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Spring is in the Air A new philosophy of love

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ABSTRACT

The experience of our conscience belongs in the same category as feeling, thinking and wanting. However, it has a special aspect, namely the presence of other human beings as absolute entities. The process of experience is concerned with the way to best promote your own interests, with how far you will go in actualising your essential characteristics as an absolute entity. The discussion of our urge for survival shows that we can go quite far in that respect, and that to actualise that urge, there are in fact no boundaries; everything is permitted. The same can be said about actualising our other essential characteristics, but the difference is that our need to do so is perhaps less cogently present; it is not our life, or at least not our continued material existence, that is at stake. Nonetheless, we can and may even choose to go to extremes in this respect and thus to give ourselves priority over others. Respect for the interests of others is based on self-respect, which may lead you to decide to subject your dealings with other people to a set of standards for yourself. Here we enter the area of morals and ethics, to which we can attach a complete moral philosophy and on the basis of a belief, a moral theology. At the end of this road is total love of yourself and others, because you have come to realise that it is the only way that can lead to the fourth essential characteristic of human beings as absolute entities, namely self-fulfilment. You will then have developed in a way that allows you to give yourself and others the scope we need as absolute entities (compassion, solidarity). Self-fulfilment is achieved through self-development, i.e. discovering and honing our gifts and talents and thus finding our own identity (development), a process by which the lives of human beings as absolute entities acquire purpose (the search for meaning). Self-fulfilment is self-actualisation, the state that results from the realisation of the essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities, and it leads to satisfaction derived from ourselves or our activities, a sense of being satisfied with what we have accomplished.

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Introduction

The entire world population can be regarded as billions of people who went before us in carrying out their assigned task of begetting progeny. The earth is now populated by a great many more people than when we were born. Apparently, people are only too happy to do this work. Men and women are indeed so equipped that it is evidently the idea that we make continual attempts. There is always a good chance that one will be successful.

After all, one ejaculation, with a volume of two to five cubic centimetres, contains from 75 to 600 million sperm cells per cubic centimetre. The ovaries, two organs about the size of a walnut and symmetrically situated just below the navel against the side of the pelvis, contain around 50.000 egg cells, which are already present but unripe in the foetus. Until puberty, these egg cells do not develop, but after the onset of menstruation one egg cell ripens every month. This takes place in the Graafian or vesicular follicle, which grows bulges on the surface of the ovary until one ruptures, thus releasing the oocyte. This is called ovulation and generally takes place halfway through the menstrual cycle (Dassen 45). Just so you know. The general idea is that a single egg cell is penetrated by a single sperm cell, resulting in new life.

A considerable portion of life is focused on the free and unfettered progress towards this development. But is this the only objective of our lives, the most important one? You might almost think so, were it not that newborn life is very vulnerable and dependent, so provisions have to be made for this. Although many children die young, all over the world, billions of people have managed to emerge from the struggle unscathed. Many people concern themselves with the fate of the neonate and organise their lives around this. It is not easy, but by trial and error, people often manage to bring the new life into a state in which it too can take part in this cyclic process.

Semen largely consists of a liquid that nourishes the sperm cells and that is rich in fructose for this purpose. Fructose is a sugar with a simple chemical structure (simple sugar); it is also an ingredient of cane sugar (Dassen 46). I will not discuss further the physical and chemical composition of the sperm cells and egg cells. But it has been established that they are composed of basic elements found in all human beings. They can be regarded as the germ of all life. Although life appears to us in a physical form, these elements potentially make us who we are; they are the germinal beginnings of our external and internal manifestation. Therefore, it is life itself that we have been carrying with us for millions of years. In addition, if Darwin was right, then billions of years ago it was just a tiny fish. If we go on reasoning consistently, that fish might simply have come from the earth itself, which in its turn might have arisen from the Milky Way galaxy, the universe, and the cosmos. But then what? In my view, it stops there. These are questions that cannot be answered, and there is no point in speculating about them.

In addition, following this reasoning you saddle yourself with another problem. It arouses the suggestion that time is something with a real existence, while there are a great many reasons to assume that time does not exist, but is merely a human dimension. After all, time implies a

beginning and an end, which means it is finite. And finite is the opposite of infinite, of eternity and immortality, which calls up a lot of questions to which there is no answer. From our history we can conclude that this has created a problem for us, one that we do not know how to deal with, but that nevertheless demands a solution to explain the entire phenomenon of life. We are apparently unable to let go of this situation and simply to assume that we are dealing with a state of being, and then to analyse it.

Another insoluble problem created by time is the suggestion that we go through a process of development towards a certain objective, which is something we want, because life without a purpose means life without meaning, without any point. In which case, just what are we doing here! We have been pondering this problem for centuries, and have always had to resort to artifice to find a solution that was somehow satisfactory. Unfortunately, this same artifice has always caused the way we view our everyday earthly existence to become clouded, distorted, false. If we distance ourselves from time, it does not mean that life has no object and therefore no purpose. It means that we no longer allow time to push us from one thing to the next, that we can lean back into ourselves and relax, from this vantage point to see what experiences befall us. Then the sky will clear of its own accord, and what we then see might be very interesting.

One consequence of this theorem is that the Darwinian process of evolution does not necessarily imply that our development is progressive – that we are on our way to improving the species, whatever that may mean. It means that the matter of which we are made can appear in many different manifestations, depending on the circumstances, but it also means that the basis is invariable, that it exhibits characteristics of being that form the actual foundation for our existence. Then it no longer makes any difference who you are and where you are, because time and place are not important. We are all part of one and the same thing (Bryson, 517). Hereditary traits have been passed on unchanged since time immemorial. This applies to all life forms.

