



ON THE DIGNITY OF MAN: THE IDEA OF THE GOOD AND KNOWLEDGE OF ESSENCES. PART III.

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Ayn Rand And Willard V.O. Quine On Analyticity

At that stage, I will develop my understanding of the issue of knowing whether definitions are true or wrong independently of reality (i.e., true or wrong in an apodictic mode); then on the issue of knowing whether material existence can be deduced from ideational essence. In this regard, I will compare and evaluate Ayn Rand's and Willard V.O. Quine's respective criticisms against the notion of analyticity (i.e., the notion of truth independent of reality by the sole operation of the logical laws admitted in some system of formal logic). Then I shall return to my assessment of Plato's approach to the Idea of Good. Just as a statement allegedly true in an apodictic mode is a statement allegedly true in a mode independent of reality; a statement allegedly true in an analytic mode is a certain variety of an allegedly apodictic statement: namely a statement that the laws of formal logic are sufficient to make it true and to make it apodictically true.

In Viennese empiricism, two kinds of purported analytical truth are recognized: on the one hand, tautologies, i.e., statements which, in the eyes of a certain system of formal logic, are true by the sole operation of the accepted logical laws in the system in question. On the other hand, statements that are allegedly reducible—independently of reality—to a tautology via the play of the synonymy between two terms or between a term and a sequence of terms. Whereas the former are allegedly analytical by the sole reason of their tautological character, the latter are allegedly analytical by the sole reason of their alleged reducibility independent of reality to an analytical truth of the tautological type.

Faced with the notion of the existence of these two varieties of analytical truth, at least two questions arise: on the one hand, would a statement that, via the play of synonyms, would be effectively reducible (independently or not of reality) to a tautology have a meaning equivalent to the one of a tautology? On the other hand, are the laws of any mode of formal logic actually sufficient to make a tautology analytically true—and is the play of synonyms effectively sufficient to make a statement reducible (independently of reality) to a tautology? Whoever investigates the relation of definitions to reality cannot refrain from seeking the answer to those two questions: the former because, if a definition were indeed of a meaning equivalent to the one of a certain tautological statement, then a definition would be of no interest with regard to what the tautology in question already says; the latter because, if a definition were effectively reducible independently of reality to a tautological analytical truth (via the play of the synonyms recognized in the language), then reality would be of no interest in judging the truth of a definition.

A fault in the Randian critique against the notion of apodicticity (which it amalgamates with the notion of analyticity) is that said critique distorts the theses and arguments in favor of said existence to the point where it attacks ghosts. Here I will leave aside the tasks of listing and dissecting the many scarecrows of Ayn Rand on that subject. Another fault in the Randian critique against the idea of apodicticity is that it lacks a clear distinction between the generic entity and the singular entity; but the inclusion of a clearer (or completely clear) distinction on that subject does not require the Randian argument against the idea of apodicticity to be significantly overhauled.

The argument in question (especially developed in Leonard Peikoff's article "The Analytic-Synthetic Distinction") is, in essence, the following. A concept encompasses all the characteristics of its object and not only those that have to be included in its (true) definition; a concept and its true definition are therefore not true synonyms (any more than terms considered to be synonymous in a certain language are really synonymous—although neither Rand nor Peikoff, to my knowledge, say so openly). Accordingly, a statement associating a concept with a true definition is neither reducible to a tautology via the play of synonyms nor endowed with a meaning equivalent to a tautology. Yet the definitions are true or false depending on whether they are in agreement with the entities exhibited in the sensible experience—and in agreement with the logical laws objectively deduced from the ontological laws objectively exhibited in the sensible experience.

According to Rand, all human knowledge (including that of the ontological laws underlying the valid logical laws) is an account of sensible experience articulated according to logical laws deduced from ontological laws themselves known through sensible experience. A definition in agreement with the concerned entity is a definition that subsumes those characteristics of the entity that are best able to distinguish the entity in question in view of what is currently known about it through the sensible experience. Because a definition that correctly subsumes those characteristics (from sensible experience) is therefore in (perfect) agreement with reality, it cannot be refuted by progress in knowledge; it can certainly be complemented, not be refuted. Conclusion: there is no truth independent of facts; but any definition that correctly subsumes the characteristics best capable of distinguishing the object in view of the present state of knowledge about the universe is true—and true in an objectively undoubtable mode.

