

Intuition and truth

Religion and truth

Atheism and truth

NASCENT STATE Magazine



Front Page: Statue of Giordano Bruno by Ettore Ferrari, Campo de' Fiori, Rome, 1889.

From the Editor

Take three cups of water; one hot, one cold and one at roomtemperature. Place the index finger of one hand in the hot water and the index finger of the other hand in the cold water. Leave them for about thirty seconds, then place both index fingers in the cup of room-temperature water. The same temperature will feel different for each finger.

We believe we know what truth is. We believe that if we didn't, it would soon become obvious to us. And yet we can live well enough with inadequate information and indeed without questioning what we know or see.

Truth is a peculiar thing. It isn't as tangible as bricks and mortar or as necessary as food and air and yet in spite of this it is so essential to life that we judge all our political, legal, economic, scientific, medical and religious establishments on that basis. And yet what we call 'truth' is often not truth at all, but our own view of it.

This edition of Nascent State magazine is dedicated to truth and to the two main claimants to truth today - religion and atheism - and to their third alternative, intuition.

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The School of Athens by Raphael, 1510

'Behold! human beings living in a underground cave, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the cave; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen

which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.'

We draw our understanding of truth from Plato, who gave us the allegory of the cave dwellers, in his book *The Republic.* It is owing to Plato that we regard truth as singular, perfect and pure, and to be perceived only with the mind. And so we search for truth, think about truth, talk about truth and, particularly if anyone expresses a view we disagree with, argue about truth. The view of truth associated with Plato has come to be known as Absolute Truth.

Plato expressed his ideas in the form of dialogues, more often between the pugnacious Socrates and his opponents. Socrates did not feel the need to defend any idea, claiming that 'I know that I know nothing', and so he was content with finding fault with others; his reasoning was that if there was a flaw in their argument, their argument was not perfect and therefore could not be truth. It is owing to Socrates that we regard argument as the means to settle truth.

This might seem straight forward, but Western culture has a history, and our understanding of truth has been marked by that history.

Christianity became the official religion of Rome under the emperor Constantine I. Constantine ordered his soldiers to paint the Christian symbol *Chi Rho* on their shields before the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 AD. He went on to win the battle, and so to become the undisputed emperor of Rome. From the time of Constantine onwards, Christianity became synonymous with Rome, and those who attacked the one also attacked the other.

Then Saint Augustine (354 – 430) wrote *The City* of God, and laid the foundations for the Vatican. Augustine had been a Pagan - first a Manichean and then a Neoplatonist - before his conversion to Christianity. He had come across Plato in his Neoplatonist days and, even after converting to Christianity, saw no contradiction between the truth of Plato and the truth of God:



Saint Augustine disputing with the Heretics 'If, then, Plato defined the wise man as one who imitates, knows, loves this God, and who is rendered blessed through fellowship with Him in His own blessedness, why discuss with the other philosophers?'

It was into this context that *The Creed* - a statement of belief by the Church fathers on matters of truth - emerged. The first was drawn up by the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, and it stated 'We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.' And so it was that the Creed, the Church and Rome became synonymous with truth.

In Plato's allegory, truth could not be owned by anyone because it existed somewhere beyond the senses. Now that the Church owned truth, anyone who questioned either Rome or the Church, questioned truth itself. This laid the foundation for the approach to truth which still exists today - there is only one truth, and if in doubt, we argue, and if still in doubt, we defer the matter to an authority. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* put it this way:

'The Church's Magisterium asserts that it exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging Catholics to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.'

Anyone who did not submit to the Dogma of the Church was anathematised (or cursed) and declared a heretic. This set the tone for the treatment of dissent and the persecution of the heretics that followed, including the Manicheans, the Gnostics and the Cathars.

Little is known about what the heretics believed or taught. What has survived has done so because it was deemed uninteresting by the Inquisition; rarely do we come across anything that might explain why its adherents would devote and - in some cases give - their lives for it. What is known about the heretics is that they did not submit to the dogma of the Church. The word 'heretic' means 'one who chooses', which indicates they were free-thinkers.