So, it is not necessarily the case that our development describes a straight line with a beginning and an end, but neither does it mean that our development follows the movement of a circle, an eternally repetitive evolution. Taking our distance from time and place in an absolute sense means that we restrict ourselves merely to our essence, that we can investigate and analyse the characteristics of our essence of which we can be reasonably sure that they exist in some form (Russell, Ten Kate, 452-453 (1)). The most recent developments in the natural sciences, and in quantum theory in particular (Van den Berg (2)), might well form the basis for this.

Absolute Entity

All life forms can be referred to by this concept. To a greater or lesser degree, they all exhibit its characteristics. Its main characteristics are a common origin, a shared evolution and structure. The common origin and the shared evolution mean that all absolute entities are brought in line with their common origin and are also directly connected to it. Absolute entities are structured so as to

be ends in themselves, solely focused on self-fulfilment and therefore fully autonomous. Human beings are therefore also absolute entities, and we will limit our discussion to them.

All absolute entities are part of one and the same thing (Bryson, 517 (3)). For discussion purposes we divide it into parts, phases, qualities, and so on merely to clarify, but this cannot alter the underlying unity. It therefore follows that all characteristics are interchangeable, that they are all interrelated and that every line of reasoning necessarily leads to the same conclusion.

The words absolute and entity are interrelated, they necessarily complement one another; in this context they cannot be seen as separate from one another, but they also have their own meaning. The word absolute means the absolute, something entirely on its own, without any relationship to anything outside of it. The word entity means essential existence, something that is substantial, a reality or essence. The term absolute entity could therefore be defined as an autonomous unit in itself, but also in relation to its origin, and is therefore the same as the characteristic of being (Bryson, 517 (3)).

1 “Methodological and epistemological standpoints. Russell defended a methodical principle for philosophy that is known as Ockham’s razor: ‘Do not expend the number of entities assumed to exist any further than strictly necessary.’ For Russell, this principle embodied a programme for general philosophical analysis: ‘If possible, replace entities which we think exist by logical constructs made up of entities which we are sure exist.’ These logical constructs are immediate observations, set forth in basic statements. ... Russell was primarily interested in how we can have knowledge of the external world. He tried to answer this question by showing how we can construct complex insights from basic statements about that world.”

2 “*String theory* tries to build a bridge between Einstein’s theory of relativity and the quantum theory and it is the most important candidate for a ‘theory of everything’: an overarching description of nature at a basic level. It does not work with elementary particles such as electrons and quarks, but something more resembling minuscule elastic strings that can oscillate in different ways.”

3 “Every living thing is an elaboration on a single original plan. As humans we are mere increments – each of us a musty archive of adjustments, adaptations, modifications and providential tinkering stretching back 3.8 billion years. Remarkably, we are even quite closely related to fruit and vegetables. About half the chemical functions that take place in a banana are fundamentally the same as the chemical functions that take place in you. *It cannot be said too often: all life is one.* That is, and I suspect will ever prove to be, the most profound true statement there is.”

The origin and evolution of human beings as absolute entities can be divided into five distinctive segments:

1. Cosmos, which cannot be defined, but which has the following characteristics:
Intelligence (Plan, Order, Structure), Energy, Form and Matter

2. Planet Earth and Nature (Laws of Nature)
3. Human Beings: Brain, Male and Female, Reproductive Urge
4. Conception (Insemination), Duality, Birth
5. Unity, Absolute Entity

The defining essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities are:

1. Dependency and Urge for Survival (Material)
2. Inward-Looking (Closed), Goal in Itself (Autonomy, Being Yourself), Isolation and Communication (Broad and Immaterial)
3. Identity (Singularity, Character) and Individuality
4. Ultimate Objective: Self-Fulfilment (Development, Search for Meaning)
5. Autonomy (Self-Determination) and Freedom (Relative Freedom)

As absolute entities, human beings operate by means of experience. The concept of experience can be described as parts, or phases, of processes in the brain. These processes are autonomous. Accordingly, experience can be divided into the following parts or phases:

1. Observation (Input)
2. Storage (Memory)
3. Organising (Combining)
4. Conclusion or Finding (Mood, Intuition, Feelings, Emotions, Thought, Knowledge, Reason (Kant, 2004, 681), Idea, Mental Grasp, Consciousness (Blackmore, 2005, 2009, 2011), Mind, Soul, Psyche, Will, Conscience, etc.)
5. Plan
6. Performance (Output)

If we just let these distinctions sink in, no one will doubt their existence, at least at first sight. It all sounds perfectly reasonable and we may therefore assume it to be true (Russell, Ten Kate, 452-453) (Dagenais IX-XII, 141-162 (1)), (Cheung 365-383 (2)), (Bakker, Studia (3)), (Kant, 2004 (4), 1999 (3)).

But upon closer inspection, you could ask yourself what these words actually mean, and what is behind them, or what terrain the words themselves cover. Although we will always be somewhat in the dark in this respect, it does show us how important it is that we know the correct meaning of words and that we continually ask ourselves if appearances are deceptive. People are always developing and their insights continually changing, so it is of great importance that the meaning of words is continually geared to situations with the most refined precision.