The Randian answer to the two questions mentioned above is therefore the following. On the one hand, there is no true synonymy because the meaning of a concept is its object taken from the angle of all of its properties. A statement that would be reducible to a tautology via the play of synonyms is absurd;

but the meaning of a statement associating a concept with its true definition is actually irreducible to the meaning of a tautology. On the other hand, tautologies are not analytical (nor apodictic) but remain objectively certain when constructed from logical laws objectively grasped in sensible experience; just as definitions and those statements which are limited to associating terms deemed synonymous (for example, "no single person is engaged") are not analytical (nor apodictic), but remain objectively certain when faithfully descriptive of the sensible experience.

The Randian criticism arrives to a partially true conclusion; but its argument is wrong on two levels, at least. On the one hand, a concept encompasses only those characteristics of its object that have to be included in the definition; but it does not only encompass them, it identifies them as constitutive of its object. Accordingly, a statement reducible to a tautology does have a meaning that is not equivalent to that of a tautology; but not for the reasons given by Ayn Rand.

On the other hand, a definition admittedly subsumes the characteristics that it considers best able to distinguish the correspondent concept's object in view of what one currently knows or believes to know about the universe; but, in addition to the fact that it precisely amounts to subsuming those characteristics which seem to be constitutive, it does not render true nor objectively certain a hypothetical definition correctly subsuming the characteristics in question. To complement a definition always amounts to refuting it, just as to relativize it always amounts to refuting it.

For example, replacing a definition of the swan as "a large web-footed bird, with white plumage, long flexible neck" with a new definition of the latter as "a large web-footed bird, with white or black plumage, long flexible neck" amounts to relativizing the first definition; but to substitute for a definition of the swan as "a large web-footed bird, with white or black plumage," a definition of the latter such as, this time, "a large web-footed bird, with white or black plumage, with a long flexible neck" amounts to complementing the first definition. In both cases, the second definition comes to refute the first.

Finally, I think the following answer is the correct one to the two questions mentioned above. On the one hand, if certain statements were effectively reducible to a tautology via synonymy, that reducibility would be no more independent of reality than it would make the statements in question equivalent in their sense to a tautology. A statement reducible to a tautology via synonymy is not impossible *stricto sensu* (as Rand wrongly asserts); but neither its reducibility nor its truth would be independent of reality. On the other hand, a tautological statement can neither be analytical nor true independently of the facts (since the logical laws themselves cannot be valid independently of the facts); just as no

statement can be reduced to a tautology independently of the facts.

A mistake by Rand is to represent to herself that synonymy does not exist between a concept and its true definition (because a concept allegedly means its object taken from the angle of all its properties—and not only from the angle of all those properties that are to be related in its definition if true). But the fact is that such synonymy does exist (because the meaning of a concept is strictly confused with its object taken from the angle of its constitutive properties, those which are to be related in a true definition). As we will see more closely a few lines later, another mistake on her part is to represent to herself that sensible experience allows us to objectively grasp ontological laws that objectively establish valid logical laws; and that there are indeed statements that are true by the operation of those laws alone, but that those statements, though objectively certain, are not apodictic.

Quine's criticism against the analytic-synthetic distinction, which is (quite in a convoluted, fuliginous mode typical of the so-called analytical philosophers) presented in his article, "Two dogmas of empiricism," is carried out at two levels. Quine, who amalgamates the notions of analyticity (i.e., truth by the sole operation of logical laws independently of reality) and apodicticity (i.e., truth independent of reality), does not deal with the first above-evoked question but only the second one. On the one hand, Quine addresses the case of those statements that are claimed to be—independently of reality—reducible via a synonymy relation to a tautology (i.e., a statement that some system of formal logic holds to be true by the sole operation of the admitted logical laws in the system in question); and which are claimed to be thus inheriting the purported analytical character of the tautology in question.