Massacre against the Cathars, 13th Century Of the different sects, Manichaeism was the most influential. Mani, its founder, was something of a colourful character. The fourth century Acta Archelai, a polemical work intended to undermine Manichaeism, dismissively mentions the title 'Buddas' when it was designated to Mani. The Acta Archelai states that Manichaeism, Gnosticism and Catharism all shared common beliefs, including dualism (a God encompassing both good and evil) and transmigration (or reincarnation). It is therefore quite possible that the major heresies had their origins in Eastern thinking. In Buddhism, Jainism and Taoism for

example, dogma plays no part. What is more, the symbol of the Tao - the Bagua - is dualist, not singular, with dark and light combined within a greater whole.

The Inquisition began in France in the twelfth century and spread throughout Europe in the following centuries. The thirteenth century Papal Bull, the Ad Extirpanda, condoned the use of torture for the extraction of confessions 'provided he does so without killing them or breaking their arms or legs...' It is a testament to the conviction of the Church fathers that they were able to reconcile this with 'Blessed are the merciful'.



Florentine Acadamy by Luigi Mussini, 1867

The all-governing power of the Church - at least regarding the nature of truth - lasted until the Italian Renaissance. The Florentine Academy, set up by the banker Cosimo de Medici (1389 - 1464), sought to reintroduce Pagan thinking back into Western culture. The authority of the Church meant that many of those involved with the Academy were treated as heretics. This included Pico della Mirandola (1463 – 1494), who died mysteriously, Johann Reuchlin (1455 – 1522), who was summoned before the Inquisition, and Giordano Bruno (1548 – 1600), who was burnt at the stake for refusing to recant.

Others who challenged the authority of the Church - for different reasons - included Martin Luther (1483 – 1546), a Catholic priest who had become disillusioned with the practice of 'indulgences' by the Church. Indulgences were the means by which a sinner could have their time in purgatory reduced by making a contribution to the Church. The practice had become corrupt, and Luther made it known through his *Ninety*- five Theses, which he nailed to the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg in 1517. He was tried, in absentia, for heresy, and ex-communicated. His treatment created the present schism between the Catholic and Protestant Churches.



Luther and the Ninety-Five Theses.

The Catholic Church fought back by instigating the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, or index of banned books, in 1560. Those whose writings were prohibited included - in addition to Martin Luther - Galileo Galilei, who was forced to recant and placed under house arrest, and Giordano Bruno, whose treatment subsequently earned him the title 'martyr for science'.

England, Germany, Holland and Switzerland all adopted Protestantism. In Germany in 1618, a Catholic ruler, Ferdinand II, was deposed by his Protestant counterpart, Frederick IV, and it triggered the Thirty Years' War, one of the most destructive in Europe.



Thirty Years War

It is interesting to note that the emergent new science flourished best in Protestant countries, with Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton both being born in England.

In the centuries that followed, Western Colonialism gave rise to Mercantilism (or freetrade), which was followed by the Industrial Revolution.



Seaport at Sunset by Claude Lorrain, 1639

Practices which had survived for millenia were replaced by machines and mills, and driven by water and steam power. In the nineteenth century, the camera (1816), the typewriter (1873), the telephone (1876), the gramophone (1877), and the radio (1896) were all made viable and accessible to increasing numbers of people. The Sunday sermon still existed, but people's lives were now increasingly governed by material goods and secular values.



16th Century Gutenberg printing press

What undermined the Church, and particularly its claim to represent the truth, was not heresy, but change. Dogma is not designed for change. To govern what can be known and discussed requires a degree of constancy in society.

Perhaps the biggest contributor to that change was Johannes Gutenberg, who invented the movable-type printing press. It is interesting to note that Gutenberg was a Catholic, and his first project was the Gutenberg Bible (1450). Because of this, the Church did not regard him as a threat. And yet what he did was to take the process of book printing - including what could or could not be printed - away from the monasteries and out of the hands of the Church. In doing so, he greatly expanded the number of books in print and, by reducing the cost, gave much greater access to knowledge for the masses.