Another aspect that plays a role in this connection is the issue of what people can know: theories of knowledge. However, by decoupling the time-space dimension and by focusing on our state of being, this problem can be deemed to have been eliminated. For this discussion, I assume that, now

or in the future, we will be able to clarify our deepest essence. I am going to make an attempt at this right now.

And if the distinctions cited above should prove to be based on truth, and therefore can be assumed to be certain, then the conclusion seems justified that they apply to all people all over the world, that is to say to the deepest essence of all people, stripped of their different cultural properties.

1. "The present proposal is to define human consciousness, with Husserl, not as a thing but as a giver of meaning, and to define man in a preliminary way not as a 'rational animal' but as essentially project and as incarnate freedom." (Dagenais, 161)
2. "'Wesen' means the disclosing process of the understanding of Being (Seinsverständnis) in the human Dasein" (Cheung, 382)
3. "Philosophical anthropology explains how human beings are put together without delving into their cultural characteristics and without moralising" (Kant, 2004 (15-40), 1999 (7-28)) (Heidegger, 36-38: about the meaning of the word Humanism)
4. About "A priori- and a posteriori-knowledge; Knowledge, Observation and Experience; Thought and Reason", etc. (Kant, 681)

The origin and evolution of human beings as absolute entities

The origin and evolution of human beings as absolute entities can be divided into five distinctive segments:

1. Cosmos, which cannot be defined, but has the following characteristics:
Intelligence (Plan, Order, Structure), Energy, Form and Matter
2. Planet Earth and Nature (Laws of Nature)
3. Human Beings: Brain, Male and Female, Reproductive Urge
4. Conception (Insemination), Duality, Birth
5. Unity, Absolute Entity

The distinctions made in this context can all be regarded as conditions for the origin, evolution and survival of human beings as absolute entities. The order in which they are named is somewhat hierarchical (from part one to part five), but on the other hand there is also some reciprocity because of their shared origin. In addition, in this sense, all parts together therefore form a unity (Bryson, 517). They are part of the same tapestry, of the same thing. If one of the parts is lost, the unity is broken and this would mean the end of the absolute entity.

The fact that all parts together form a unity does not mean that they cannot each be seen as unities in their own right. This means it is possible to discuss the unity, the absolute entity, with its own essential characteristics. In this discussion, it is of great importance to bear in mind the perspective (they are one and the same), which implies that the essential characteristics of the

absolute entity must mesh with the conditions for their origin and evolution, because they are part of it and are aligned with it (Bryson, 517).

Human beings as absolute entities

Here too, the individual essential characteristics can be viewed as independent units, but together they are inextricably bound up and as such, they form the unity of absolute entity. They influence one another but are not in a hierarchical relationship; one does not arise from the other. They have independent meaning and operate independently. This because the factors that determine the essential character of human beings as absolute entities can be regarded as their essentials, i.e. all of them together and each of them separately determine our essence. And their essence is that which makes them what they are, that which distinguishes them one from the other, and therefore touches on their *raison d'être*.

If the foregoing is correct, then this would mean that the highest priority for every human being is, as early as possible, to focus on the totality of his or her essential characteristics, to reflect on them and more particularly, to align and coordinate all of them with each other – in other words, to achieve equilibrium, and thus to safeguard his or her existence. A pressing question in this context is to what extent people owe something to one another. An argument in favour of this might be found in their common origin and in the consequence of the second essential characteristic: the fundamental need to break out of their isolation.

Apart from this, it can now be postulated that today's human beings are seriously remiss in two respects: in respect of the environment and in respect of the search for meaning or spirituality, both of which are related to the conditions for the survival of planet earth, of nature and its laws, as well as the essential characteristics of self-fulfilment as the ultimate goal of development and the search for meaning. You could say that we have lost our way in these respects and that only an in-depth reflection on our innermost essence can point us in the direction of ourselves again. The two are interconnected and are related to the enormous developments of the past centuries, which have resulted in economies of scale, something we now refer to as globalisation, meaning that all developments all over the world influence everything and everyone everywhere. Thanks to recent developments in the field of internet and telephony (communication), we can share our joint concerns with one another and bring them to a solution. For this it is necessary that we reflect on what our essential characteristics entail and bring them into harmony with one another.

The defining essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities

The defining essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities are:

- 1 Dependency and Urge for Survival (Material)
- 2 Inward-Looking (Closed), Goal in Itself (Autonomy, Being Yourself),
Isolation and Communication (Broad and Immaterial)
- 3 Identity (Singularity, Character) and Individuality

- 4 Ultimate Objective: Self-Fulfilment (Development, Search for Meaning)
- 5 Autonomy (Self-Determination) and Freedom (Relative Freedom)

1. Dependency and Urge for Survival (Material)

Central to this is our material state of being. On the one hand, material refers to wants, needs, imperfections, death and on the other hand to their obviation by endeavouring to make provisions, to satisfy needs, bring perfection and life. It is from this antithesis that our urge for survival arises. Survival means maintaining living matter on pain of the occurrence of its opposite, dead matter. But this opposition is less absolute than we might think and has only one human dimension. After all, here a link seems to exist to our cosmic condition for existence, of which matter is a characteristic part. And our urge for survival (our will to live) can only be explained by matter that is not merely physical, but also includes, nay bears in itself, our will to live in a form or a manner that we call energy. Matter is therefore not only substance and our visible manifestation, but also embodies energy, which is incorporeal, immaterial, invisible to us. If this energy is the basis of our urge for survival, it is related to what we call intelligence, and then the conclusion would be justified that in an absolute sense matter includes not only energy, but also intelligence. These three quantities bear in them one another's characteristics and in this way, they are each other's equals, but viewed from our human dimension it is plausible that they are related hierarchically and that intelligence manifests itself in the form of energy, which appears to us as matter.