Quine rightly points out that the notion that some statements are, independently of reality, reducible to tautological analytical statements via synonymy relations actually supposes the notion that synonymous terms are synonymous independently of reality—and that the notion that synonymous terms are synonymous independently of reality actually supposes the notion of a truth independent of reality. Hence a logical circle when it comes to elucidating, characterizing, the way a statement allegedly reducible to a tautological analytical statement would be indeed reducible to a tautological analytical statement. (Quine then rightly shows that any other conceivable way of alleging some statement to be reducible to a tautology results into a logical circle as well).

On the other hand, Quine addresses the case itself of tautologies and logical laws. He points out that the logical laws one resorts to at some point in the pursuit of knowledge are actually interdependent (and totally interdependent) with the whole of the ongoing scientific theories—and that the former are

completely and only dependent on the latter and the latter, in turn, completely (but not only) dependent on the former. The logical laws are accordingly susceptible to be themselves revised when a new scientific theory with a better empirical corroboration comes to replace a former one. Hence the tautologies are neither analytical (i.e., true by the sole operation of the logical laws) nor objectively certain; but instead faced with the tribunal of experience themselves and objectively uncertain. Just like that criticism on Quine's part is actually exaggerated on the issue of logical laws and tautologies, it unfortunately stops along the way on the issue of synonymies.

To be completely dependent (qualitatively speaking) on something is one thing; to be only dependent (either completely or partly) on it is another thing. The fact for some house under construction of being completely dependent on those specific bricks specifically available in some building-supply store is one thing; the fact for the house in question of being dependent (or partly dependent) on nothing else than those bricks—for instance, cement—is another thing. When two things are interdependent only to some extent, the dependence is either partial on both sides or complete only in one side; when they are dependent only of each other, the dependence is exclusive on both sides.

It is true that, if a statement were actually reducible to a tautology via the play of synonyms independently of reality, its analyticity couldn't but be supposed by its reducibility; but Quine does not identify what is the reason for such impossibility. Namely that, when two terms (or a term and a sequence of terms) are in some language claimed to be synonymous with each other, the latter are actually synonymous depending on whether reality confirms (instead of refuting) what the considered language claims to be their synonymy.

As for the issue of tautologies (i.e., the issue of those statements that the logical laws one follows claim to be true by the sole operation of those laws), Quine's claim that the logical laws (i.e., the rules one follows in the construction of reasonings in order to reason in a coherent mode) as they stand at some point are (completely) interdependent with the whole of the ongoing scientific theories—and dependent only on them (though not reciprocally)—is actually exaggerated.

Instead, the logical laws one makes use of at some point are obtained strictly as much through one's empirical impression or empirical conjecturing as, besides, through one's hypothetical suprasensible impression, through one's hypothetical conjecturing from one's hypothetical suprasensible impression, and through one's hypothetical conjecturing from other hypothetical conjectures (whether they are borrowed—and whether they are scientific claims) from sensible experience, other hypothetical

conjectures (whether they are borrowed—and whether they are also empirically conjectured) from suprasensible impression, and other hypothetical conjectures (whether they are borrowed—and whether they are also empirically conjectured) from sensible impression—and are therefore dependent to some extent (and only to some extent) on the ongoing scientific theories, but not only dependent on the ongoing scientific theories. While the latter are obtained strictly as much through one's conjectures from one's logical laws, as through one's hypothetical sensible impression as through one's hypothetical suprasensible impression, as through one's conjectures from sensible experience as through one's hypothetical conjectures from (hypothetical) sensible impression, as through one's hypothetical conjectures from (hypothetical) suprasensible impression, as through one's hypothetical conjectures from hypothetical other conjectures from (hypothetical) sensible experience, hypothetical other ones from some logical laws, hypothetical other ones from (hypothetical) suprasensible impression, and hypothetical other ones from (hypothetical) sensible impression (whether those hypothetical other conjectures are one's conjectures or borrowed to someone else)—and are therefore dependent (in a complete mode) on one's logical laws, but not only dependent on one's logical laws. Hence the logical laws are interdependent to some extent (and only to some extent) with the scientific theories—and notably (but not only) dependent on them, and reciprocally.