What began with Gutenberg led to the multiple opinions, outlooks and voices which shape the modern era. New forms of expression have lead not just to new terms, but to a completely new way of looking at the world. The metaphor of serpents and apples has been replaced by one of selfish genes and robots. Religion no longer holds sway because we no longer see the world in terms of religious imagery.

Although we no longer live in a religious era, we have inherited the same dogmatic approach to truth. We still believe there is one truth, and that if we are presented with a truth different from our own, we have to find fault with it until its errors are exposed - and if that doesn't settle the matter, we still refer the issue to an authority.

By the same author:







and truth



The 'Four Horsemen' of Atheism, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris

'His opinions are these. The first principles of the universe are atoms and empty space; everything else is merely thought to exist. The worlds are unlimited; they come into being and perish. Nothing can come into being from that which is not nor pass away into that which is not. Further, the atoms are unlimited in size and number, and they are borne along in the whole universe in a vortex, and thereby generate all composite things — fire, water, air, earth; for even these are conglomerations of given atoms. And it is because of their solidity that these atoms are impassive and unalterable. The sun and the moon have been composed of such smooth and spherical masses (i.e. atoms), and so also the soul, which is identical with reason. We see by virtue of the impact of images upon our eyes.'

Diogenes Laertius, citing Democritus, 5th century BC.

Democritus is regarded as the founder of Western atheism. It is recorded that he travelled widely, including to India where he studied under the Gymnosophists (or Yogis), and even claimed to have 'stolen' their ideas from them. It is known that the ancient Charvaka or Lokāyata schools of thought were atheist. Quite how Indian Yogis could have stumbled upon the idea that the universe is composed of atoms without present day technology is unclear.

Until the eighteenth century, atheism existed as only one of the many views of the world, and was for the most part tolerated provided it was not stated openly. The Encyclopédistes and the French Revolution changed all that.

Denis Diderot (1713 – 1784) was the principal editor and chief contributor to the Encyclopédie. In addition, he also wrote The Skeptic's Walk (1747), a philosophical tract On the interpretation of Nature (1754), d'Alembert's Dream (1769) and particularly the essay Political Authority (1751), in which he provided justification for the use of violence to bring about political change:

'In a state of anarchy all the threads of the network rise up against their commander and there's no longer a supreme authority.'

The Revolution brought about the separation of Church and State, and ushered in the beginning of modern day Secularism, or a society governed by reason rather than by religion.



Denis Diderot by Louis Michel van Loo, 1767 In the following century, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811); the mathematician Pierre-Simon Laplace declared that God was an 'unnecessary hypothesis' (1825); the political activist Charles Bradlaugh founded the National Secular Society (1866), and Friedrich Nietzsche had his Zarathustra declare 'God is dead' (1883).

Prior to the emergence of Secularism, religion governed not just the Sunday sermon, but the whole outlook of Western culture; the cause of disease, poverty and natural disaster, as well as the ordering of society itself were all attributed to divine will. For those who saw instead an unequal distribution of power and grace, Atheism became, not just an outlook, but a 'cause', and one which Denis Diderot was well aware of. In the introduction to the *Encyclopedie*, he wrote:

'We must ride roughshod over all these ancient puerilities, overturn the barriers that reason never erected, give back to the arts and sciences the liberty that is so precious to them.'

Atheism has since gone from being the lesser view of the malcontent, to the dominant view of the majority. Whereas at one time Atheism was tolerated provided it was not stated openly, now religion is tolerated provided it is not stated openly.

In many respects, the emergence of modern

Atheism is a natural and instinctive reaction to being told what to think, what to believe and what to do by an authority. It is much easier to rebel against an existing order than to think about what should replace it. As Percy Shelley put it:

'All religious nations are founded solely on authority; all the religions of the world forbid examination and do not want one to reason; authority wants one to believe in God; this God is himself founded only on the authority of a few men who pretend to know him...'