However this may be, our first task is to maintain our physical, corporeal essence, but this also leads to the biggest problems. Because we are not self-supporting in this respect, but dependent on the possibilities offered to us by nature, to which all life forms belong, we are obliged to spend a considerable portion of our lives on it. This means using scarce energy to achieve our objectives. To maintain our energy levels, we must spend an average of one-third of our life sleeping. For this, we need a place to live. On average, another one-third of our life is spent acquiring nourishment and a place to live. This leaves one-third for our private life, a considerable portion of which is needed for activities that are directly and indirectly related to our material self-preservation. This means that we are always short of time and always carry on an unrelenting struggle for existence. Not only our own inner struggle, but also an external one as well in which we must compete with others, imply that means of existence are scarce. This necessity of the struggle applies not only to individuals, but to the entire world population, which is why nations wage war on one another.

The implication is that our urge for survival is inherent, that everything is permissible, that we are a law unto ourselves; it is a matter of survival of the fittest, and this consequence can manifest itself in all conceivable and inconceivable variants. This situation is recorded in the lower strata of our lives, and it seems very remote in our present day and age because human societies have been created on the basis of rules which can be enforced, if necessary with the use of violence; but the threat will always be there, and even though the rules are enforced, a great many situations are

conceivable that can escape the effects of enforcement, and thus the fundamental principle is always applicable.

We might well ask ourselves whether it is a good thing for people as absolute entities to seize every opportunity to raise the level of prosperity all over the world so that a great many people benefit from it. What will be the consequences? We would do well to wonder whether some limit needs to be set. Unrestricted growth of the world population and unbridled growth of prosperity may well mean that one day there will be a price to pay. The crucial question is when the critical limit is reached and what factors affect this; resourceful management can shift this limit infinitely. However, these are forces that are currently not under our control. Perhaps new worldwide macro-organisational structures will be able to provide a solution (Zoellick (1)).

1. “[*India, Brazilië en China moeten G7 bijstaan*] “We should consider setting up a new steering committee, one that includes Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the present G7.”

But once again, should human beings as absolute entities be happy with this? Or will such a development take place at the expense of other interests of absolute entities? Worse still, will it interfere to such an extent with one or more of the conditions for our existence that it must be slowed down or even stopped?

2. Inward-Looking (Closed), Goal in Itself (Autonomy, Being Yourself)
Isolation and Communication (Broad and Immaterial)

Human beings as absolute entities are inward looking, separate from all other absolute entities. We need to remember that all life forms are absolute entities and therefore all of them share this fate. Ordinarily, absolute entities can only observe the outside of another absolute entity, and cannot catch even the slightest glimpse of the inside. Body language is no exception. It can be considered an expression of something without revealing the underlying substrate of factors that play a role. More is required for this. Often, parts of it can be deduced from the circumstances, but it is still a matter of guesswork as to the actual causes of certain communications. A person’s inner life and the deeper backgrounds always remain concealed for others as long they are not expressed in the commonly accepted manner.

This is one reason why human beings as absolute entities are on their own and can only seek their objectives within themselves. They are thus the goal in itself or in other words, autonomous in the sense of self. This autonomy must be distinguished from the fifth essential characteristic of absolute entities, or autonomy as self-determination. Both characteristics entail the third characteristic, which is that human beings as absolute entities live in isolation in an absolute sense, isolated from everything and everyone, even from their origins. Since they perceive this as very oppressive, they will do all they can to break out of their isolation. The obvious way to do so is by communicating using all possible means, in the broadest sense of the word. However, because the state of isolation is absolute, it is in fact not possible to break out of it, and the means of

communication are only ostensible possibilities and are therefore immaterial. The result is an imaginary connection. It exists only in the imagination of those involved. In addition, human beings can only communicate with limited and imperfect means, which leads to a great chance of misunderstanding or miscommunication. Recent developments in telephony and internet cannot alter this.

The most important general means of communication are those of language, involving signs (words, figures, symbols), images or sounds or a combination of these; they stimulate our senses and thus leave a certain impression in our brains. In everyday life, communication is usually incidental and fleeting. Words evaporate. Books, or at least texts, image and sound recordings give communication permanence. Certain forms of human behaviour (codes, manners, rituals) are intended to promote communication between people, although they may promote other objectives as well. We can thus regard religion and philosophy, art and culture, science and politics as forms of permanent communication between people.

3. Identity (Singularity, Character) and Individuality

We are living matter in a certain form, in which a number of specific characteristics are inherent, among them a number of unchanging hereditary traits that give us our own identity (singularity, character), by which we distinguish ourselves from other absolute entities (individuality).

Preamble (Dassen, 57)

Heredity might be described as passing on, by means of reproduction, factors that produce a resemblance of offspring to their parents. In a certain sense, every cell nucleus is an archive filled with documents, one that stores the complete list of hereditary factors of an organism. The documents are the chromosomes, which are present in all cells in equal numbers. Under the microscope, they are visible as a jumble of short threadlike strands. Half of every chromosome pair comes from the father and half from the mother. Human beings have twenty-three pairs of chromosomes. In these macromolecules the genes (the carriers of the hereditary traits, genetic factors) are arranged like pearls on a chain, and each gene always occupies the same place in the chain.