Other problems with "Quine's epistemological holism" should be addressed, which I'll leave aside here. Regarding the question of whether a logical law can be objectively certain, O.W. Quine is right against Ayn Rand that no logical law can be objectively certain. The Randian ontology (which Quine, to my knowledge, does not address) is notably flawed in that it believes the traditionally admitted logical laws in formal logic (namely the laws of identity, non-contradiction, excluded-middle, etc.) to be deduced from ontological laws objectively grasped through sensible experience.

The fact is that sensible experience allows us to notice that those entities inhabiting our fragment of the universe are characterized with identity (i.e., the fact of being what they are—and only what they are—at some point in some respect), non-contradiction (i.e., the fact of not being both what they are and what they are not at some point in some respect), excluded-middle (i.e., the fact of being either something or something else, but not both, at some point in some respect), etc.; but allows us to notice neither that those characteristics are (either intrinsically or extrinsically) necessary in that moment of the universe nor that they are (either intrinsically or extrinsically) necessary in any moment of the universe nor that they are necessary in any entity inhabiting the universe at any moment of the universe.

Though the human mind can conjecture (from sensible experience) or have the impression (from

sensible experience) that those characteristics are present in all entities at any moment and intrinsically necessary (in a strong mode), or come to the belief that they are present in all entities at any moment and intrinsically necessary (in a strong mode) following suprasensible experience (which is, at best, approximative), it cannot grasp those alleged omnipresence in time and space and intrinsic necessity through sensible experience. Just as both Quine and Rand are right that no logical law one makes use of at some point can be true independently of reality, both unfortunately miss the fact that is suprasensible experience (in some humans) and the fact that a logical law used, trusted, at some point in someone's mind (whether it is one universally admitted in the community of scientists and scholars at the considered moment) is sometimes the fruit, notably, of suprasensible experience (or notably its fruit to some extent).

Another flaw in Randian ontology is that it conceives of the claim that the world is eternal (i.e., endowed with no temporal beginning and with no temporal ending) and intrinsically necessary as a claim merely describing an objective component of sensible experience. Yet sensible intelligence allows us to notice that there is existence around us, but not that "existence exists" in an eternal, intrinsically necessary mode; such claim is really a conjecture from sensible experience or an account of a sensible impression, not a description of all or part of sensible experience. Sensible experience does not even allow us to notice whether those entities around us are existent outside of the sensible experience we have of them, i.e., are existent as external rather than simulated entities.

Just like a concept correspondent with reality is one whose object with its constitutive properties such as posited in the concept's attached definition exists in reality (whether one speaks of the material realm of reality), a concept not-correspondent with reality is one whose object with its constitutive properties such as posited in the concept's attached definition lacks in reality (whether one speaks of the material realm of reality). (Since a concept's meaning, i.e., its object taken from the angle of its constitutive properties, is socially held as synonymous with the concept's socially attached definition, saying that a concept's object is correctly or incorrectly posited, defined, in the concept in question is a convenient way of saying that it is correctly or incorrectly posited, defined, in the concept's socially attached definition).

In contradiction with its own claim that no statement can be true or wrong independently of reality, the Randian ontology surreptitiously conceives of some kind of statement as being one wrong (and proven wrong) independently of reality. What the Randian ontology calls a "stolen concept" is a concept that, in some statement, finds itself used in such a way that the statement in question finds itself both asserting

the validity of that concept (i.e., its correspondence with reality) and denying the validity (i.e., the correspondence with reality) of another concept on which "it logically and genetically depends." According to the Randian ontology, the self-contradiction present in any statement stealing a concept B from a concept A is not only independent of reality; it proves (despite itself) the validity of the concept A (i.e., the correspondence of the concept A with reality).

Further, according to the Randian ontology, the Proudhonian statement that "property is theft," as well as, for instance, the statement that "the laws of logic are arbitrary," are such cases of a statement stealing a concept B from a concept A. While the allegedly self-contradictory character of the statement that "property is theft" allegedly proves the legitimate, not-stolen character of peacefully acquired private property, the allegedly self-contradictory character of the statement that "the laws of logic are arbitrary" allegedly proves the existence of objectively certain laws in logic. A fact worth recalling as a prelude to identifying the flaws of the Randian ontology on the issue of the "stolen concept" is that most concepts are endowed with a general meaning and sub-meanings, i.e., modalities of the general meaning, such as the general meaning itself taken in isolation. (The several sub-meanings contained in a same concept are not to be confused with the several concepts a same word subsumes).