Percy Shelley by Alfred Clint c. 1829

It is perhaps due to the imposition of religion by an imposed authority that Atheism was regarded as much a crusade as an outlook. This crusading element is very evident in present day Atheism, with Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett being regarded as its chief protagonists. Christopher Hitchens, in his book God is not Great (2007), put it this way: 'We atheists do not require any priests, or any hierarchy above them, to police our doctrine.'

While the appeal to reason is admirable, genuine reason must be guided by more than what it is against. In many respects, the crusading attitude of Atheism has resulted in it adopting the same Crusading attitude of religion, with the assertion that there is only one truth - atheism - and that all other truths are falsehoods which must be

attacked until their flaws are exposed.

This has led to the emergence of what is now known as 'scientism', or the adoption of a narrow-minded and limited - and therefore quite unscientific - attitude by some who claim to represent the scientific community. The term 'scientism' was first employed in this sense by the economist Friedrich Hayek in his book *The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies on the Abuse of Reason* (1952). Hayek sought to put the adoption of dogma in science into an historical perspective:

'Before we can understand the reasons for the trespasses of scientism we must try to understand the struggle which Science itself had to fight against concepts and ideas which were as injurious to its progress as the scientistic prejudice now threatens to become to the progress of the social studies.'



Friedrich Hayek

Those who, unwittingly or otherwise, inject the same dogmatism into science, do so because they regard the removal of any religious element as a step towards truth. From the point of view of the crusading Atheist, only material nature is real, and any attempt to insinuate religious ideas into science is to be resisted at all costs.

Richard Dawkins provided an example of how this crusading element can lead to a very distorted view of both science and scientists. In his book

The God Delusion (2006), he wrote:

'Einstein sometimes invoked the name of God (and he is not the only atheistic scientist to do so), inviting misunderstanding by supernaturalists eager to misunderstand and claim so illustrious a thinker as their own.'



Albert Einstein by Ferdinand Schmutzer, 1921 The statement is quite extraordinary, not least because it flatly contradicts Albert Einstein's own statements on the subject. When asked about his views on God by the writer George Sylvester Viereck (1930), he answered:

'Your question is the most difficult in the world. It is not a question I can answer simply with yes or no. I am not an Atheist. I do not know if I can define myself as a Pantheist. The problem involved is too vast for our limited minds.'

Einstein was not alone. Robert Openheimer, Erwin Schrodinger and Werner Heisenberg had all read and greatly admired the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and Max Planck, who founded quantum mechanics, wrote in his essay *Religion and Natural Science* (1937):

'Religion and natural science do not exclude each other, as many contemporaries of ours would believe or fear; they mutually supplement and condition each other.'

The problem with scientism is that, rather than being a break from the dogma of religion, it is a continuation of it by other means. In such a climate, any scientist who dares to express any

view contrary to its exclusively materialist dogma will find themselves regarded as a 'heretic of science'. Such was the fate of Rupert Sheldrake, who proposed that the forces that cause form in nature can be studied in the same way as its material content. It caused John Maddox, editor of *Nature* magazine, to suggest that Sheldrake's *A New Science of Life* (1981) was a 'book fit for burning'.

The term 'paradigm', referring to a way of looking at the world shared by a majority of scientists, was first employed in this way by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Kuhn pointed out that many of the great leaps in science have come, not from within the existing paradigm, but at the cost of challenging present day assumptions. Furthermore:

'Normal science, the activity in which most scientists inevitably spend almost all their time, is predicated on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like. Much of the success of the enterprise derives from the community's willingness to defend that assumption, if necessary at considerable cost. Normal science, for example, often suppresses fundamental novelties because they are necessarily subversive of its basic commitments.'



Thomas Kuhn

The assumption that truth can be fixed and defined by present day knowledge is not only limiting to progress - it is unscientific.