We know that hereditary traits of our forebears recur repeatedly in the family tree. The colour of our skin, eyes and hair is very clearly hereditary, as is the physique in a general sense (e.g. slender or stocky), and other hereditary traits to a lesser extent.

For a long time, it was not known why the hereditary structure passed on from parent to child remained constant over many generations, even thousands of years. Biochemical research has shown that a complicated compound found almost exclusively in the cell nuclei of plants and animals forms the basis for life. This compound, deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), is arranged in the form of an intertwined double helix with a multitude of crosslinks. Every cell nucleus forms an archive in which the chromosomes are the documents containing the construction diagram for the

organism. These documents have a number of chapters, the genes. When a cell divides, the construction diagram of the entire organism is passed on in the genetic code by means of complicated interaction.

Conclusion

Identity is the defining essential characteristic of human beings as absolute entities. This essential characteristic makes people individuals. It is not shared a human trait as described in the other essential characteristics of people as absolute entities.

Their identity therefore reveals the innermost being of people; it touches the germ of life and thus is life itself. What makes it so special? We have learned that its characteristics can all be traced back to our material state of being, which includes certain substances that give us our own specific singularity. The field of genetics is a field that has not been fully explored (Mielke c.s.). Quantum theory is still in its infancy (Van den Berg). The conclusion nevertheless seems justified that further research might explain the riddles of life and might even allow us to break through into a subsequent dimension. However, for the time being, we have reached a boundary.

4. Ultimate Objective: Self-Fulfilment (Development, Search for Meaning)

Self-fulfilment is achieved through self-development, i.e. discovering and honing our gifts and talents and thus finding our own identity (development), a process by which the lives of human beings as absolute entities acquire purpose (the search for meaning). Self-fulfilment is self-actualisation, the state that results from the realisation of the essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities, and it leads to satisfaction derived from ourselves or our activities, a sense of being satisfied with what we have accomplished.

5. Autonomy (Self-Determination) and Freedom (Relative Freedom)

Autonomy means self-reliance, independence, the freedom to make your own choices, your own decisions about yourself, to the exclusion of others (self-determination), thus allowing you to actualise the essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities. This freedom is relative in that it focuses on self-fulfilment, and so it is limited in this sense.

Experience (perception, cognisance)

This is the way in which human beings as absolute entities operate. Experience as a concept can be described as parts, or phases, of processes in the brain. These processes are autonomous. Accordingly, experience can be divided into the following parts or phases:

1. Observation (Input)
2. Storage (Memory)
3. Organising (Combining)

4. Conclusion or Finding (Mood, Intuition, Feelings, Emotions, Thought, Knowledge, Reason (Kant, 2004, 681), Idea, Mental Grasp, Consciousness (Blackmore, 2005, 2009, 2011), Mind, Soul, Psyche, Will, Conscience, etc.)
5. Plan
6. Performance (Output)

1. Preamble (Dassen 60)

All living organisms, even the simplest micro-organisms, are composed of cells. Despite differences in dimensions and form, all cells are essentially the same. The cell nucleus provides for the maintenance and reproduction of the living cell. Cells form new cells by dividing. The normal manner of cell division is called nuclear division. The formation of new DNA takes about eight hours, whereas nuclear division takes less than two hours. Human cells divide at most once a day; many types of cells divide only after weeks or months. In general, cell division is a brief, intense activity during a short period of the life of the cell, causing scarcely any interruption to its normal functioning.

The brain is part of the nervous system, containing all nerve centres that are needed to maintain life. They form the body's central checkpoint and make it possible for us to think, to plan and to experience. The nervous system has two basic functions: receiving and processing information and setting in motion and guiding movements for specific physical work. The central nervous system, to which the brain belongs, is the central exchange or checkpoint, coordinating and managing all life and bodily functions. Everything that we consciously feel or do starts in the central nervous system and is processed there. Our unconscious thoughts, feelings and conflicts can be found there as well.

Conclusion

Experience can thus be viewed as a process in the brain that is set in motion by stimuli to the senses. The information about this is stored and processed and, within fractions of seconds, is given a suitable reaction (by means of electrical impulses), apparently based on a situation or state that can best be qualified as a conclusion or finding, interpreted by us in terms of functions, such as mood, intuition, feelings, emotions, thought, ideas, wants or a property arising from these such as intellect, knowledge, conscience, mind, soul and psyche or a relate state such as consciousness, the subconscious and the unconscious.

The process seems to take place autonomously and therefore to escape our observation and influence. This would mean that the phase in which the conclusion or finding is reached is a direct consequence of the data stored and processed in the brain cells. If this reasoning is correct, then the qualifications we use (mood, intuition, etc.) are inaccurate, misleading and confusing and they can better be replaced by the words conclusion or finding. After all, we are that process (Swaab, 2008, 2014) and though appearances are deceiving thanks to the operation of the senses, what in fact

takes place shows merely the distance within the process that we are still removed from reaching the phase of the conclusion, a matter of a fraction of a second.

We would be better off using the word conclusion or finding as our basis, at any rate to indicate the phase in which the process of experience finds itself. Both words refer to perception (immaterial) in contrast to experience (material). The words conclusion or finding do more justice to what takes place in this phase of the process of experience. The words we now use arouse the mistaken impression that there is another dimension outside of our empirical reality, which is not plausible.

2. The process of experience

How does the process of experience actually take place, and how can we explain the fact that we use so many different words for something that has to do with the same process?