Thus the concept of color includes a sub-meaning for which the correspondent definition in language is a "visual characteristic distinct from the size, the thickness, the transparency, and the shape"—as well as a sub-meaning for which the socially correspondent definition is a "visual characteristic associated with a wavelength." (Since a meaning or sub-meaning is socially deemed to be synonymous with the socially attached definition, saying that the concept of color includes the sub-meaning, for instance, of a "visual characteristic distinct from the size, the thickness, the transparency, and the shape" is a convenient way of saying that the definition socially attached to one of its sub-meanings is as put above).

The statement that "the red is not a color" is one that the Randian ontology would qualify as a theft of concept. Said ontology would have us believe that, in "the red is not a color," the concept of color is a necessary condition for the concept of red; and that the statement in question is thus rendered self-contradictory and that the contradiction in question proves the existence of "color" in the world.

The statement that "the white and the black are not colors" is also one that the Randian ontology would qualify as a theft of concept. It would have us believe that, in such statement, the concepts of white and

black are “stolen;” and that their allegedly stolen character proves the correspondence of the concept of color with reality. Yet the statement that “the red is not a color” is admittedly self-contradictory (in that the concept of color—regardless of which sub-meaning for the concept of color is retained in the statement in question—serves as a necessary condition for the concept of red); but that self-contradictory character does not prove the concept of color to be correspondent with reality.

A statement saying two things that contradict each other does not prove the existence of one or other of those things—including when it comes to a statement both denying the correspondence (with reality) of a concept A and claiming the correspondence (with reality) of a concept B for which the concept A serves as a necessary condition. The self-contradictory character of such statement proves no more the correspondence of the concept A than it proves the correspondence of the concept B.

As for the statement that “the white and the black are not colors,” instead of such statement being necessarily self-contradictory, it is actually self-contradictory when taking the concept of color in the general meaning of “a visual characteristic distinct from the size, the thickness, the transparency, and the shape;” but not when taking that concept in the more precise meaning of a visual characteristic that—besides being distinct from the size, the thickness, the transparency, and the shape—finds itself associated with a wavelength. In such statement, the concepts of white and black find themselves “stolen” when it comes to the concept of color taken in the above-evoked general meaning, not when it comes to the above-evoked more precise meaning. Even when the concept of color finds itself taken in the above-evoked general meaning, the statement that “the white and the black are not colors” does not prove the concept of color to be correspondent with reality.

The Randian claim that a statement stealing a concept B from a concept A proves (despite itself) the correspondence of the concept A—and that those statements that are “property is theft” or “the laws of logic are arbitrary” accordingly prove the respective correspondence of the concepts of (legitimate) property and of (objectively certain) logic laws—is flawed at two levels. On the one hand, it misses the fact that a statement stealing a concept B from a concept A does not prove the concept A to be correspondent with reality; on the other hand, it misses the fact that a same statement can be both a statement stealing a concept B from a concept A when A or B is taken in a certain sub-meaning—and a statement making use of the concept B coherently with the concept A when A or B is taken in another sub-meaning. Thus if, in the statement “property is theft,” one takes the concept of property in the sub-meaning of “private property,” and the concept of theft in the sub-meaning of “the private property of what is given to everyone without any distinction,” then the use made of the concept of theft is actually

coherent with the concept of property.

The statement "property is theft" is indeed to be taken then in the sense that "private property is the private property of what is given to everyone without any distinction, what allows to speak of private property as a theft of what is everyone's property." Likewise, if one, in the statement "the laws of logic are arbitrary," takes the concept of laws of logic in the sub-meaning of "the laws one expects oneself and others to follow in the construction of reasonings," and the concept of arbitrary in the sub-meaning of "the fact of not being objectively corroborated or, at least, of not being objectively certain," then the use made of the concept of arbitrary is actually coherent with the concept of laws of logic. The statement "the laws of logic are arbitrary" is indeed to be taken then in the sense that "the laws one expects oneself and others to follow in the construction of reasonings are, if not deprived of an objectively corroborated character, at least deprived of an objectively certain character, what allows to speak of them as arbitrary."

