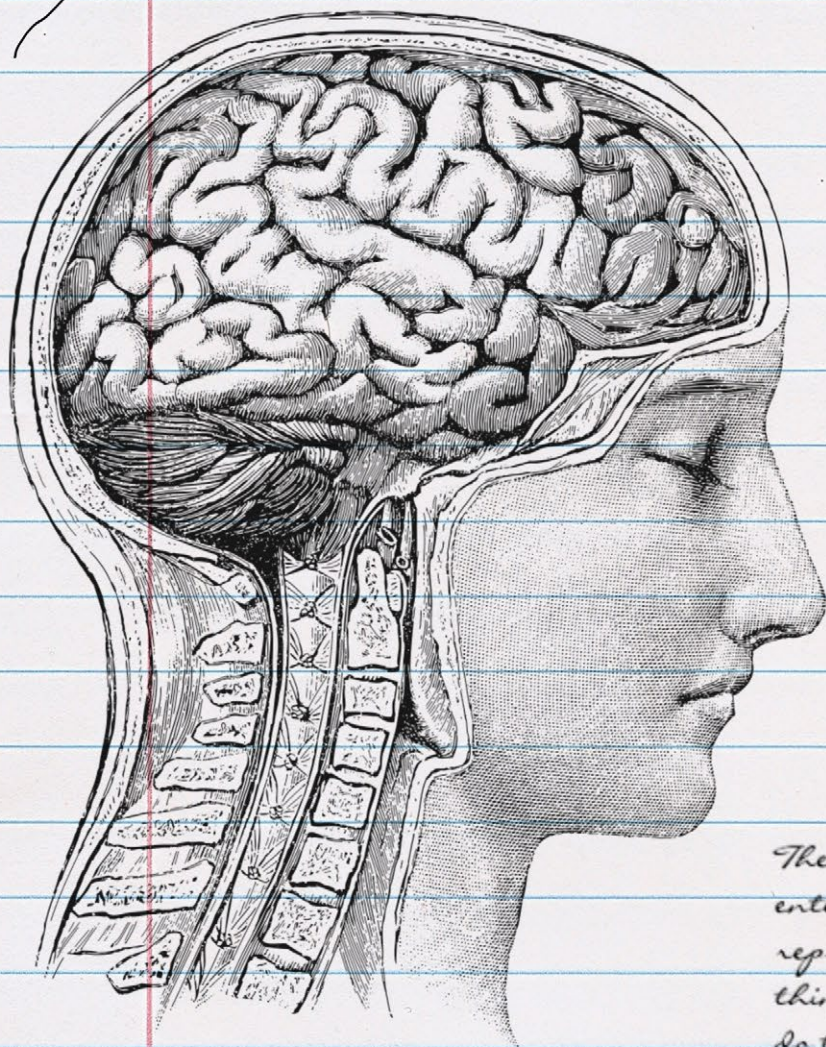


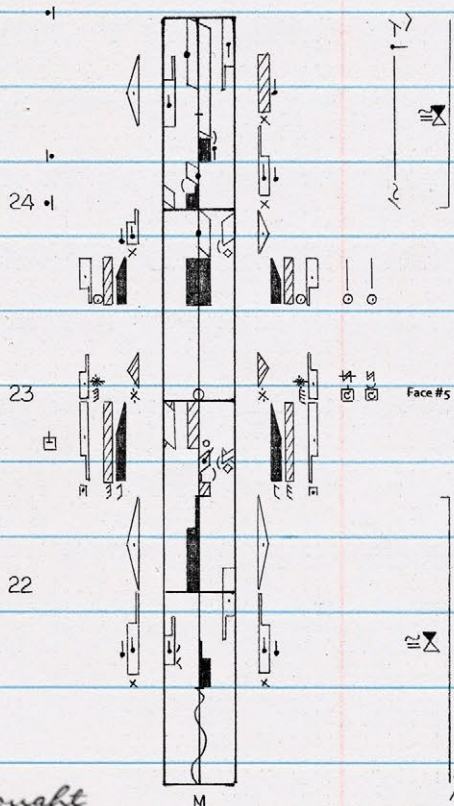
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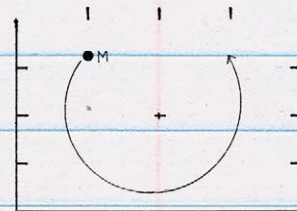


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Medicians may do a very slight
ritard here however, the dancer
needs to press forward.



*The more thought
enters into our
representation of
things, the less
do they retain
their naturalness,
their singularity
and immediacy.*



24-30

$$\frac{\partial E}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot [(E + P^*)\mathbf{v} - \mathbf{B}(\mathbf{B} \cdot \mathbf{v})] = -\rho\mathbf{v} \cdot \nabla(\Phi + \phi) + \rho H - \rho^2 \Lambda - \nabla \cdot \mathbf{Q} - \nabla \cdot (\Pi \cdot \mathbf{v})$$

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t} - \nabla \times [\mathbf{v} \times \mathbf{B} - \eta \mathbf{J} - \eta_H(\mathbf{J} \times \mathbf{B}) - \eta_{AD}(\mathbf{J} \times \mathbf{B}) \times \mathbf{B}] = 0$$

SHAPE JOURNAL

THINKING

WHAT IS THINKING? /
THE BOUNDARIES OF THOUGHT - THE SELF-IMPOSED LIMITS OF HUMAN THINKING /
REALITY AND MIND - THE AS YET NOT TOTALLY DEFINED ALTERNATIVES FOR A PHILOSOPHICAL STANDPOINT

(© W.F. Magg)

*The more thought
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{G.W.F. Hegel}



Thinking

Special Issue 45 / September 2016

- 4. What is Thinking?
- 13. The Boundaries of Thought
- 19. Reality and Mind

What is Thinking?

Exactly what thinking is has always been a problem for Homo Sapiens.

For we are clearly animals, yet seem to be very differently endowed from even our closest relatives among the Great Apes.

Yet we continue to study what we think of as “intelligence” in various non-human animals, and attempt to define what it is that separates us from them, and exactly how it could have developed in only this single species.

Indeed, we often characterise what we do as “Thinking” and picture it in a very homocentric way, as in Rodin's famous sculpture of a man with his hand upon his chin and with head bowed. He isn't looking at an object or doing anything physical: he is *Thinking!*

We like this because it doesn't seem to fit with how all the other intelligent animals “think”. We seem to do our reasoning solely in our heads, using what we call *abstractions*, and we are convinced that only we can do this. There can be no doubt that it happens.

But what actually is it, and what can it achieve? Indeed, the number one question has to be, “Can it actually settle upon the Real Truth?” The answer has to be “No!”

For how could any thinker actually arrive at the *Absolute Truth* of anything? For, to manage that, he would have to have all the relevant facts in his possession: use all the correct assumptions and principles, AND, most important of all, have the appropriate methods of thinking to achieve his objective.

But, those requirements will NEVER be fulfilled!

The Thinker is only a mere mortal! And, the most important and penetrating developments in his Thinking are very recent indeed, and are regularly proved to be insufficient. We cannot possibly know everything we need in a particular area, nor will our premises be perfectly sound. And though Man has indeed made significant progress, it is never in Absolute Truths.

Clearly, what he must *not* do is seek the Absolute Truth in the first place, but on the contrary, forever increase the *Objective Content* in his ideas about the world.

Instead of the concept of collecting “Truths”, he has to settle for finding aspects or parts of a complex truth and then attempt to make them into a coherent account. And, though these can also mislead him in this, he has been found to be very proficient indeed in constructing comprehensible structures.

But the process is clearly infinite!

And, his many assumptions and principles that he devises to “make sense” of what he has revealed are not only insufficient, but will always in the end, also be misleading. The process is not incremental and continuous at all!