To answer these questions, we must first of all realise that all these processes take place within fractions of seconds. Nerve impulses are transmitted at a speed of around fifty to one hundred metres per second. This makes it clear why a reaction time of approximately one second is necessary before a motorist recognises a danger and takes appropriate action, or when a person is holding his or her hand near a hot oven, before the muscles are told to withdraw the hand (Dassen, 62).

Viewed in this way, it seems reasonable that, depending on the complexity of the situation, the process of experience is longer or shorter. The more complex a situation, the more time it will take. A process of experience is autonomous, taking place outside of our field of observation and beyond our influence. This means that in complex situations we must wait longer for the conclusion or its implementation. This gives us a sense of uncertainty, which continues throughout the phase of ordering (combining) and lasts until the phase of the conclusion or finding, which is the only one that can provide us with certainty. Uncertainty means not knowing what to do or how to act. The scale from not-knowing to knowing is a sliding scale, i.e. the longer the phase of ordering and combining, the more knowledge we will gain, and each point in that process is accompanied by a different feeling, depending on the extent to which our not-knowing (uncertainty) has been converted into knowing (certainty).

In the first phase, we are in the domain of mood, intuition, feeling, emotion and in the second phase the domain of thinking, ideas, intellect, reason and knowing. These are parts of one and the same ordering process which will lead to the conclusion or finding. Only the way we perceive it is translated into terms of feeling and knowing or not-knowing (Van den Berg, Frayn (1)). We refer to the course of this process as unconscious and then move via the subconscious to consciousness; again, these are references to our perception and they are not actually correct because the process of experience continues without interruption, although outside of our field of observation and beyond our influence, and therefore autonomously; because we are these processes of experiences (Swaab, 2008, 2014 (2)), they take place within ourselves; we are one of them, indivisibly linked.

3. Dreams, visions, paranormal phenomena, ghosts and apparitions Meditation

Then how can we explain dreams, visions and paranormal phenomena (clairvoyance, clairvoyance and clairaudience), ghosts and apparitions? In addition, what exactly is meditation?

In medical terms, dreams are sometimes defined as the fantasies, thoughts and other mental activities that occur while we are asleep. From this, we may conclude that the process of experience continues without interruption, not only in our waking state but in sleep as well, and that it is thus an autonomous process, outside our field of observation and beyond our influence. The images in our dreams are simply a result of the empirical visual observation that took place in a waking state, the stimuli of which (visual, photographic) have been stored (set down) in the brain cells and the images of which can become visible during sleep.

Taking this one step further, some people have visions; they see paranormal phenomena, ghosts and apparitions, which also result in images or visions that arise in the same way, though here they are not limited to sleep, but are also seen in a waking state.

The shared characteristic of all these phenomena is that the images can manifest themselves in present, past or future (multidimensional, broader, deeper). From this it might be concluded that the time-space dimension is absent, or in other words, that the images thus evoked are not limited by time or space but can be approached directly in their state of being, where many interconnections can be viewed.

Meditating is generally defined as looking inward to experience the deepest reality, meditation as an attempt to experience the deepest reality by means of internal contemplation and transcendental meditation as meditation intended to separate the mind from the body. Meditating means being one and the same (Bryson, 517), your deepest (cosmic) state of being, by separating yourself from empirical reality (the process of experience) and looking inward in your own self as an absolute entity, which is part of your origins (evolution and history) with which you as an entity are linked. During the process, your essential characteristics are aligned with your most original state of being, thus bringing about a state of equilibrium (peace).

From this we may conclude that the former phenomena and meditation are not the same, but quite the opposite. The former arise from the process of experience and empirical reality and are part of it, while meditation can be viewed as an attempt to withdraw from reality and its sphere of influence, and so is not part of it.

1. "There is no such thing as free will, language proves to be ambiguous and consciousness is still a huge riddle. Even the laws of nature are no more than human artefacts, the product of the way in which we perceive the universe. In short, all structure that we ascribe to the world arises from our own observation of it." Statement: Everything is illusion, nothing is real, we live our lives completely in the (human, illusionist) world of our own creation and reality (fact, realism, God as reality) will always be unknowable to us as human beings. Philosophical anthropology describes

this human (illusory) world, of which religion and philosophy, art and culture, science and politics (Popper) are constituent parts. Important in this context: the meaning of language and communication.

2. [*Wij zijn ons brein*]: “Free will is an illusion. It is not we, but the brain, that determines. Our character, personality, our sexual orientation and what we refer to as mind, it is all found in the brain ... a person ... is his brain...”. [*De 21 gram*]: “There is no such thing as the soul. When we die, 100 billion brain cells cease working.”

4. Multiplicity of processes

Sliding scale

Experience is not just a single process, but a multitude of them throughout one’s entire life. It leads to what we call a person, or a mind, a soul, a psyche, a totality of experiences, which gradually cause someone to exhibit certain personal characteristics related to his or her own identity (singularity, character), to that by which he or she distinguishes himself from others (individuality). We now want to look at what happens on that sliding scale from not-knowing to knowing, the process which we need so many words to describe, even though it is all part of the same process. In the first phase of this process (not-knowing) we are in the domain of feelings and emotions, and in the second phase in the domain of knowing, where feelings have been converted into knowing. In addition, remember, all this takes place in just a fraction of a second.