The Idea Of The Good And The Jump From Ideational Essence To Material Existence

In its investigation of the relationship of concepts (whether they are "stolen" or coherently used) to reality, the Randian ontology systemically misses the fact that concepts are corroborated rather than confirmed by reality; and the fact that definitions when updated are not left intact on that occasion but instead dismissed then rectified—whether the update consists of extending or relativizing them.

If we were to discover an animal that, without being a bird, would be endowed with a beak, then the definition associated with the (generic) concept of beak would be rectified from such discovery (rather than updated in a paradoxical mode leaving intact the definition). The concept in question would define, henceforth, its object no more as "a horny, teeth-less mouth only found in birds;" but instead as "a horny, teeth-less mouth like the one, for instance, of a bird."

On that occasion, the concept of beak would evolve with its definition and, accordingly, the sequence of terms "a horny, teeth-less mouth only found in birds" would be no more claimed in the language to be synonymous with the term "beak." Yet the Randian ontology would have us believe that, in the statement "I saw a kind of animal which looked like a bear except it was endowed with a beak like a bird," the concept of beak is "stolen" from the concept of bird. The fact is that, in such statement, the concept of beak is implicitly updated in such a way that the use made of said concept in said statement is one coherent with the concept of bird (rather than one stealing the concept of beak from the concept

of bird). Holding such statement does not prove that a beak is indeed a horny, teeth-less mouth that is notably (but not only) constitutive of a bird, which is also constitutive of a certain genre of animal that (except it is endowed with a beak like a bird) looks like a bear.

Yet the human knowledge of an individual material entity's material essence (i.e., the sum of an individual entity's constitutive properties over the course of its existence—whether those are generic or unique, and whether those are intrinsically necessary or extrinsically contingent or extrinsically necessary) only occurs through conjecturing from the sensible datum (or from sensible impression)—and through suprasensible intuition. It cannot occur through mere sensible intuition as the latter, while allowing us to touch, see, etc., some individual entities, gives us empirical access neither to the material essences of those empirically accessed individual entities—nor to their ideational essences.

While the material essence of an individual material entity is the sum of all the entity's constitutive properties over the course of its existence, the ideational essence of an individual material entity, which finds itself inscribed in an ideational model, is the sum of all the entity's properties over the course of its existence (including those properties that are accessory rather than constitutive). Humans could deduce the material essences from empirical intuition if—and only if—empirical intuition of the universe's whole infinite content and whole past, present, and future history were possible to humans; but such mode of empirical intuition is impossible to them.

What they are left with if they are to grasp the material essences is the following two options. On the one hand, conjecturing what are those material essences from our sensible intuition of a certain portion of the universe—namely that portion of the universe that is empirically offered to us at a certain point of its history. (Induction is part—and only part—of such conjecturing process). On the other hand, grasping suprasensibly the ideational essences of the individual material entities—more precisely, the modeled constitutive properties inscribed within those ideational essences contained in ideational models. Both processes are doomed to be endless ones which can only obtain results that are, at best, approximative. Just like suprasensible experience can only grasp a deformed, mutilated echo of the ideational realm taken as a whole or of an ideational entity within it, sensible experience can only grasp a singular entity as it stands at some point, not its material essence nor the universe taken as a whole at some point nor the universe taken as whole in its whole past, present, and future history.

As for the (material) existence of some entity at some point of the universe, it is no more a product of

the fact that the correspondent ideational essence includes the property of existing than it can be deduced from the fact that the concept for the singular material entity in question includes (if correctly constructed) the property of existing. The existence itself of God, whom I perhaps should clarify is not to be confused with what, following Plato's wording, can be called "the Idea of Good," cannot be deduced from the fact that the concept of God (if correctly constructed) includes the impossibility for God not to exist in an eternal mode.

In essence, Plato correctly referred to the Idea of Good as being itself not an ideational model for some hypothetical singular entity—but instead the ideational entity allowing for several ideational models to exist, to be what they are, and to be an object of knowledge. It should be added that the Idea of Good is, more precisely, a sorting, actualizing pulse that, while encompassing (and expressing itself through) the whole realm of the ideational models (both generic and singular), chooses in an atemporal, virtual mode which of the hypothetical material singular entities are to be concretized at some point in the material, temporal realm.