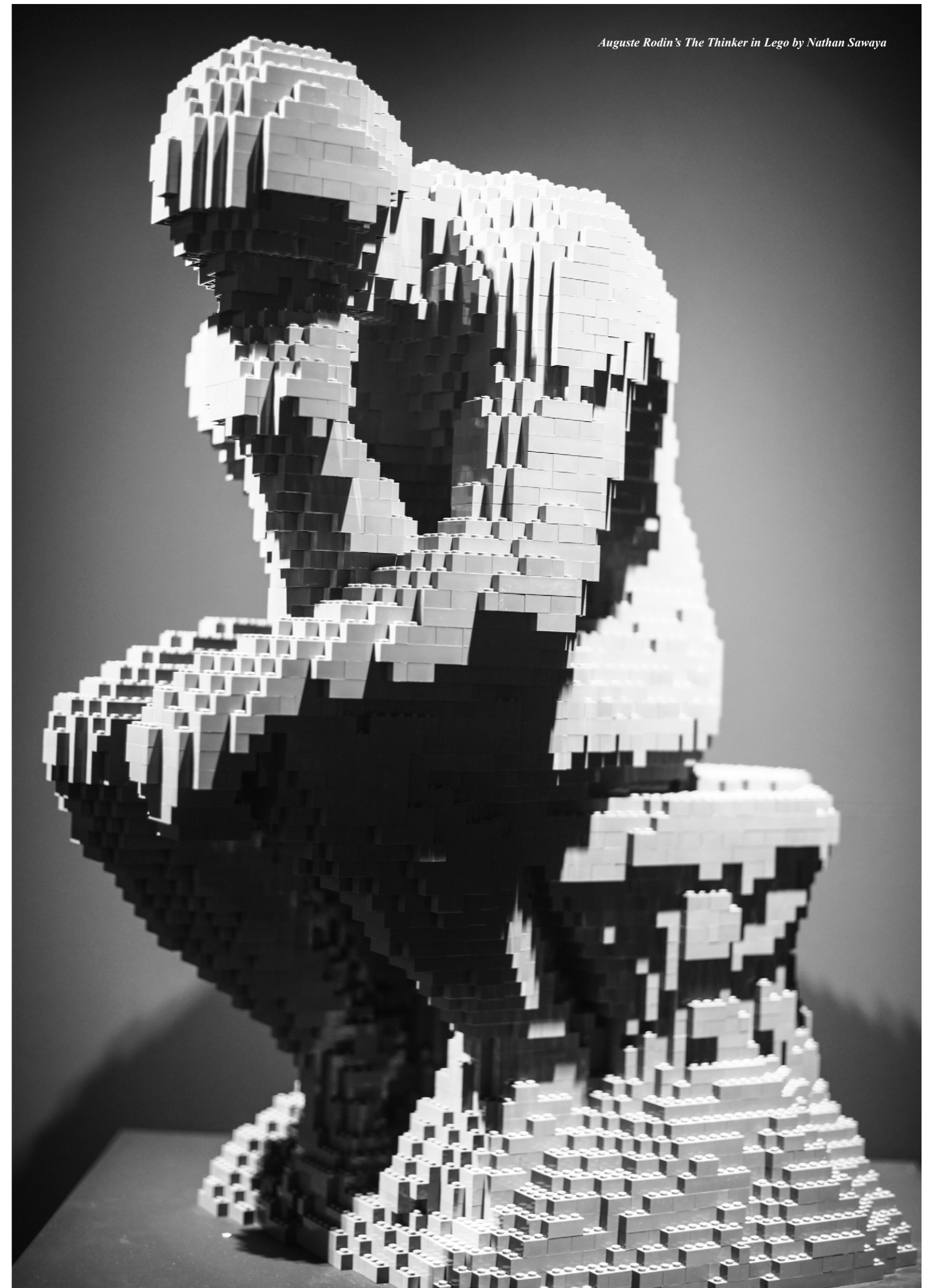
Now, what de-rails, such a discussion as this, is Mankind's clear success in actually using what he knows, and how he thinks things are. In other words, he is very good at getting the required results, even if his explanations are wrong!

We can have great success even though our assumptions, principles and explanations are incorrect.

For, we concentrate upon – “What happens if I do this?” We are consummate pragmatists, and have learned to control situations in such a way as to get the results we require. We must differentiate between Success and Truth – between “What must be done?” and “Why does this behave as it does?”

In the modern world, we might call the former Technology and the latter Science.

Note: Many years ago I met an ex-soldier who offered to build me an audio amplifier to turn my record player into a stereo device. He did so, and it worked perfectly. But, when I asked him what particular components were for, he had no idea, and he couldn't use what he knew to build something new. He knew what to do, but not why it worked!





So, we are naturally concerned with making things go the way we want, and we have the intelligence to attempt to modify things we naturally find, and attempt to change them to all-the-better do what we want them to.

It may not sound much, but it was truly revolutionary.

When Homo Habilis (or some other early hominid) started to knap broken pieces of flint to give them a sharper edge, he was able to use them to cut things in a controllable way, and even make other things out of wood and horn by using his new tool to change them too.

Such a process was refined into a remarkable ability, and long before Man had any idea “Why?” he certainly developed “How?” to a remarkable degree and made superb weapons like bows-and arrows, which made him an exceptional hunter in spite of his relatively meagre stature.

But, these crucial developments did not make Man better at explaining why things behaved the way that they did. And, this important lack was filled in with magical rites and religious beliefs, which, they believed, were as important in their successful enterprises as the things they knew how to make and the things they knew how to do.

Now, this revolution, in time, led to a host of new practices and skills, ultimately flowering in what has been called the Neolithic Revolution. By this major Event, Mankind significantly transformed both himself and his society with others of his kind.

But, it still wasn't enough!

More and more people wanted to know *why* things behaved as they did, to do more than merely modify them to be more effective in limited tasks. Some sought understanding as a more fruitful path to development. After all, it had taken several million years to get where they were.

Even Homo Sapiens had remained a hunter-gatherer for the vast majority of his existence, and now, ever more questions needed to be answered. Now, if the emphasis upon explanations were correct, what is it in the way Man has always tackled his problems, which prevents him doing so.

What makes our attempts in this direction limited: why do they so frequently come to an impasse, which seems impossible to transcend?

Already we have identified the lack of sufficient knowledge. But, we do attempt to use what knowledge we already have, to apply to problems we haven't yet got any sort of handle upon.

Our “wisdom” in doing this, is determined by our experience, and that is limited. Even with civilised Man's use of language and writing, so that knowledge can be made socially available, the sum total of all that knowledge falls short of being able to help us understand many, many things.

And, though we were unaware of just how limited, there occurred a few human beings who considered these limitations to a great degree, and realised that it wasn't the lack of knowledge that brought things to a halt, but how we dealt with that knowledge, and related them to one another.

We always tried to reveal underlying causes, to unify what we knew into an integrated and consistent whole.

And we did this by arriving at what we saw as underlying *principles* – common to all the fragments we knew about. And, these always had a penumbra of assumptions, which we believed were true of all phenomena.

We gradually amassed a culture of these things as a basis for what we were trying to explain.

Note: Such commonality was initially found in quantitative relations and the first systematic achievements were in Mathematics!

But, the best of these investigators was undoubtedly Friedrich Hegel – the German Idealist philosopher, whose self-chosen subject was “Thinking About Thought”. So, about 200 years ago, he did make significant progress in defining the limits that we had self-constructed as the basis for our Thinking.

Let us, therefore, reiterate what historically led them to the means they used in attempting to understand Reality, as distinct from effectively using it.

Human beings are intelligent, and, via a remarkable trajectory of changes in place and mode of life, developed a unique life as a bipedal, naked hunter/gatherer, originally on the plains of East Africa, where they became remarkably successful.

Their intelligence made them find pragmatic ways of doing things, and this included *Thinking* about the problems they regularly faced.

They began by language to name and even categorise things, and occasionally make conclusions about them. These internalisations of found patterns we call abstractions, and they were only as accurate as Mankind's state of development could deliver.

Crucially we also arrived at assumptions and even principles, which were believed to encapsulate the essences of this ever-increasing knowledge.

And, this development was both a great leap forward and also a limitation upon our understanding.

They were constructs, based upon an ever-wider range of knowledge, but always constrained by the extent and depth of that source. They couldn't possibly be totally correct.

But, at the same time they were not just figments of Mankind's imagination either, but a whole catalogue of knowledge: they may not have been the Absolute truth, but they were certainly contained a measure of Objective Content – parts or aspects of the Truth.