5. The meaning of the words we use (Coelho; Psychiatrie; Psychoanalytisch)

(See also Kant, 2004, 681; 1999,53-60)

Because the meaning of words is so important, we will first define them and then see what happens and how:

Mood

1 emotional tone that accompanies human beings in their continual activity

2 all-embracing and lasting emotional state (in contrast to affect)

Intuition

form of understanding not based on reasoning, experience or knowing

Feelings

becoming innerly aware, perceiving

Emotions

feelings that are consciously observed, in contrast to affect, which is about both conscious feelings and urges

Affect

brief but vehement emotion

Thought

inner processing and treatment of data from observation or from the memory

Knowledge

capacity to think and to understand

Reason

capacity of human beings to render an account of the world and themselves, to know grounds and arguments and to act accordingly; see also sense

Sense

sense (good sense, common sense), wits

Idea

representation existing in the mind, concept, thought

Mental Grasp

the whole of meaning, experience, general concepts and statements

Knowing

understanding

Understanding

having knowledge of

Consciousness

sensory state in which people efficiently process and/or respond to stimuli from the outside world and from their own body, and in which they are aware that their body is functioning; arriving at a certain awareness through thought

Subconscious (psychology, psychiatry)

the portion of what people have forgotten that is trying to return to their consciousness and that thus exerts an influence on their behaviour;

in psychoanalytic theory: level of consciousness between unconscious and conscious

Unconscious

the whole of processes that influence behaviour, but that are not apparent to our consciousness

Person

independently acting human being, individual

Mind

a number of functions of the body: thinking, feeling and wanting

Soul

mind or psyche

Psyche

total of conscious and unconscious inner experiences of an individual organism, soul, mind

Will

the human capacity to strive for something

Conscience

learned awareness of good and evil, moral consciousness.

6. Billions of cell bodies Structural, functional and incidental information

Our body consists of a single large mass of cells (living matter) that possess a treasure of information that we are unable to grasp, and that, depending on the place where those cells are located, make us do everyday things. The nature of this information might perhaps be classified into structural (DNA, chromosomes, genes), functional (hunger, thirst, fatigue, sexual feelings, etc.) and incidental (related to the process of experience). The incidental source of information is situated in the brain, which can be regarded as the coordination centre. The management of all life and bodily functions is conducted in the brain, and it is here that what we call conscious or unconscious feelings, thoughts, plans, conflicts, etc. are found (Dassen, 66).

All brain activity can be regarded as an autonomous process that escapes our observation and is beyond our influence; it is entirely managed by our structural, functional and incidental antennas. This process continues when we are asleep and even when we are unconscious. Our dreams confirm this. When we wake up and open our eyes, our incidental information provision goes on without flagging, whether we like it or not. What we do at that point might be described as entering the train that is our process of experience and becoming entirely absorbed by it. When we rouse ourselves from sleep, wash and dress, have breakfast, it may seem to be a conscious experience, but in fact we are simply being guided by our cells; an extra dimension of consciousness has nothing to do with it.

In our sleeping state we are not conscious of ourselves, but our empirical processes of experience (except for observation and storage of new sensory stimuli) continue nevertheless. In our waking state we are fully taken up by the process of experience, and as an entity, a oneness, we are part of it. We are the process of experience (Swaab, 2008, 2014). The unconscious cannot alter the way our process of experience moves forward. We may or may not be involved (to a limited extent) in the process of experience. If we see a tree, we are not conscious of that tree, but we are in an uninterrupted flow from our eyes to the tree, which we observe via our brain cells. Here the word consciousness is not appropriate; what we are involved in is merely an empirical experiment, namely the course of the process of observation. And the same applies to what we call feeling, thinking and wanting. If we referred to these as experiencing, it would do more justice to what actually happens. The words we use arouse the suggestion of a non-existent human dimension.

The concepts of person, mind, soul and psyche give the overall picture of all the characteristics that we possess, that we can observe in ourselves and in others and that are connected to our experience in relation to our origin and evolution and our essential characteristics as absolute entities. In fact, the same objections are attached to the use of such words as those described above in relation to consciousness, feeling, thinking and wanting. This applies all the more to the emotionally charged word soul and to a somewhat lesser extent to the word mind. It is therefore

preferable in my opinion to replace these words by a different word – characteristics, for example – because this word does more justice to what actually takes place.

7. Conscience and the Other Conflict of Interest

The experience of our conscience belongs in the same category as feeling, thinking and wanting. However, it has a special aspect, namely the presence of other human beings as absolute entities. Generally speaking, the process of experience is concerned with the way to best promote your own interests, with how far you will go in actualising your essential characteristics as an absolute entity. The discussion of our urge for survival showed that we can go quite far in that respect, and that to actualise that urge, there are in fact no boundaries; everything is permitted.

The same can be said about actualising our other essential characteristics, but the difference is that our need to do so is perhaps less cogently present; it is not our life, or at least not our continued material existence, that is at stake. Nonetheless, we can and may even choose to go to extremes in this respect and thus to give ourselves priority over others.

This leaves two possibilities: either it brings you into conflict with the other, or you step back of your own accord, perhaps after a showdown with another person, and decide simply to make the best of it. You can drive a conflict so high that you go to extremes, even death. You can also come to your senses and decide to step back. Finally, you can decide in advance that you do not want to let things come to this juncture for any reason at all, and pull back.