Also, it should be added that the universe taken as a whole—and perhaps each parallel universe taken as a whole—are a material, temporal incarnation of the Idea of Good (which thus serves as an ideational model for the universe taken as whole—and perhaps for other universes parallel to ours); and that the Idea of Good nonetheless remains completely external to the universe while incarnating itself into the universe. The same applies to those ideational models for possible singular material entities which are concretized—namely that they incarnate themselves into the correspondent material singular entities while remaining completely external to them and completely virtual.

While our universe is temporal and endowed with a temporal beginning from the nothingness, the Idea of Good whose incarnation it is is both atemporal (i.e., subject to a time in which past, present, and future are simultaneous) and eternal (i.e., subject to a time with no beginning and no end); but neither the Idea of Good nor the universe nor any material singular entity can have its existence deduced from its concept. The existence of a hypothetical material entity (within the universe) modeled in some correctly posited, defined, concept could be deduced from the inclusion of the property of existing in the concept in question if—and only if—the property of existing inscribed in an ideational essence were implied by all or part of the non-existential properties inscribed in an ideational essence. Just like the same applies to the universe, the same applies to the Idea of Good and to God himself: namely, that the (ideational) existence of the Idea of Good could be deduced from the fact its (correctly defined) concept includes its existence (in an eternal, intrinsically necessary mode with an eternal, intrinsically

necessary permanence) if—and only if—its property of existing were implied by all or part of its non-existential properties; but an existential property has something to do with all or part of the non-existential properties neither in the Idea of Good nor in God nor in any hypothetical singular material entity modeled in an Idea nor in any material singular entity present at some point within our universe.

Our universe is not only made of the presence of those material singular entities inhabiting it at different stages of its history; it is also made of the absence of those material singular entities which, in an other scenario for the universe, would have been perhaps present but that, in the actual universe, are lacking at any stage of its history. Any (purely) fictional entity in our universe is an entity whose absence is a component for our universe; but not any absent entity is a fictional entity, i.e., an entity present in the fictional realm imagined in our universe. Whether an absent entity is fictional, its absence is an ingredient of our universe; whether it is fictional, its absence cannot be deduced from the fact its concept (if correctly posited, defined) includes its property not of (materially) existing.

Each ideational model in the virtual, atemporal plane includes a set of existential properties, i.e., a set of properties about whether the concerned modeled entity is modeled as an existing entity (and about the modeled mode of existence in the general sense for the concerned modeled entity—if the latter happens to be modeled as an existing entity); but the fact for a certain ideational model of including the property that the concerned modeled entity is endowed with existence does not render said entity an actually existing entity in our universe. Reciprocally, the fact for a certain ideational model, of including the property that the concerned modeled entity is deprived of existence, does not render said entity an actually inexistent entity in our universe. Just like, in an existent singular material entity, the property of existing is not implied by all or part of the non-existential properties, the presence of the property of existing in a modeled hypothetical entity is not implied by all or part of the included non-existential properties.

The fact that the presence of the property of existing in some ideational essence has nothing to do with what are the non-existential properties present within the ideational essence in question serves as a necessary, sufficient condition for the fact that the fact for an existent singular material entity of being has nothing to do with the fact for said entity of being what it is (in addition to its existential properties).

The only way for material existence of being deduced from the presence of the property of existing within the ideational essence would be that the property of existing included in the ideational essence is implied by all or part of the included non-existential properties; but none of the existential properties

included in the ideational essence has something to do with the non-existential properties included in the ideational essence. If the fact for the ideational model of some hypothetical singular entity of including the modeled property of existing were a product of all or part of the non-existential properties modeled in the ideational model in question, then the hypothetical singular entity in question would be rendered materially existent by the sole presence of the property of existing within its ideational essence, then its material existence could be deduced from the sole fact its ideational essence includes the property of existing.