Clearly, these were helpful in many cases, but not all, and in the end, and in many areas, they were misleading. Using such thinking, we did make significant progress, but were still unable to explain why.

It was Hegel who realised how these things arose, and when their produced assumptions and principles failed.

Of course, some of the gains were remarkable, and the contribution of the Ancient Greeks was brilliant. For, what they did was turn an assumption about the apparent permanence of many things into a System.

It started with Mathematics, where patterns evident in the world around them, were idealised into fixed, simplified forms, and a study of these, in their own

terms, and taken to a remarkable level, proved extremely useful in all areas where control was sufficient to keep things close to those ideal forms.

And, from this, a more general system, again based upon fixed, unchanging things was developed – termed Formal Logic.

This led to a great leap forward in Thinking, but it never included real qualitative change and development.

And, at this time, around 500 B.C, Human Thinking split into two very different traditions – the Pluralistic, based upon the Greek gains, and the Holistic, based upon the oriental tradition, and brought to fruition by The Buddha - which became Western and Eastern philosophies respectively.

These typify the trajectories of development in Human Thinking thereafter, and the inadequacies that were set in stone, and prevented the most fruitful revelations of Reality-as-is.

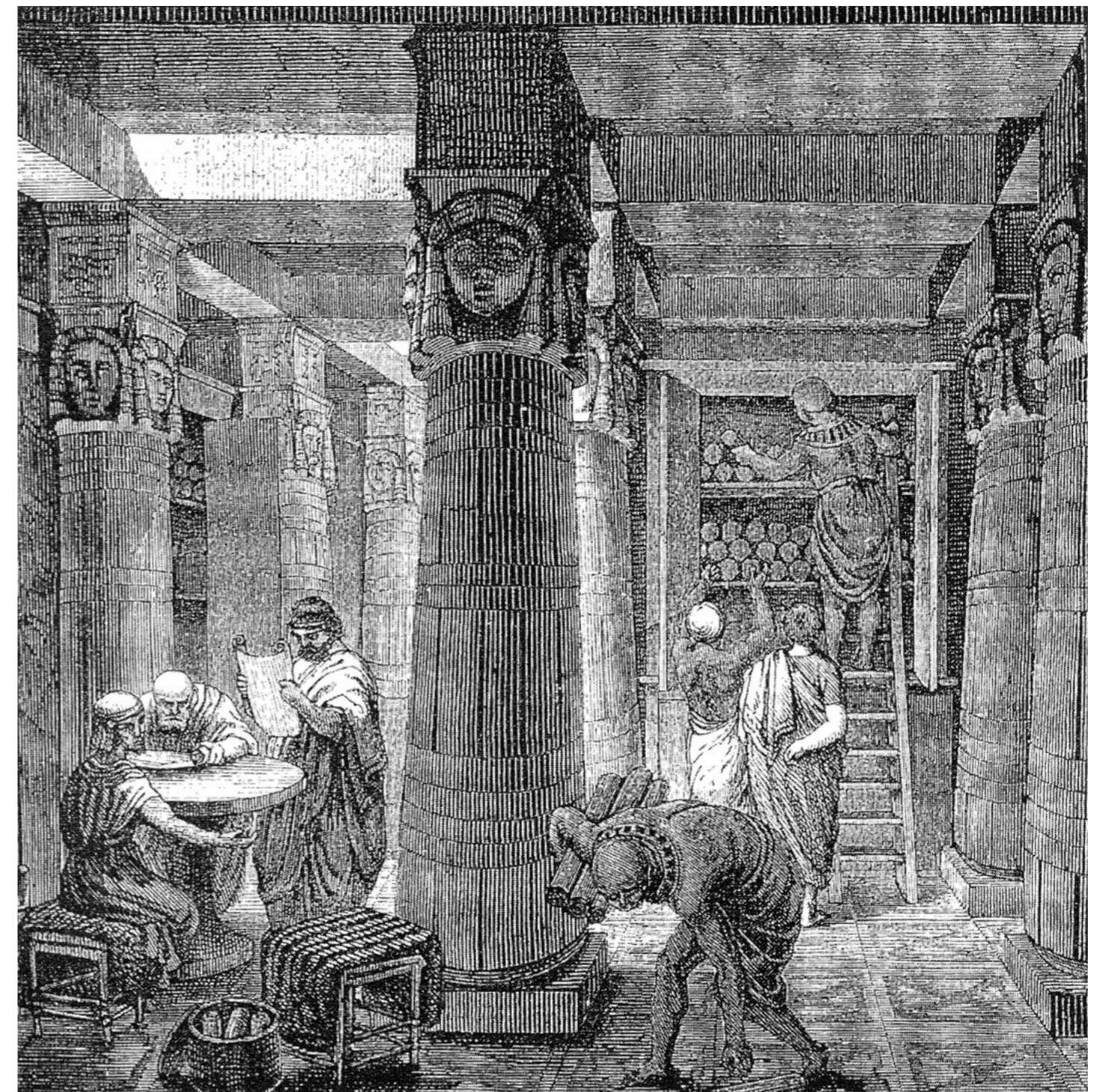
Nevertheless, the most remarkable development was that of Science, which was, for most of its history, an amalgam of three seemingly incompatible strands in Human Thinking.

And, surprisingly, it was this contradictory nature that was its best feature, because across these dissimilar strands many different things could be covered reasonably well, even though NO comprehensive and consistent account could integrate all three.

Before we go further, we must adequately describe the contents of this amalgam.

First, we had the Greek tradition, with Formal Logic, while Second, we had the Holistic tradition which coped best with delivering **explanations** and Third, we had Mathematics, which was able to deliver a multitude of Perfect Forms, which could be, in carefully farmed situations, fitted-up to extract aspects of reality, and used!

But, as these three strands were unavoidably contradictory in their premises, they slowly created quite separate disciplines with their own specialists and only a limited set of interfaces between them.



The Great Library of Alexandria, O. Von Corven, 19th century

Of course, the brilliantly pragmatic Humans soon found ways of “co-operating” sufficiently to achieve some remarkable gains.

Now, though Science is the best example of how alternative systems, kept going, despite inevitable contradictions they were still the best achievable means for Mankind’s still inadequate concepts and methods.

In fact, the overall approach is embodied in the famed pragmatic credo – “Keep everything and switch, when necessary, to what fits best”

But, of course, even in this amalgam (and with that credo), there never was enough to deal with all situations in Reality.

A crisis just had to arrive!

And, the man to recognise both such an unavoidable eventuality, AND a possible way of transcending it, was GWF Hegel. Hegel lived 200 years ago, and was an academic philosopher in what was later to become Germany. He had taken as his area of study, “Thinking about Thought”, and, being both a holist and idealist, he took a very different path from most thinkers of his time, including the scientists.

He finally unearthed the regular appearance in Human Thinking of what he termed “Dichotomous Pairs” of concepts, which were mutually incompatible with one another, in spite of having been generated by the very same premises.

It was clear that these always occurred when the current set of premises were rapidly running out of steam, and delivering more problems than solutions, and no amount of switching to and fro between alternatives is now able to lead to any progress whatsoever. (See Zeno’s Paradoxes circa 500 B.C.)

A current system of assumptions and principles had reached a crisis point. Hegel finally realised that to make any real progress, these crucial and determining premises, which had undoubtedly generated BOTH arms of the dichotomy, had first to be unearthed (for they were usually unstated), then criticised, and finally replaced!

Only if this could be carried through successfully, could any further progress be made. Crucially, the various specialisms were forever narrowing or proliferating, in attempts to keep things compatible, but the results were a Post Modernist mish-mash of contradictory fields getting nowhere.

Hegel also realised that, even when this was actually successfully achieved, it would never be any sort of final solution, for even radical improvement in these premises, would only allow a finite period of further gains. For every new transcendence would, itself, at some stage, prove to be inadequate, and wholly new Dichotomous Pairs would signal yet another crisis and impasse!

Mankind could do no other than pull himself up by his own shoelaces, and he would be developing himself in the process of attempting to understand Reality!

