of connection/unification – Love – becomes in Religion a competition among the

claims for primacy by different religions. Through religion, the alternative interpretations of the experience of universal Love are transformed first into a competition and then into conflicts [crusades and jihads] of religious “cleansing” of the infidels. Unfortunately, this failing first in interpretation of the unification experience and then in the subsequent progression into institutionalized conflict is common to virtually all religions. And arguments by moderates calling for tolerance among religions never address the essential interpretive fallacy upon which the fundamentalist conflicts rest.

There is yet another way in which Religion fails conceptually. The spiritual experience of unification evokes an awareness of sharing in an all inclusive singular identity through infinite interconnection and the transcendence of time and space. In this setting, all entities participate in one another, belong to one another, are fundamentally in contact with one another, and can relate and influence one another. An individual in objective reality can shift his or her consciousness position and access this infinitely interconnected subjective reality where time and space no longer are barriers. Paranormal events, which exhibit consequences in objective reality for connections that can be realized in this subjective reality, are the bridges that bring the effects of the subjective into the objective in the form of pre and retro cognition, clairvoyance, telepathy, and psychokinesis. While from an exclusively objective, intellectual perspective, events like the mental moving of objects, multiplying materials, healing the sick, knowing the thoughts of others, “seeing” and telling of events of the past and the future all seem miraculous, from a subjective, spiritual perspective these are paranormal events that are to be expected.

Religions and cults form around individuals who exhibit these paranormal talents to a significant degree exactly because most modern humans are so minimally developed in intuitive competence and so unfamiliar with the subjective realm and the commonality of bridging paranormal phenomena. Intuitively developed individuals have always been around in all human cultures, but in the time of complex, civilized communities, religions have transformed a few of these intuitively talented individuals into prophets and even saviors when the circumstances have been conducive. Religions celebrate and even worship these individuals at the same time the average person is encouraged to keep his or her intuitive abilities in check and to reduce the significance of any core spiritual experiences to proof of the authenticity of the religious belief system itself. In this way most religions capture rather than liberate the intuitive competence of their followers. Religions honor the devout followers who obey and accept all on faith, and they tend to be uncomfortable, if not downright belligerent, in dealing with independent spiritual seekers who look to their own internal resources to create their own path to enlightenment. Ironically, in spite

of the core spiritual experience being the source of all religions, in practice most religions join with secular, objectivist culture to restrict the development of intuitive competence in the citizenry.

In addition to making prophets and saviors out of intuitively talented individuals who evidence paranormal abilities and discouraging intuitive development in the populace, Religion misinterprets the spiritual, subjective message regarding human physical death by either positing a separate soul or enlisting some form of reincarnation. Subjective reality is the reality of all things existing as one together – inseparable and unified as one, existing as one infinitely interconnected and interrelated identify. In this reality there is no separate identity, so there is no basis for either a separate soul or for one separate physical entity being reincarnated in another separate physical entity. From the spiritual perspective of the subjective reality, the individual as a separate entity is an illusion to begin with. As an integral and integrated part of it all already, there is no “other” place to go or entity to be or become. There is only change in an ever vibrating and flowing universe. All that is can never be lost; it only changes in and out of materiality and immateriality in the infinite flow. We come from everything being made up of the disparate matter particles and energy of the universe; we participate in everything being related to all other forms of matter and energy; and we become anything and everything as we emerge and dissolve as material things. We already have life everlasting; we just do not have it as some form of our current selves, whether as an immaterial soul or physical reincarnation. God as a father, Jesus as a savior, judgment, soul, heaven or hell are all projections from the objective, material world to interpret and try to provide meaning in the subjective world where for the spiritually enlightened these separate entities and actions have no credibility and are totally unnecessary. These materially based projections reflect the need of objectively focused humans in a spiritually immature condition who want answers to questions about life that they do not know how to frame and do not know where to go to get their answers. So, Religion creates these materialistically based projections to ease the uncertainty of material death caused by the very ignorance of which Religion is a major promoter.

Collectively, the failings of Religion with respect to revealing the nature, scope and significance of subjective reality are enormous. Religion becomes first a set of literal beliefs and rituals based on inappropriate projections from the objective into the subjective, and then as a social institution Religion becomes a supporter of objectively oriented secular society. Through this process, Religion, which ironically has its origins in the core unification experience of subjective spirituality, ultimately becomes a major roadblock to humanity maturing into sophisticated subjective awareness.