Conversely, if the fact for the ideational model of some hypothetical singular entity of including the modeled property of existing has nothing to do with all or part of the modeled non-existential properties inscribed in the ideational model in question, then the hypothetical singular entity in question is not rendered existent by the sole presence of the property of existing within its ideational essence, then its existence cannot be deduced from the sole fact its ideational essence includes the property of existing. The sorting, actualizing pulse that is the Idea of Good is instead what renders actually existent some modeled hypothetical singular entity endowed with the property of existing; just like it is what renders actually inexistent some modeled hypothetical singular entity endowed with the property of not existing—and some modeled hypothetical singular entity nonetheless endowed with the property of existing.

When selecting which immaterial, atemporal Ideas are concretized in our material, temporal universe, it is quite conceivable that the Idea of Good does not only get incarnated into our universe, but also into other universes parallel to ours. Thus it is quite conceivable that, in some universe parallel to ours, there can be found some singular entities that instead belong to fiction in ours and some fictional characters that are instead real in ours: for instance, there may be some parallel universe in which Tong Po and Attila are real, but Mohamed Qissi and Abdel Qissi fictional characters...

Conclusion—And The Idea Of The World's Contingency

The “dignity of man” lies in his intermediate position between a beast (but one with chaotic instincts) and a being-like-divine (but who is only like-divine rather than divine strictly speaking). Whether when it comes to combatting bad magic in the name of good magic, or bad technique in the name of good technique, “the former is the most deceptive practice,” but “the latter is the deepest and the holiest philosophy.” “The former is sterile and vain,” but “the latter firm, trustworthy and unshakeable.” God does not only expect the human to hunt the material essences, the knowledge of which in humans can

be approximative, but can never be achieved; he also expects the humans to co-create the universe alongside God himself, what is an endless task which asks to be carried out through knowledge, technique, and magic—and in complete submission to the laws that God established in its work and faces Himself.

The universe is neither meaningless nor God-forsaken; but the cosmic march proceeding under an ideational sun whose materialized light it proceeds through mistakes which man as the bearer of a torch imitating the sun is expected to repair in complete humility to the sun. The question of whether the universe is contingent is, precisely, to be asked, on the one hand, from the angle of meaning: is the universe meaningful—rather than gratuitous, vain? On the other hand, it must be asked from the angle of factuality: is the universe's existence intrinsically necessary, i.e., self-sufficient and inescapable? Yet the universe—in that it is God's incarnation—is driven by God's persistent, fallible attempt to engender increasingly higher order and complexity within the universe, an attempt that is carried out in turn for what is the tendency towards entropy in the universe's isolated systems. Thus the universe is endowed with meaning—the meaning that is purposeful creation of order and complexity, in which the human is invited to take part. Also, the universe's existence is endowed with a temporal beginning—and therefore devoid of that mode of intrinsic necessity that is the one consisting of existing in an uncreated, inescapable mode.

If the universe had created itself from nothingness without its existence being inescapable, then its existence would be neither intrinsically nor extrinsically necessary; instead it would be extrinsically contingent. If the universe had created itself from nothingness without its existence being escapable, then the universe's existence would be intrinsically necessary (rather than extrinsically necessary, intrinsically contingent, or extrinsically contingent); but the involved mode here of an intrinsically necessary existence would be the one consisting of existing in a self-created (rather than uncreated), inescapable (rather than avoidable) mode. If the universe was a product by God, then the universe would be extrinsically necessary (rather than intrinsically necessary or extrinsically contingent); whether it was created by God as permanent in an intrinsically necessary mode—or instead as provisory in an intrinsically necessary mode or even as permanent in an extrinsically necessary mode.

For my part, I claim the universe was created by God—but created neither as an emergent property of God nor as a product of God, but instead as an incarnation of God. Though God's self-incarnation is a relational intrinsically necessary property co-eternal with God, the universe's existence is not eternal—but instead endowed with a temporal beginning. Though the relational, innate property that is

God's self-incarnation finds itself occurring in a strong intrinsically necessary mode, the universe's existence is both intrinsically contingent (and therefore extrinsically necessary)—and permanent in an extrinsically necessary mode—with regard to God; and extrinsically contingent—and permanent in an intrinsically necessary mode—with regard to the nothingness chronologically prior to the universe's chronological start.

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[Featured image](#): "Earthbound," by Evelyn De Morgan, painted 1897.