Clearly, Hegel’s ideas (though he didn’t think so) marked the demise of the objective of achieving Absolute Truth. For, such was clearly impossible! With the new ideas and methods, what had to be sought was a maximising of what became known as Objective Content in our conceptions of Reality, which did indeed manage to reflect some aspects or parts of what was being studied. And, in addition, subscription to a standpoint which sought out, purposely, these Dichotomous Pairs, and then a revelation of their common premises, would have any chance, at each stage, of breaking through the unavoidable impasses, and continuing the real route to Understanding.

There could be no doubt that Hegel’s devised stance and methods had merit.

But, perhaps, it was both too much and too idealistic!

The acceptance of the crises and resolutions in Thinking were found to exist in literally all development, and even in the nature of Human Societies.

They were soon recognised beyond Human Thinking, in what were termed Social Revolutions.

Clearly, with the intellectual life of Society limited to the owning classes, such ideas were considered to be an anathema, and when a student of Hegel – Karl Marx, turned his master’s position on it’s head, or rather upon it’s feet. And converted the whole body of Hegel’s

gains to Materialism and also to Political activities, the standpoint was universally condemned, and opposed by all branches of Society in the hands of the economic masters of the current system.

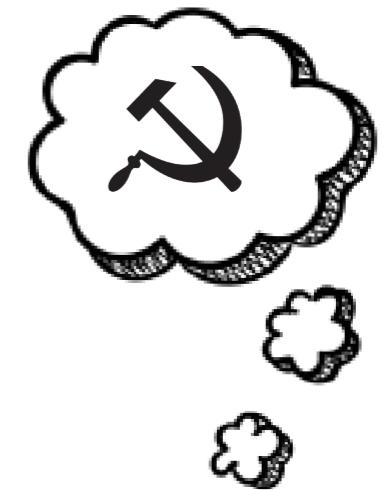
So, from that day to this, those citadels have done their duty and kept well away from this Revolutionary Philosophy.

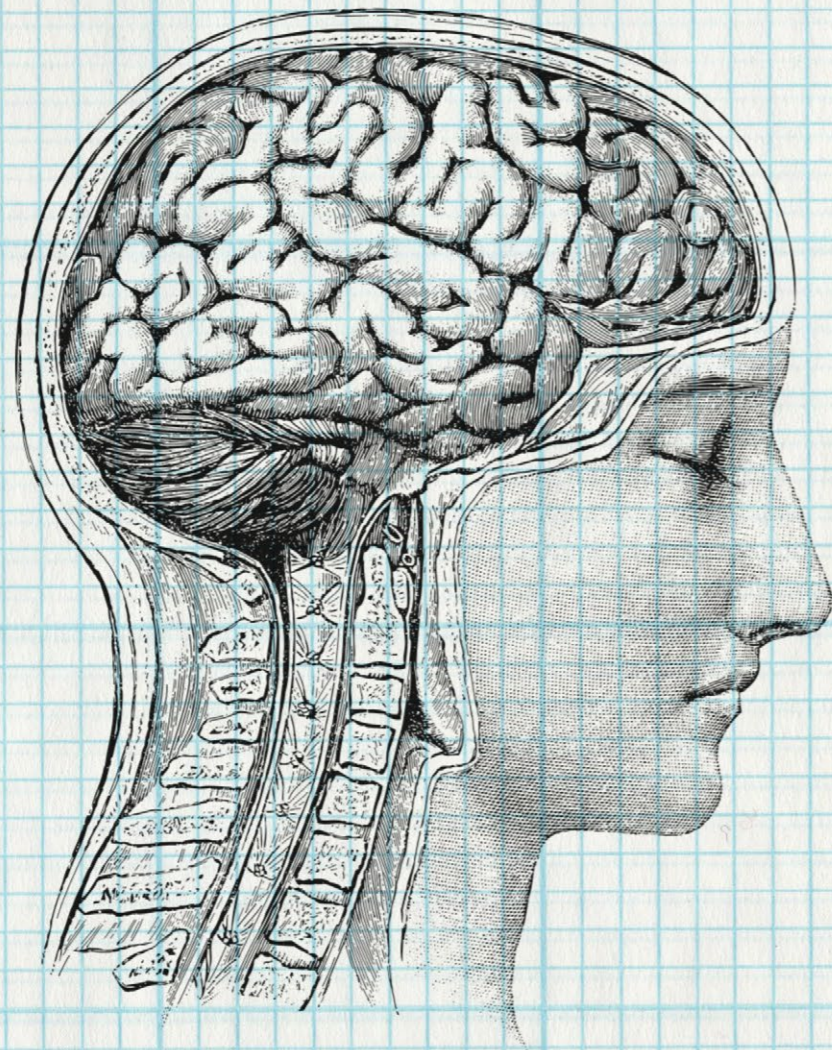
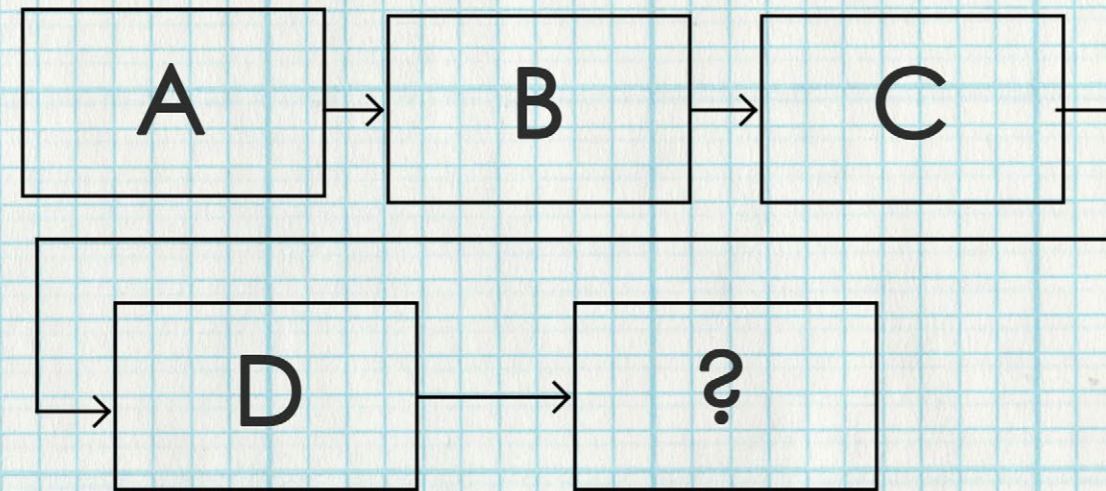
Indeed, the very few scientists, like Wallace and Darwin who upon wide experience and gathered evidence, were pressed into a similar stance, they were so opposed that the latter sat upon his ideas on The Origin of Species for about a quarter of a century.

Indeed, the biggest crisis in the history of science, had it’s first murmurings in the discovery of the Quantum and by 1927, this had become the total rout of many traditional compromises, and the whole of Sub-Atomic Physics abandoned the old ways for a purely formal, Mathematical approach, and the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Theory was declared The Only Truth.

In spite of the regular fanfares extolling the “gains” of this area of Science, it is not a Revolution, but a wholesale Retreat, and is more like singing your own praises as you spiral down a self-made plughole!

Jim Schofield
2016





A = A

The Boundaries of Thought [self-imposed limits of human thinking]

When attempting to understand Reality, Mankind is always presented with an extremely puzzling set of apparently ubiquitous features, which seem to continually undermine such efforts. And, these problems usually stem from two sources.

The first is the complex, confusing and sometimes seemingly contradictory Nature of Reality itself.

And, the second, as you have no doubt already guessed, is the Nature of Mankind itself!

You might not think that such would be the case, seeing as Man was created by, and is certainly a part of that Reality, but, nevertheless, it is quite definitely so.

Reality is not only incredibly complex, but it is also creative: it not only develops in complexity, but also, and crucially, it evolves over time, regularly, delivering wholly new and unique creations, and the only tool for revealing that nature, is its own remarkable product of Evolution – Man himself!

Now, this paper will not be some dazzling literary effort, designed, expressly, to both entertain and beguile the reader, but, instead, is an important attempt to inform that person, both about himself, and also the unavoidable diversions that Mankind inevitably takes in his efforts to make sense of his world.