Re-creation and Spirits

Until the concept of Super Psi emerged in parapsychology studies, a resolution appeared impossible for the seeming dilemma between the two competing fundamental principles of “the only constant is change” and “all that ever was is and ever will be.” Psi brings all paranormal phenomena together as different realizations of the same underlying intuitive human capability when operating in the subjective domain of reality. Super Psi resolves the seeming contradiction between constant change on the one hand and absolute permanence on the other by positing the phenomena of re-creation. Super Psi suggests that within constant change, human intuitive capability can utilize the infinite interconnectedness of all things and events across time and space and by connecting and sharing identity with them, rediscover what and who they are and what they know and were. Living humans can even re-create these persons, things and events in cognitive, and even material form because they are always “present” or “available” in the subjective domain of reality.

The mistake Religion makes is to view from an objective perspective this constant “presence” for all things and events in the subjective and then attribute continued causality for this subjective presence in the objective. It is through this very significant “mistake” that “spirits” or ancestors or gods are held to be causal agents in the everyday world. Continued presence or availability in the subjective does not imply continued causal agency in the objective. The ability of humans to manifest aspects of subjective presence cognitively or even materially in the objective does not mean that apart from the manifesting activity of humans these presences are independent agents causing events to occur in the objective or everyday reality. Always available in the subjective across time and space does not necessitate being always causal in the objective. Religion fails to make this distinction; making this distinction is fundamentally important for understanding the relationship of the objective and subjective dimensions of reality; and Super Psi is one theory that can clearly accommodate making this distinction.

Now comes the really tricky part. Humans can render the presences that are available through infinite connectedness and shared identity in the subjective “real” in the objective, and they can invest these objective presences from the subjective with activity that can be causal. But the source of this causal activity is not subjective presence itself but the re-creative investment of humans living in the objective, material domain. Living humans who utilize intuitive competence in the subjective can get anything they want that ever was and they can cause subjective presence to have objective effect if they have the requisite intuitive capability and elect to do so. These living humans can manifest

subjective awareness in any way they like. They can do it themselves and attribute it to themselves or they can understand themselves to do it through the presences that are available to them in the subjective. And in some ways, attributing causality to other identities can facilitate humans being able to accomplish these manifestations by removing them from the constrained everyday ego of the living individual. But, the fact that this happens and that humans and religions often attribute causality to subjective presences themselves does not mean that primary causality actually lies where it is attributed.

Super Psi suggests that it is the living human that is responsible, that he or she is actually the causal source for all such “spirit” manifestations. By contrast, Religion allows for a separate reality and independent causality for the subjective presence domain. What the Super Psi interpretation demonstrates is first that it is not necessary to go the Religion route and second that in going the Religion route Religion both diminishes the capability of living humans and creates the basis for human conflict over whose “gods” are the true subjective presences. Super Psi is a super humanistic view, and by fully crediting the subjective dimension of reality and human participation in it, it vastly exceeds secular humanism with its limited focus on the objective, material, intellectual realm of human experience and existence.

Conclusion

Science derives denial of the paranormal phenomena that bridge the objective and subjective realms of reality from its own bias for the objective reality and its failure to live up to its philosophical ideals and policies. The effect is to mostly overlook investigation of these bridging paranormal phenomena and the potential impact of a major paradigm shift, which their study could produce – including a very different view of human consciousness and the utility of subjective awareness. Spirituality focuses fully on the subjective but like Religion it often mistakenly attributes causality to supernatural, spirit entities. Religion in addition suffers from its very often being co-opted by and serving the power needs and pragmatic concerns of social, economic and political culture and from imposing objective reality constructs in the form of literal beliefs and rituals on the subjective in an effort to overcome the challenge posed by physical death. Super Psi offers a super humanistic solution to the failings of both Science and Religion. It credits both the objective and subjective dimensions of reality and human access to and use of both while it avoids the denial and obstinance of Science and the socio-political and conceptual miscues of Religion, all of which diminish the importance of human intuitive competence.

As a 20th and 21st century social scientist, I am very interested in seeing the failings of both Science and Religion overcome. In this regard, I suggest that the position that is most productive for the success of the emerging world civilization is one 1) where Religion in all of its iterations frees itself from its thick crust of objectivist projections [literal belief and frozen ritual] and its ties to secular society and returns to open vehicles to access and liberate Spirituality, 2) where world society commits to a super-humanistic view, like Super Psi, which encourages human responsibility for and realization of full human mental potential, 3) where world society promotes balanced intuitive and intellectual development in its citizenry respecting equally the objective and subjective dimensions of reality, and 4) where Science lives up to its open-minded philosophical ideals and pursues the in-depth investigation of the paranormal bridging phenomena between the objective and subjective dimensions of reality.