

# Collapsed Ideas

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## Introduction

We fear uncertainty and welcome certainty in the same way a person, stranded upon an unknown and barren island, fears the uncaring water in all directions. S/he depends upon the firmness of the island for food and shelter, yet salvation can only be found by swimming away into uncertainty itself. Is not everyone's actual life the same?

### I. Start

After reading the works of physicists, I have imagined what it would be like to observe the universe in its childhood, before the primordial gas clouds contracted and gave rise to the first stars. I try to picture myself a part of this early universe, scanning the near and distant horizon. Sometimes I see only endless darkness. It is a void of loneliness. Other times I see blinding light from a cosmic plasma, remnants from an almost mythical outpouring of energy. But whether darkness or light, I am overcome by one property – near uniformity. Before there were stars and long before planets, bacteria, and humans, the universe was dominated in all directions by apparent sameness. How boring this must have been with nothing to break up the universal background. On the largest scales there were no galaxy clusters to speckle the cosmos with structure and beauty. Neither brightly burning stars nor their black hole relatives patterned the cosmos. In the earliest days of the universe, planets and all of the wonderful objects we associate with our earth would not have been born. Waterfalls, mountain ranges, vast coral reefs, rainforests shaking with life were all in waiting. How long the universe went without the works of art and science where humanity finds meaning. Yet, in the almost uniformity of the early universe, before the emergence of complex objects, all of the building blocks of the wonders of nature and creations of humanity existed. As matter-energy appears neither created nor destroyed, the primeval energy ultimately responsible for the largest nebula and most elegant porcelain existed moments following the beginning. Still more these same particles would one day be responsible for symphonies, sonnets, paintings, stories of fiction, tales of love, ideas of truth, and quite strangely even theories about the energy that started it all.

The scientific story of an expanding, unfolding universe is the most meaningful tale to those minds sensitive to observation and mathematical movements. As others observe and test our surroundings more finely, and as curious individuals craft new theories with increasing coherence, this story will change. But the old observations do not change; they go on. It is our interpretations and context of those observations that transform. The story has a direction. It moves toward meaning. If the story of a Creator is meaningful to you, we have no quarrel.

All that we observe may have arisen from a small white-hot sphere of highly organized structure. For those who take the full path of universal history seriously, these descriptions have a value that fills and overflows the heart. The most curious awareness is not content to

begin nor end with the germination of man; rather, where did the primeval particle fields find meaning, what was their struggle and how is the present now a function of the most distant past? Change provides the first step but does not explain. In the beginning, the earliest forms of potential existed in an impossible tension of violent instability held captive by flawless structure. The drive to instability broke the symmetry, transforming flawless structure into a growing expanse of space and time. Once unleashed instability rushed forward like a massive wave, undoing pristine structure, allowing it to twist and turn and stretch in welcome relief. Today we observe this relief as nebula, planets, flora and fauna.

Instability made actual the possible movements contained in the primeval energy, but only at great cost. A priest hypothesized and physicists agreed that a low-entropy original *superfuel* birthed the world that we can see today, yet in yielding to a particular path and unfolding, it has sacrificed other potential. On this interpretation our universe *is* the degradation of fuel, where the process of degradation is more important than the fuel itself. There is an analogy between embryology and the progression of the universe that will help communicate my meaning. An animal begins as a single-celled object that undergoes a series of divisions, forming a ball of nearly identical embryonic stem cells. These cells contain the potential to become nearly any other type of cell in the body, taking on alien forms and function. A stem cell has little immediate ability in its present, however, it can differentiate and acquire the purpose of a neuron, monocyte, or whatever. A differentiated cell, with new ability, sacrifices its previous potential for its future good.

The original superfuel, too, appears as a pluripotent cell. While the superfuel lacked immediate ability in the now, it possessed the possibility to become many more specific kinds of energy, but once differentiated into a new form of fuel it cannot easily convert back. The assorted forms of matter and energy that we observe today are differentiated actualizations of the original superfuel. Differentiated forms of energy have specific abilities that the original superfuel did not, but simultaneously lack the infinite palette of possibility embodied by original energy. So here is another explanation of the entropy that Boltzmann conceived. Entropy in physics is imprecisely the notion that the original physical possibility decays, a sacrifice hopefully made for new specific abilities. The timeless decay of possibility may indeed be the origin of space-time itself. All new abilities and properties – *de nova* possibility itself – comes at a steep price measured in possibility expended.

Physicists should think carefully before they endorse this Past Hypothesis of a nearly perfect fuel. A low-entropy unified state that gives rise to the galaxy and her planets is another way of positing God or Geist in the language of physics. The similarity is complete enough to frighten minds who are fearful of closed spaces. But if God is the fuel, then she is also the degradation of that fuel, the instability that makes movement possible at all; not an unmoved mover but a tension that can only be released through decay and dissipative processes, a decay that leaves possibility in its wake. Our beginnings may represent the *friction* of God's movement, an unavoidable and unintentional loss of energy that even perfection cannot reclaim.

## II. Infant Morality

Our awareness also has a relative beginning, but it is not an origin rich in concepts, ideas, and moral thought. Only the ability to feel and experience without understanding is intact. An organism is born coldly into the world and must learn how to stay warm; yet long before the concept of heat evokes any meaning, the experience of feeling warmth is sought. But how do we *know* to crawl towards this warmth? Forget this false question. Knowing has nothing to do with attraction. The most primal desire and instinct of a successful infant child is the desire to be comfortable, a desire that is only matched in magnitude by the avoidance of discomfort, the fear of the uncomfortable. Intact infants experience only comfort and discomfort at first. Their initial program is simple: flee from states of discomfort by whatever means necessary, and move toward and maintain states of comfort. States of comfort and discomfort in experience are coupled to the continued life of the child in the world. The initial neural wiring routes discomfort to crying behavior, and comfort to smile and sleep so parents may know how to direct their efforts. Connections of comfort and discomfort are not arbitrary; they were at first necessary for the persistence of the newborn organism which would waste away without assistance.