And, most important in such a task, have to be the conditions that Mankind had to cope with, and which played a crucial formative role in his thinking.

For they certainly made him, and developed him in ways appropriate to his means of life. And, that means that Mankind would be congenitally, ill-equipped by Natural Selection to undertake the quite different task of really *understanding* things, and, consequently, of being able to explain them.

Man was selected-for, throughout the vast majority of his existence, to be a hunter/gatherer, requiring very

different mental processes. So, by the time he had turned to further paths, the forces of Natural Selection, and gene adaption, were effectively over. Nature was no longer selecting, Mankind was.

Man could NOT depend on his “appropriate genetic makeup” in dealing with the new problems he had begun to set himself. The usual forces of evolution no longer worked to equip Man in these new roles.

Man had, somehow, to do it for himself!

And, it has to be said that this has by no means been straightforward. Indeed, the forces of Natural Selection are never principled or planned, but entirely pragmatic – “If it works, it is right!”

And, to this day, it is the most important element in Man’s nature, and particularly in his thinking.

He is the result and epitome of pragmatism. And, the application of his undoubtedly superior intelligence is inevitably directed by this.

He solves problems practically, and often brilliantly, and clearly does it much better than all other animals.

Now, that isn’t to say that Man, or at least some among his species, did not turn to tackling other questions. But, because of his nature, involving both his intelligence and his pragmatism, progress was neither direct nor easy! Indeed, though he found many physical pragmatic solutions to aid him, his explanations were, initially at least, wide of the mark!

To begin to have any chance of doing that, he had to massage Reality in order to get any kind of a handle upon it. He just had to simplify it – ignoring all anomalies, and concentrate upon subsets that seemed to conform to extractable forms.

The consequences, as you would imagine, were “temporarily useful”, but ONLY in chosen conditions.

They, in the short term could be pragmatically useful, but in the long term were bound to fail.

He had begun to make “conceptual bricks”, but they could only build the most flimsy of “explanatory erections”.

Indeed, Man was constantly prevented, by his own self-devised methods, or of getting a general grip upon Reality – for though encouraged by the successes he achieved, he was also bewildered by their failures, and the seeming contradictions that always came up! Of course, it isn't easy “pulling yourself up by your own bootlaces”.

Let us be clear. Mankind initially made very slow progress for over 90% of his existence as a separate species: yet modern man is exactly the same animal, biologically.

That slow progress was not because he was less intelligent than he is today, but because he was too pragmatic: there had to be a revolution in how he *Thought!*

No recent new endowment has enabled his recent enormous developments, and his selected-for abilities, which were prodigious as a hunter/gatherer, but useless as a philosopher – as a thinker about himself and his World.

But, he did begin to re-invent himself, to a degree, by using his undoubted intelligence in new ways. What were essential for his future success, included thinking that could be adapted to other tasks, and perhaps the most helpful were ideas about Religion.

Explanations could be put down to an all-powerful deity “on our side”, and such made the achievement of remarkable, and energising, common purposes in believers!

Of course, there were other crucial changes in his mode of life, which were vital in generating new thinking. The so-called Neolithic Revolution, wherein the cultivation of crops, and the rise of animal husbandry, allowed groups of human beings to, not only stay where they were, but also to do it with other families. Then larger groups, and more diverse discussions, especially in a new or better way of life, were the trigger for a great deal of new thinking.

But, to see how he got to where he is now, and how he could go forward from here, he will certainly have to understand himself – what he presently does, how he thinks about, and what he must do to progress further.

For, the crises and impasses, in his understanding are by no means over yet. Without another, major revolution in his current thinking, he will grind to yet another crucial halt.

We must bury forever the myth that amassing knowledge will be sufficient. What must also be developed is *Understanding*, or knowing why things happen.

And, that must be applied not only to the Reality he confronts, but also to himself!

Around 2,500 years ago, two new trends in thinking appeared, which have been crucial in the developments that Man has made in understanding his World. But, they seem to be mutually exclusive alternatives.

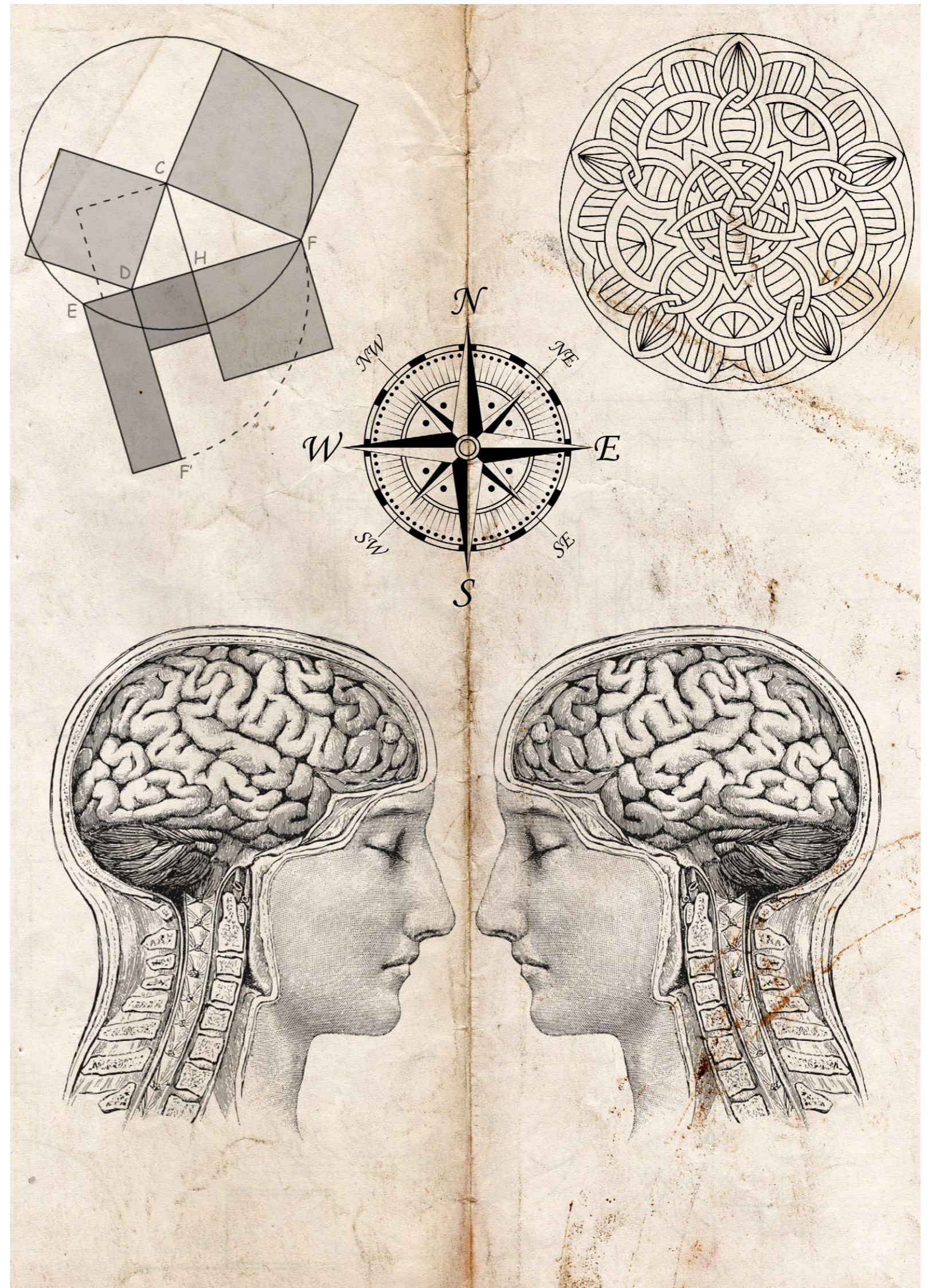
In Greece, the rationalist or reason-directed way of thinking – based upon the Principle of Plurality was established, and led to both Geometry and Formal Logic. Though, crucially, this naturally led to the assumption of eternal Natural Laws, which then summed to produce all consequent productions and behaviours. Such a stance meant that Reality was everywhere just a complication of unchanging Laws.