One of the fundamental principles of present day physics is that matter and energy are sufficient to explain all the objective phenomena in the universe. This will not last. Norbert Wiener, the father of Cybernetics, in his foundation work

Cybernetics, Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine (1961), wrote:

'The mechanical brain does not secrete thought 'as the liver does bile', as the earlier materialists claimed, nor does it put it out in the form of energy, as the muscle puts out its activity. Information is information, not matter or energy. No materialism which does not admit this can survive at the present day.' (my italics)



Norbert Wiener, 1949

Wiener may be, at present at least, less wellknown than other leading scientists of the day, but his work with Claude Shannon and William Ross Ashby and their contributions to Artificial Intelligence will make this likely for review.

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence means that Wiener's remarks about 'information' are no longer speculative, but central to the emergent technology, and the accompanying outlook, of the present age. We are about to enter an era where it will no longer be possible to regard information as a mere byproduct of matter and energy. If this is not yet clear, further developments in AI will make it obviously so. In Cybernetic terms, the difference between the transmission of noise and a message is not matter or energy, but organisation.

Once information is regarded as being quite independent of matter and energy, the dogma of atheism will collapse. Any materialism which cannot accept the reality of information as the essence of order in nature will find itself fighting a rearguard action. It would seem we are heading for a new paradigm; the question of whether the new paradigm will be just as limiting as previous paradigms is still open. To avoid that will require a very different form of thinking than the dogmatism of either religion or atheism.

Intuition

and truth



Jain concept of Anekantavada or 'many-sidedness'

We use intuition whenever what we see or hear doesn't make sense. If what we see or hear doesn't make sense, it is because it indicates a hidden element behind what is presented.

We use logic to deal with the known world. Once we know what something is, we can define it, label it and categorise it, and therefore deal with it logically. But when we are presented with something which indicates a hidden or unseen element, we have to employ intuition. This is because we can define what we know but we can't define what we don't know. So we use logic to deal with the known, and intuition to deal with the unknown.

There is much that we don't know and can't see. We can't see the thoughts of others, plans made behind closed doors, the causes of events, the distant past, the context we live in and - particularly - the future. For the most part the hidden in life doesn't bother us; we can live well enough with limited knowledge. It is only when we are presented with something which is obviously hidden, such as an enigma, that we have to consider what is not directly apparent.

Our inability to see what is hidden tells us we do not see the world in its entirety. Once we understand this, it follows that our knowledge of the world is incomplete, and therefore we do not know truth. Once we accept the hidden as a fact of life, the use of intuition to deal with it becomes essential.

The modern era regards intuition as quite separate from logic. This wasn't always the case. Pythagoras (c. 570 – 495 BC), who is regarded as one of the founding figures of Western culture, was quite adept at both. He is most remembered

for his theorem, but is less well-known for his mode of teaching, which was highly intuitive. Diogenes Laertius, in his Lives of the Eminent Philosophers, tells us:

'The mode of teaching by symbols was considered by Pythagoras as most useful, this mode was cultivated by nearly all the Greeks, as being most ancient and the Egyptians particularly honoured it, adopting it in the most diversified manner. Great attention was paid to it by Pythagoras, as will be found by one who clearly unfolds the significance and arcane conceptions of the Pythagorean symbols, thus developing the great rectitude and truth they contain when liberated from their enigmatic form.'



Pythagoras by Raphael, c. 1510.

His use of symbolic imagery is most telling. It could be said that a symbolic image is a deliberate enigma, demanding interpretation. If what we are presented with doesn't quite make sense, we are forced to look beyond the presented image to consider what is not being stated directly - and why.

Prior to the establishment of the Church, there was no distinction between intuition and logic. Once Christianity became the official religion of Rome, it adopted logic as the means to defend the Creed. Because logic makes it possible to state in very specific terms what is right and wrong, the employment of logic meant there could be only one 'correct' opinion, and all other opinions were treated as wrong and attacked until their untruths were exposed.