These possibilities share at least one common characteristic: they are all related to the presence of the other; the interest of another person is at stake, giving rise to the question of how you will deal with it. If you give your own interests priority at the expense of the other, it is good for you, but you as an absolute entity have surely experienced what this means for the other; in a fleeting moment, it has presented itself. You can go on like this endlessly, but at some point, perhaps not until the end of your life, you will realise what it means to another person when you realise what it means to you when it happens to you. This may well constitute a reason to change your behaviour towards others. The reason to respect the other person's interests is therefore found only in the fact that you do not want to have such an experience yourself; it is not found in the interests of the other person. This experience or this awareness can lead you to take it into account in your behaviour at an early stage and to encourage the same thing to others. This is what we call the conscience. From this point of view, good means good for yourself and therefore for others as well. You realise that when you injure another person, you primarily harm yourself. If you do not, many people will regard you as an unprincipled reprobate and you will feel the consequences.

Respect for the interests of others is therefore based on self-respect, which may lead you to decide to subject your dealings with other people to a set of standards for yourself. Here we enter the area of morals and ethics, to which we can attach a complete moral philosophy and on the basis of a belief, a moral theology. At the end of this road is total love of yourself and others, because

you have come to realise that it is the only way that can lead to the fourth essential characteristic of human beings as absolute entities, namely self-fulfilment. You will then have developed in a way that allows you to give yourself and others the scope we need as absolute entities (compassion, solidarity).

Summary

To summarise, human beings as absolute entities have undergone developments over millions of years (they have evolved) so that today we can point to a number of traits (essential characteristics) in connection with their nature and origin, which we have looked at from a point of view that we generally call empirical reality (the process of experience). In this process our empirical involvement can be regarded as the motor that has made us, or caused us to develop, into what we are today. This is our everyday reality. This alone has given us our essential characteristics (urge for survival, communication, identity, self-fulfilment, self-determination), and these essential characteristics can be seen as the motives – which have proved in the course of history to be enduring – for our actions. This implies that they do not truly exist, but they apparently typify our most original state of being, set down in billions of cells (matter) that make us who we are.

It follows from the nature of human beings as absolute entities that the way in which they get along with each other is primarily determined by the free interplay of forces. They can impose limitations (self-limitations, voluntarily) on themselves for the sake of peace (conscience) and can avail themselves of norms (rules of morals and decency) as guidelines for their actions. This involves the relationships between individuals in contrast to individuals in a group (family and friends, clubs, companies, religious communities, government) where the group imposes norms (rules of morals and decency, mores, customs and usages, laws) on its participants, who must adhere to them.

We can thus conclude that the free interplay of forces (absolute freedom) is inherent in human nature, that any limitation of this is alien to human nature and that the use of norms is only prompted by a need for ordering, depending on the circumstances (efficiency), when there is a clash of interests. This absolute freedom in connection with the realisation of the total of all essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities in relation to others must be distinguished from the relative freedom of people in realising their autonomy in the form of self-determination, which is limited in this sense.

A new philosophy of man & humanism

On 10 December 2006 Pakhuis De Zwijger in Amsterdam organised a forum discussion on consciousness and free will. According to the English psychologist and panellist Susan Blackmore, there is only experience – the rest is not important. (Blackmore, 2005, 2009, 2011) In the past few years, neuroscientists Victor Lamme and Dick Swaab have fuelled this debate. In recent publications both have further decried the idea that there is such a thing as free will.

A new philosophy of man shows that questions about consciousness and free will are borrowed from the old philosophy, with its focus on ultimate knowledge and the absolute beginning. But we cannot find any answers to these questions if we leave human beings out of the equation.

The theoretical basis for the new philosophy was laid by the American philosopher and member of the American Philosophical Association James Joseph Dagenais (1923-1981), who came to the conclusion that philosophical anthropology is not a science, but a domain unto itself and cannot be replaced by any other anthropology. The final explanation of man lies outside all possible scientific views that have ever been formulated, because they lie within the origins of every branch of science, including the science of philosophy. It is the final ground on which the philosophies, of any nature whatsoever, can be practised implicitly or explicitly. (Bakker, *Studia*, 150) He demonstrates that ‘I think, therefore I am’ (Descartes) should be replaced by ‘we are’, and calls it “nonsense” to ask whether free will exists, or whether we are determined.

Dutch humanist Jaap van Praag (1911-1981) and Dutch philosopher Reinout Bakker (1920-1987) elaborated on the findings of Dagenais. Van Praag for humanism and Bakker for the philosophy of man or philosophical anthropology. Taking this one-step further, the new philosophy of man can serve as the basis for a humanist ideology.

In his inaugural speech of 25 January 1965, Bakker spoke of the necessary collaboration between philosophy and science. Philosophy without contact with the empirical sciences is empty, but also: the empirical sciences are blind without the contribution of philosophy. If one of these two poles is made absolute, the danger of gross onesidedness, or even distortion, is imminent. The fact that the ultimate questions about man are so rarely asked stems from giving the scientific foundation an absolute status. Many phenomenologists and existentialists have warned against such scientism (Bakker, *Studia*, 150).

The methods of a post-modern philosophical anthropology will have to be based on reflection, on the claim that it is possible to debate differences and contrasts on reasonable grounds, and on the individual responsibility for the decisions, we all make for ourselves in respect of changes in body and mind. A post-modern version of Sartre’s creed: man is and always will be what he makes of himself. (Bakker, *Studia*, 151) I have given philosophical anthropology a new concrete substance on the basis of the definition of American philosopher Jim Dagenais: “a consistent overall vision of man and his world”, so that it can serve as the basis for philosophy and thus as the foundation for human life.

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