Meanwhile, in India, the philosophical methods of the Buddha took things in a very different direction, by conceiving that “everything affects everything else” – based upon the Principle of Holism.

Clearly, these two approaches were totally incompatible, as presented, and different cultures chose one or the other exclusively.

These were, clearly, opposite to one another in many important ways, yet BOTH contained some aspects of the Truth of situations – what we have come to call Objective Content.

Neither was sufficient in itself, but, nevertheless, which led to significant progress in thinking – though each only in its own self-defined contexts.



And, progress in either of these routes was compromised by Mankind's built-in pragmatism, which, crucially, meant that Man could keep all that he found - including contradictory pairs of concepts, and could merely switch between alternatives, pragmatically, until he found the one that best fitted the given situation.

Now, though this pragmatic approach did, indeed, lead to the solving of many problems, it was anathema to the requirement of developing consistent, coherent and comprehensive understanding. It was very damaging indeed!

Now, worshippers of Logic, or even Science, will vigorously disagree, but I'm afraid that they will be wrong in this instance.

Let us take the supposed "God of Understanding", namely Logic, and see how that holds up.

It was, of course, the achievement of the Greeks, and was, without doubt, both a brilliant and an essential development. But, it was only made possible by a strict and vigorous filtering of Reality in order to reveal its essences. In other words, Reality was NOT dealt with "as is", but was processed by both simplification and idealisation to highlight certain then extractable features, which could then be directly investigated in their own terms alone, to attempt to formulate explanations of the phenomena involved.

This expression – "in their own terms alone" is crucial. For it took, what seemed to be, permanent features and assumed that they were always the same – whatever the context would be.

The expression, "The Greeks had a name for it" encapsulates this approach very well. For, by affixing a name, it made the named thing a "constant" component – as if naming it said what it was, and therefore how it would dependably behave.

[You know what I mean – if someone can stick a label upon what you are, they assume they have a reliable handle on how you will behave: it is a very ancient "wisdom"]

And, of course, over a quite extended period, such a simplification could indeed suffice!

NOTE: To this day, there are those who will correct you as you try to explain something, with the interjection – "Oh you mean 'colloquialism'" (or some such 'contribution'), assuming that the name, in Greek or Latin, for a phenomenon - inferring that its meaning is fully encapsulated in that name. It isn't!

It showed itself constantly, for example, in the belief that all animal or plant species were immutable, and could not change into something else!

And, perhaps the epitome of this approach resides, indubitably, in Mathematics – particularly in that lauded Greek achievement of Euclidian Geometry, where, at its very heart were Numbers which, by definition in "Counting", cannot be but totally fixed.

Indeed, Number is often the target, and essence, of Simplification and the idea of eternal, unchanging things to be studied in the "fixed" terms alone!

But, in addition, the essential founding principle of such an approach can ONLY be that of Plurality! And, this is because, that Principle rejects evolutionary changes, and even developing Laws. And, it explains all differences in terms of various additive mixes of producing fixed components!

It led, inexorably, to the concept of Eternal Laws, on the one hand, considered incremental additional quantities as solely delivering emerging Quality, on the other! Formal Logic is entirely pluralistic!

Now, earlier in this paper, I compared Plurality with that of Holism – the stance of the Buddha, both of which originated at about 500 B.C.

And, it was immediately clear that these stances could not be more contradictory!

The Constants, appearing in pluralist equations of phenomena, were the very same things as the ever-changing factors, of a holistic explanation.

Clearly, one stance built the World ultimately out of fundamental eternal, while the other saw it as an evolution of components to ever new entities, properties, laws and Levels.

Now, posed like this, it is clear that the choice of Plurality – dominating for 2,300 years, and is still in charge today, and appears to be indisputable!

Yet, Darwin's Origin of Species was unavoidably holistic, as was Fred Hoyle's Theory of the Evolution of Stars.

And, we should not leave out Stanley Miller's experimental investigation into the Origin of Life itself.

Even Yves Couder's brilliant "Walker" Experiments were not only completely holistic, but for the first time breached the Copenhagen dominance in Sub Atomic Physics.

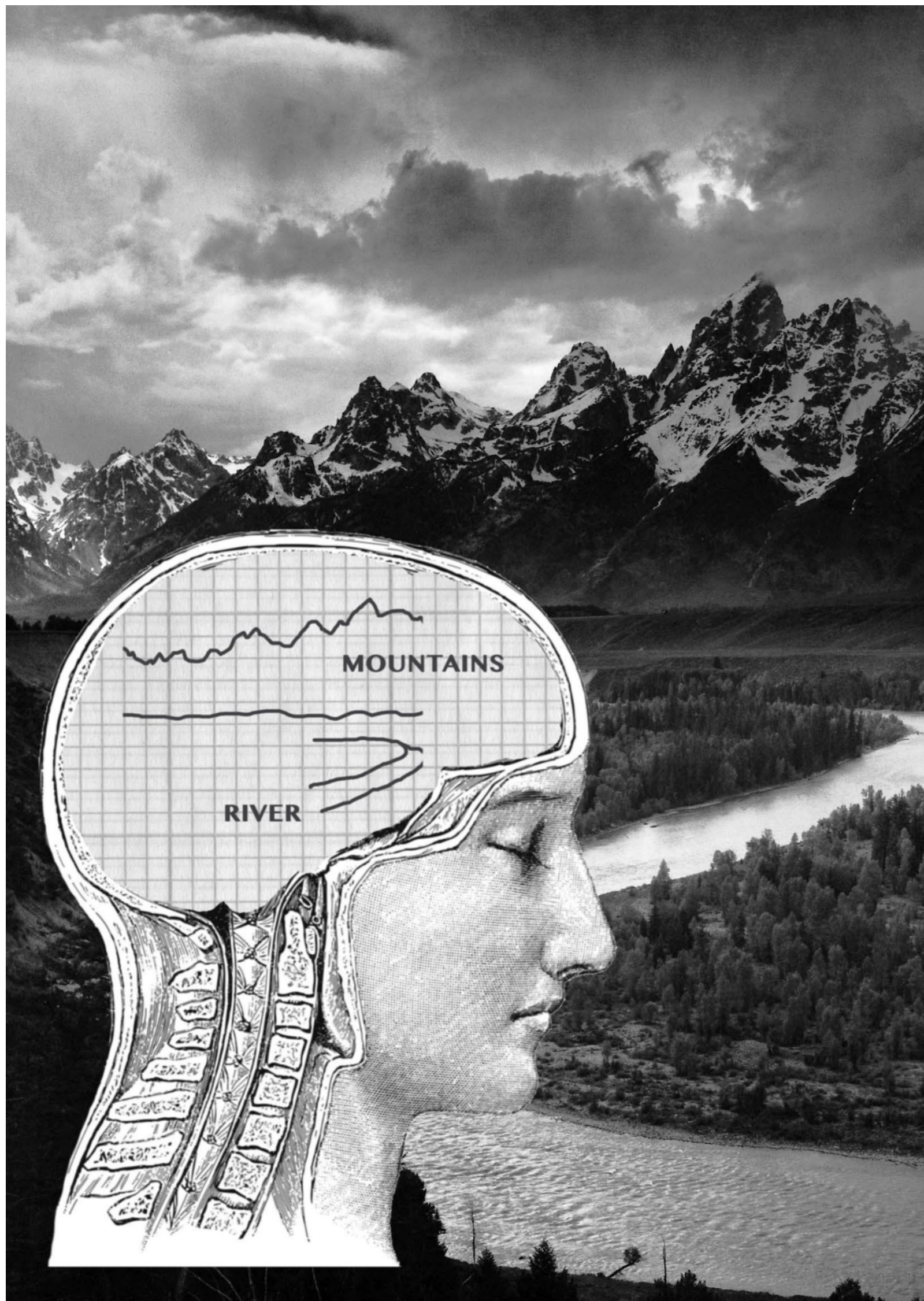
Clearly, Holism had something crucial to offer.

And, believe it or not a holist stance has long been woven into Science - even though it seemingly arose entirely out of Plurality.