The heretics, on the other hand, employed intuition. The major heresies of Europe, Manichaeism, Gnosticism and Catharism, all expressed their teachings through symbolic imagery. Furthermore, there was no dogma. The twelfth century theologian Alain de Lille, writing about the Gnostics, tells us:

'The perfect freedom with which they were endowed meant repudiation of all formal religious institutions and law. No hierarchy was needed. One of the group was known as a 'prophet' and apparently was their chief spokesman, although any of the company might experience visions which would be recounted in private meetings.'

The freedom to think, to question and to choose is fundamental to the intuitive mind. If we are not to rely on authority for our understanding of truth, then we must form our own intuitive judgement about what is true.



Frontispiece for the New Atlantis, 1626

We associate symbolic imagery with religion largely because, until the emergence of science, life was governed by religion. In order to distance itself from religion and its imagery, science adopted logic as its main form of expression. While logic is highly precise, it comes at the cost of a much reduced view of the world. There are many in science who are aware of the dangers of this form of reductionism. Francis Bacon, who is regarded as the 'Father of the Scientific Method', took this very same view. In his foundation work, *Novum Organum* (1620) he wrote:

'The present system of logic rather assists in confirming and rendering inveterate the errors founded on vulgar notions than in searching after truth, and is therefore more hurtful than useful.

'The present discoveries in science are such as lie immediately beneath the surface of common notions. It is necessary, however, to penetrate the more secret and remote parts of nature, in order to abstract both notions and axioms from things by a more certain and guarded method.'

The more certain and guarded method he was referring to, was the intuitive method. His book *New Atlantis* (1627), in which he outlined the direction that science could take if it adopted a much more imaginative view of what could be achieved, inspired the formation of the Royal Society to pursue his ideas. The *New Atlantis* is expressed entirely in terms of symbolic allegory.



Isaac Newton by William Blake, 1795 If clear and fixed word definitions are an indication of logic, the readiness to regard the world as an enigma is an indication of intuitive thinking. The other great contributor to the birth of science, Isaac Newton (1642 – 1727), also employed the same method. John Maynard Keynes, the economist, who bought a box of Newton's writings in auction, was shocked to discover they revealed, not dry logic, but a keen interest in arcane symbolic imagery. This led him to call Newton 'the last of the magicians':

'Why do I call him a magician? Because he looked on the whole universe and all that is in it as a riddle, as a secret which could be read by applying pure thought to certain evidence...'

Symbolic imagery, or the expression of ideas by enigmatic means, is problematic for those enamoured of logic. An idea expressed as an enigma renders any attempt to fix a definition either pointless or limiting to further insight. Any understanding of a symbolic image is therefore provisional, and conditional on insight.

Insight has played a much more important role in the development of both science and technology than it is given credit for.



Archimedes by Domenico Fetti, 1620 Insight caused the mathematician Archimedes to run naked from his bath, shouting 'Eureka' after, in an instant, he solved the problem of how to work out the mass of a complex gold crown. It was responsible for the theorem for which Pythagoras is most remembered, and led him to make a sacrifice to the gods in gratitude for the idea. It was responsible for Newton's

apocryphal apple, which caused him to think about the nature of gravity. It was responsible for the sudden arrival of the mathematician Rowan Hamilton's quaternions, and caused him to carve the equation into a nearby stone in case he forgot it. And it was responsible for Tesla's alternating current motor, the vision of which caused him to stop, mid-walk, in a park in Budapest to explain it to his companion.

The capacity to regard what we see as an enigma was also responsible for many of the inventions of the Industrial revolution. James Watt's steam engine was inspired by observing how the steam from a kettle forced the lid to rise and fall. Eli Whitney's cotton gin was inspired by him observing a cat trying to pull a chicken through a fence, only to separate it from its feathers. James Hargreaves had the idea for the spinning jenny after observing a thread-wheel continue to revolve after it overturned and landed on the floor. While the inventions were triggered by observation, each had to regard the observation as an enigma for it to lead to a new idea.



Max Planck, 1933

The ability to think visually, as distinct from logically or mathematically, is key to intuition. Once an idea arrives, it can be expressed logically or mathematically, but its origin is in the intuitive mind. Reliance on logic or mathematics on the other hand reduces our experiences down to what can be expressed in terms of word or numeric definitions. The assumption that this is enough to understand the nature of the world has created a division between mechanistic science and religious imagery. Max Planck (1858 - 1947), who founded quantum mechanics, did not regard them as contradictory. In his essay on *Religion and Natural Science* he pointed out that while logic is clear and precise:

'On the other hand, a religious symbol always points beyond itself. Its significance is never exhausted by its own features, however much veneration it may enjoy because of its own age and the operation of a pious tradition.'



Paracelsus by Quentin Matsys, early 17th century Logic, whether applied to science or religion, is exclusive, with each claiming to be the only truth. For intuitive insight however, the capacity to see something from more than one point of view is essential. In this light it is interesting to read the writings of Paracelsus (c. 1493 - 1541), the Swiss physician and alchemist:

'The peasant can see the externals, but the physician's task is to see the inner and secret matter. In order to make these things visible, Nature must be compelled to show itself... Take a piece of wood. It is a body. Now burn it. The

flammable part is the Sulphur, the smoke is the Mercury, and the ash is the Salt.'

Paracelsus is presently regarded as something of an eccentric, not least because he employed astrological and alchemical imagery in his medical studies. In many respects a word or a number is itself a symbolic representation of what it describes. The only problem comes when mathematics and logic are regarded as sufficient to understand the world in its entirety.

Contrast this with the phenomenon of insight, which provides in an instant a wholly new and unexpected perspective on all that we previously thought we knew and understood. The physicist Fritjof Capra (b. 1939), who wrote *The Tao of Physics* after his own experience of insight, had the following to say about the relationship between rational and intuitive thinking:

'Rational knowledge and rational activities certainly constitute the major part of scientific research, but are not all there is to it. The rational part of research would, in fact, be useless if it were not complemented by the intuition that gives scientists new insights and makes them creative.'

Taking in all of the above, it may now be possible to provide an outline of the intuitive method and its approach. Just as logic has its method and principles, so too - provided we do not expect logic by other means - does intuition. This outline can be stated in the following manner:

- 1. We do not see the world in its entirety.
- 2. The world is an enigma.
- 3. What we call truth is relative.
- 4. Understanding is dependent on insight.

The assertion of a relative truth will be problematic for some. Orthodox thinking, i.e. logic, regards relativism as a means to undermine truth. Relativism does not however mean that 'truth is relative', but that our understanding of truth is relative.

The historian of science, Thomas Kuhn, was the first to employ the term 'paradigm' to describe the way of looking at the world which is shared by a majority of scientists. He made this very point in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). He said that while a shared outlook is quite natural, when the outlook becomes fixed and dogmatic, the same paradigm can be mistaken for truth and therefore limit the emergence of new ideas. Kuhn was accused of relativism, and - to his credit - he didn't flinch:

'One consequence of the position just outlined has particularly bothered a number of my critics. They find my viewpoint relativistic, particularly as it is developed in the last section of this book. My remarks about translation highlight the reasons for the charge. The proponents of different theories are like the members of different language-culture communities. Recognizing the parallelism suggests that in some sense both groups may be right. Applied to culture and its development, that position is relativistic.'

While Western culture has issues with relativism, Eastern culture - which is much more inclined to intuition than logic - has no such issues. In Jainism, for example, the concept 'Anekāntavāda', which translates as 'nonabsolutism', refers to a conception of the world drawn from more than one point of view. This view is expressed in the Jainist allegory of the blind men and the elephant, with each taking hold of one part of the elephant and assuming it to represent the whole.

If we believe we know what truth is, then the obvious next step is to defend that truth. If we do not know what truth is, then we must be sufficiently open-minded to be able to consider ideas which are presently outside our current perspective. If we are searching for truth it means we have not yet found it. If we claim to know what truth is, we stop searching.

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