Quite apart from the objective of finding formulateable pluralist laws, the equally important search for theoretical explanations of phenomena could never be delivered, materialistically, from mere formal descriptions. And, the only way to seek out such aspects of Reality had to be finding Causes in terms of entities and their evident properties – such clear materialistic incentives forced an alternative route to accompany the pluralist one. And, as it was also always extending the generality of things to ever wider areas, the particular limitations of pluralist relations, very quickly proved inadequate. Coherence, Consistency and comprehensiveness forced Theory into a holistic stance!

A dichotomous pair of contradictory stances grew up alongside one another, without, necessarily, blowing Science apart. A switching of ground (a very pragmatic method) managed to allow a surprising, yet fruitful marriage! And, hence, perhaps less surprisingly, a third distinct stance arose within Science and grew in strength all the time. WE would call it Pragmatism, except that it was, to an extent, limited to the achievements of Science alone, where it was about effective use of the achievements of Science, and became known as Technology.

The practitioners involved, who came to be called Engineers, did not have to discover, but they had to successfully use the Laws of Science in productive ways.



Reality and Mind

[the as yet not totally defined alternatives for a philosophical standpoint]

For, perhaps 2,500 years, Mankind has zigzagged, to and fro, between two seemingly mutually exclusive standpoints in their attempts to make sense of both themselves, and the World they inhabit - Materialism and Idealism.

And though for a time, one or the other would predominate, in those areas where such things are considered, the inadequacies of their current conceptions will always have forced a ready, if temporary, swing over to the opposite stance.

NOTE: Surprisingly, even in this considered-to-be-primary basis, the forms actually dealt with by Man have managed to turn the obvious alternatives – Idealism and Materialism, into a Dichotomous Pair, and the trajectory of their uses has taken the same sort of route as with all such Pairs. Even the definitions of such basic stances will have involved inadequate underlying assumptions: they will mean different things at different times!

Of course, these underlying assumptions that cause the uncertainty are NOT the clearly apparent key issue, which is “What is primary – Matter or Mind?”

For, we don't consider these standpoints only from that Primacy Issue alone: they are necessarily also underpinned by a whole set of other assumptions, and these, inevitably, can never be totally objectively defined. They will be, necessarily, coloured by a mutually-defining set of premises, beliefs and principles, which will be primarily determined, and indeed limited, by our then current knowledge and understanding.

Now, if at all possible, this continual switching between these two must finally be terminated, and a real and more profound resolution discovered.

Yet, of course, there has always been the pragmatic “solution”, as there always is with any Dichotomous Pair. The thinker switches between the two alternative

standpoints in addressing problems, as their particular circumstances and required solutions dictate, and this seemingly unprincipled stance turns out to have two main advantages.

First, solutions can be found to certain currently significant problems, by simply choosing that stance which has the most easily reached and usable solution. Yet, secondly, the continuing opposition, between the two, does make possible important advances in their attempted resolution.

So, such “flexibility” has come to be the norm!

But, logically, of course, it is an insufficient compromise, and the gains that are achieved, come in through the gaps and cracks of the insufficiently defined alternatives, while the monolithic main opposing stances continue to keep most things tidy or is alternatively left completely unaddressed.

Now, before anyone thinks that I will just put yet another (maybe cleverer) gloss upon this – merely sitting on the fence, I should make clear my chosen standpoint.

I am most definitely, a Materialist! But, certainly NOT a mechanical materialist as is the usual basic stance in Science.

The basic fact is definitely the certain existence of the “Earth before Life!”

How can an idealist standpoint predominate, when NO living things were in existence, never mind thinking minds, for the vast majority of the history of the universe?

No, Materialism – as the priority of Matter over Thinking is indisputable!

And, the various positivist strands (somewhere between the two), like the Empirio-Criticism of Poincaré and

Mach, and many other similar positions ever since, are accurately described as either shame-faced Materialism, or agnostic Idealism.

But, we must never lose sight of the fact that all these arguments and explanations are, without any doubt, products of human minds, and therefore, inevitably bear the stamp of current capabilities, knowledge and understanding, in addition to the total impossibility of completely delivering such things entirely by such means. Whatever we consider what Idealism and Materialism are, they will always be mistaken in significant ways.

As a materialist, I have also to list, among my heroes, philosophers who were, quite definitely, idealists.

The three who transformed my thinking were Zeno of Elea, the Buddha and finally Hegel, whose concentration upon Human Thinking was a crucial contribution, even to a materialist. And my primary giant of materialism has to be Karl Marx – a disciple of Hegel, who took his master's gains and transferred them wholesale, into the very heart of the materialist standpoint and approach.

So, is there a non-agnostic stance encapsulating both? The simple answer is quite clearly, "No!"

But, what is essential is that the materialist stance must stop dealing in "absolutes", and admit that every single currently-held materialist conception will always be the product of human minds.

NOT, it must be emphasized, as having inevitably mechanistic consequences, but, on the contrary, as incomplete yet leading-edge extractions from the development of a material Universe, AND capable also of affecting what produced it and even changing that into something different.

True materialists do not, and indeed cannot, deal in Absolute Truth!

They are forced to deal only in aspects and parts of actual Reality, which are also deformed by our current lack of sufficient knowledge and understanding to deliver them exactly-as-is! What we achieve may well be taken from Reality, but also distorted not only by our inadequate means, but also by our still limited mental abilities.

What we achieve, at best, is something with more Objective Content than what they replace. But, at the same time, they are never pure invention. They always have a source in Reality, yet are never absolutely true! So, there you have it!

The elements of Reality that we manage to extract, are modulated significantly: they are never pure, unaffected Reality-as-is, but forms selected-for, by our means of setting up and controlling our Domains of study, and then simplified and abstracted into purely formal quantitative reflections of what actually exists.

Though Materialism is most definitely the sounder basis for what Reality consists of, it is solely dealt with through the minds of human beings, and therein significantly adjusted to "make sense", along with all our other current knowledge and understandings.

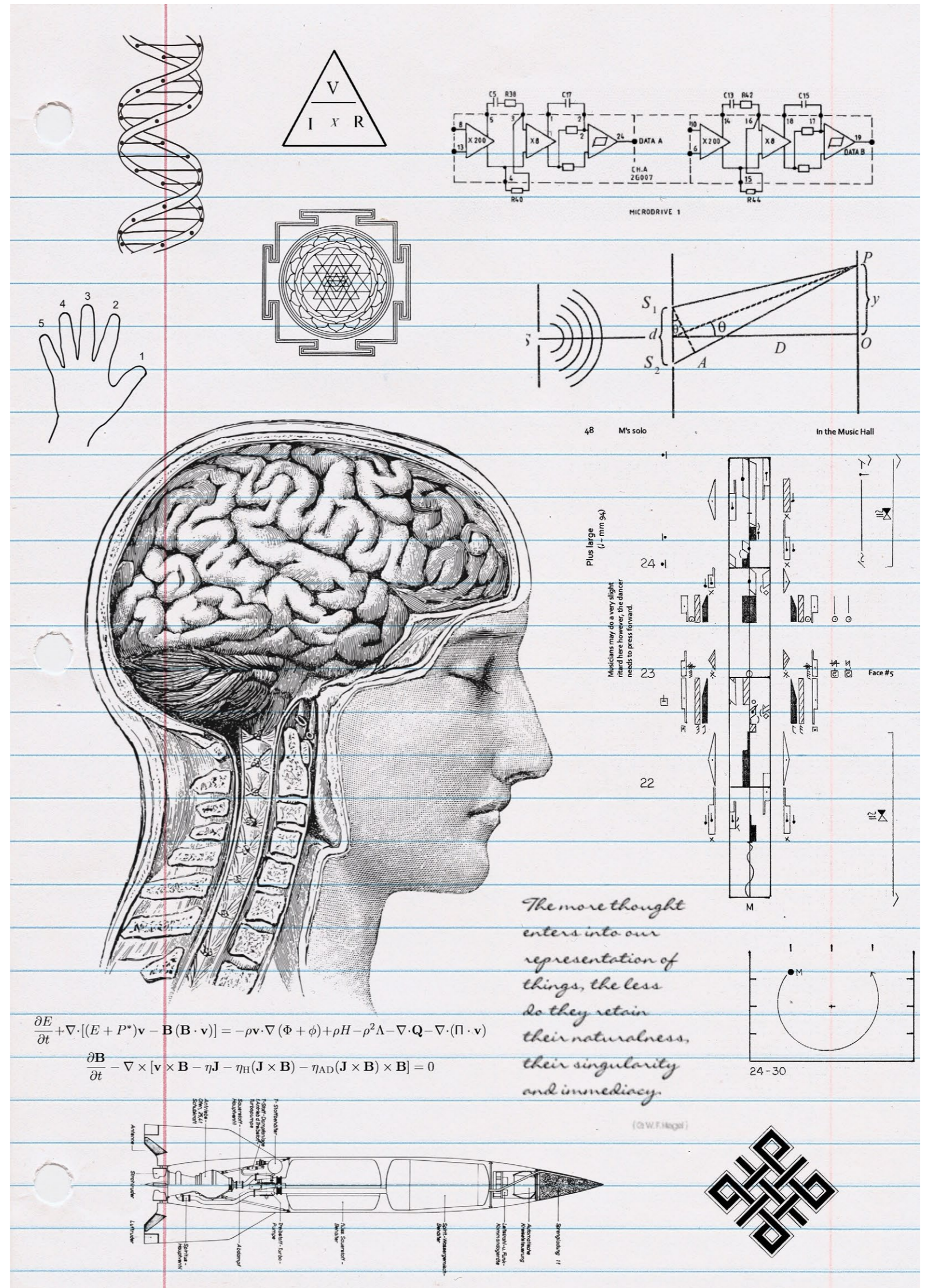
Clearly, a materialist who knows nothing of this unavoidable process, will inevitably be some form of mechanist: he will not take into account the changes imposed within human minds.

NOTE: The consequences can be remarkable, for in the 20th century, the current assumptions and principles that underlie all Science, had the effect of causing physicists working in the Sub Atomic Realm to abandon materialism entirely, when they completely failed to deal with the discovery of the Quantum effectively.

Their only means of repose, was to abandon explanation entirely, and replace it by the perfect, idealised forms of Mathematics, which, having been transferred from concrete Reality into a World of just such idealised, perfect Form alone, were able to avoid the contradictions of pursuing their still-extant and determining assumptions of Reality.

The concerted attempt to understand Reality, materialistically, was historically deemed to be Science, and, of course, it was indeed a significant development compared with all prior attempts. But, it had to be addressed by real people with their actual knowledge and understanding determined by their histories, experience and social imperatives.

Mankind could NOT leap directly into an accumulation of Absolute Truths, All the bases that were available were unavoidably simplified and abstracted assumptions – so



what was interpreted could not but be determined by the current level of those doing the investigating. And, they had no choice when attempting to pull themselves up by their own bootlaces, but to make essential simplifications to what they had unearthed.

The first defining basis was to study only Stable Systems. Clearly, situations that were all over the place would be impossible to tackle, while things that “kept still” would be much more amenable to study.

So, Formal Logic, with its Identity Relation, $A = A$, set the initial tone, and anything that was changing all over the place, was set aside for later study. So, such a study only of Stabilities, involved a set of assumptions, including what were seen as Eternal Causing Laws. So Science, from its outset, only studied Stability, and Real Qualitative Changes, or Developments, were NOT addressed!

Clearly then, though even this primitive Science was materialist, it was incapable of addressing the ongoing development of material Reality. It sought to explain constant things – steady state situations.

It therefore soon became a series of different sciences, and even within these- specialisms, the crucial developments were shelved “for now”!

The clear way forward was to study Stability “first”, and indeed, even individual investigations could get nowhere until a stable Domain of investigation had been set up – carefully filtered and controlled to visibly reveal particular possible “laws”.

And, if we couldn’t find such a stability we would have to construct one!

Nevertheless, even this enforced limitation was able to reveal a great deal. But, of course, it was a very selected set of features in mostly very non-natural environments that were investigated and theorised about.

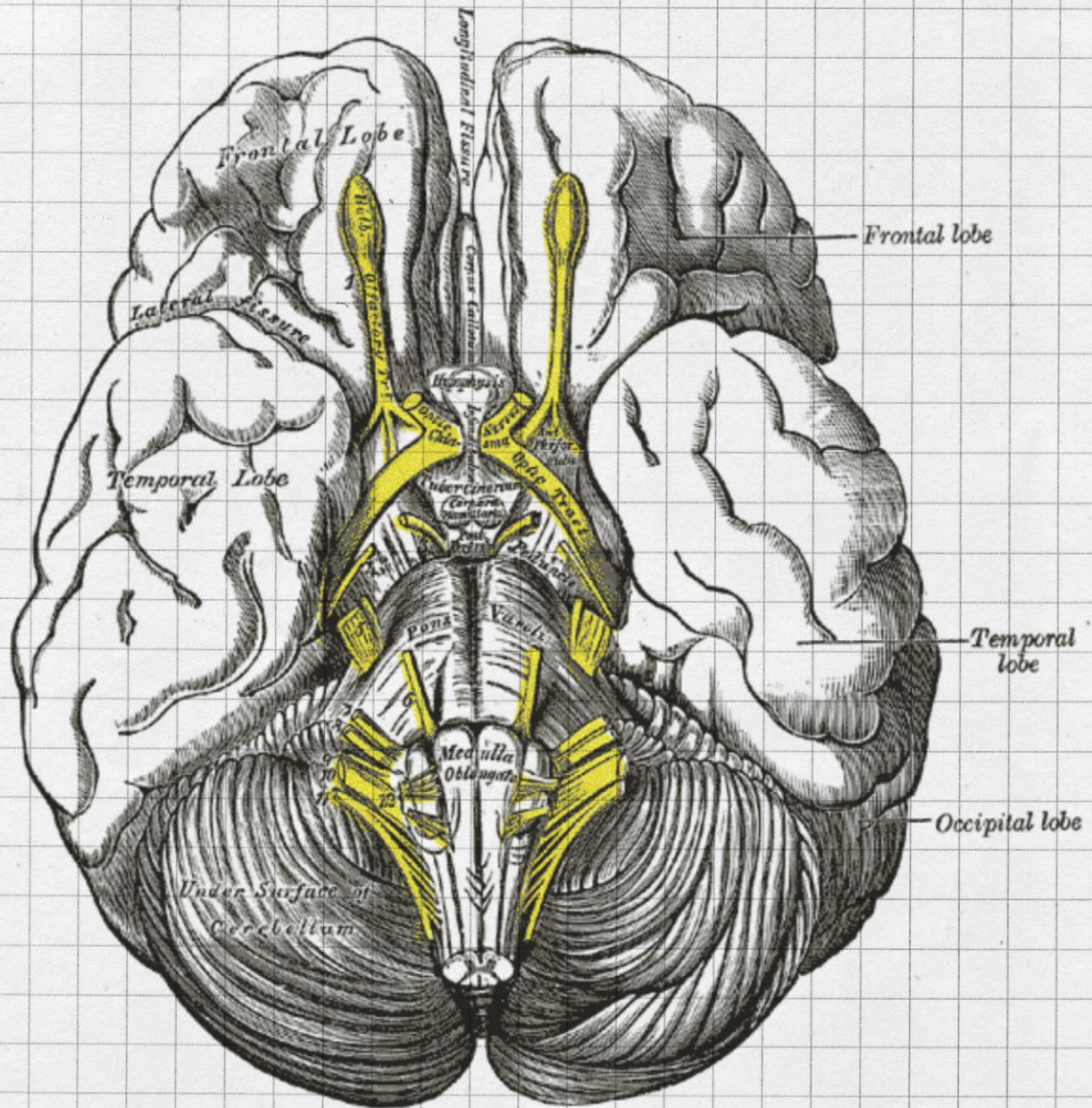
So, the question became, “How could this be remedied? It would certainly require a very different and thorough study at an entirely different level – that of Thinking Minds to correct the always stabilised bases.

A revolution was required in Science!

Without it, as has already occurred in Sub Atomic Physics, the whole discipline careers off into very narrowly defined lines of investigation, which prohibit a real critical review. Primarily, the Principle of Plurality, which underpins all scientific experiment and extracted theory, must be replaced by a thoroughly holistic approach.

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