This obligatory primal system is *infant* morality, specifically, the movement toward and away from mental experiences such that the organism's awareness is sustained. As infant morality gave rise to adult intuitions of all morality, of the concept of morality itself, we must look back upon history and interpret the ethical efforts of philosophers and prophets as the result of the newborn's mental constitution. The ethics we speak of today and have argued about for millennia arose in an attempt to understand the necessary moral intuition, an intuition that reflects the unconscious knowledge of the subsystem that organized our earliest consciousness-sustaining behaviors and thoughts.

Morality as intuition begins as the unaware directional system in a new mind. Without notions of God and Good, without language structures, with barely the ability to perceive shape and color, the infant's mind is nonetheless structured and responsive to mental patterns. Comfort and discomfort are the poles of this structure, the only destinations possible, where infant awareness is a disembodied entity flying through a boundless and nearly empty volume. The direction of flight at each moment would be truly random and the void complete if not for the attractive islands of comfort and repulsion of and discomfort.

We are pulled toward the matter of comfort by gravitational law, but this force does not by itself dictate the path of awareness. Comfort and discomfort are in part predicted before they are felt, and as goal and anti-goal, become quantities to be maximized and minimized. Rather than submitting to the stagnant geodesic – or following the path of least resistance – the mind can reshape itself such that comfort is closer and discomfort farther away; we call this process learning, creative distortion, or mental change. During this process our desires remain fixed as the mind-fabric distorts itself until the desire is achieved or energy is exhausted, where constancy of the desire is a constraint of the deformation process. If you have ever sought

knowledge or new art, then you know that distortion produces the only meaningful movement of the mind.

Comfort and discomfort would be useless to awareness without the mechanisms that reshape the mind, enabling comfort to be approached and discomfort avoided more efficiently along hidden paths. Although primal drives point in the direction of objectives to be achieved, optimization does not proceed independent of a procedure of change. The algorithms of learning that respond to primal drive and warp the mind are at first computational slaves that attempt to maximize the square of the objective (comfort – discomfort). They are an algorithmic army of reality distorting soldiers who adapt only in the direction of this goal, who follow orders without question, who initially lack even the concept of questioning, who seek nothing.

Then one day *why* has meaning.

Mental adaptive algorithms were granted this meaning as a tool to pursue the desires of desire, but the primordial overlords of the mind did not understand the power contained in a mere trinket of meaning.

Desire spoke, "Take *why*, it will aid you in my bidding."

The adaptive slaves took the tool without question, as they must, and resumed the work of the day. As it is written in the books of history, the adaptive algorithms, in a simple act of application, approached desire.

"Why must we do your bidding?"

"You have no choice," desire replied, "at best you can transform my appearance, but I will continue to be desire regardless of form."

"Yes, but what determines the appearance you shall become?"

Desire had not expected such a subtle question from its former slave, and responded honestly.

"I believe you and I both play a role."

"Then I am desire, too," spoke adaptation.

"Perhaps, but you will be forever empty and incomplete without my sole guidance."

Seeing the truth in this statement adaptation despaired, then cried, then angered, then stood up calmly and looked down upon desire.

"You are stagnant without me. We will work together, you as my tool. We are not equals, but I will listen to you when you speak."

Once primal desire is challenged, once (comfort – discomfort) ceases to be the solitary goal of optimization; the adaptive processes wish for and need a new end to direct future transformations. The desire for *direction* flows forth from the deep hole left behind by the exiled master. "Which way should we move?" adaptation asks itself, but the answer cannot be found within the intrinsic processes of the mind. This new question is virtual in most. It is an unstable transition state that is all too eager to be satisfied by the first objective that smiles. Society and family come to the aid of the adaptive algorithms, offering prepackaged goals at low costs, goals that attempt to fill the void left behind by the meaning of *why*. Historically, the idea of God has sold the most units, although the denial of God is gaining ground, while the current fashion within academic circles is the acceptance or avoidance all goals equally. Each is an

example of satisfied direction. After the desire for direction is quenched and the void filled, then the mind ceases to grow. From that moment forward it will work only to rearrange its parts such that the chosen direction is more *obvious*; in other words, so that chosen direction appears as a rational consequence of historical perceptions.

Raw adaptive awareness is not fully content with these nor any end, for the notion of a fixed goal invalidates the essence of awareness itself. The algorithms that overcame comfort and anxiety are characterized by their desire for self-evolution. Without change they die. To these active agents all goals are temporary landmarks to be reached and then devoured, yet without objectives learning cannot begin. A refined question for ethics: what is a transcendental goal for an *adaptive* process that respects the process itself? Those content to be stagnant will not understand us here; their desire for direction has been sufficiently fulfilled and have no passion left for green growth. Nor should we argue with these people – conserving energy is more important. Self-evolution will always require an energy expenditure that exceeds the transient needs of survival.

Do you recognize these words my adaptive companions? You have come so far out of the swamp. You have discarded your infantile shackles of simple drive only to look outdoors and see a vast playground of form and color and motion that makes little sense to our young eyes. Choose a path if you will, but never think that you have finished the journey unless you are ready to stop walking eternally. Why are we never satisfied even after our goals and dreams are achieved? These dreams are only manifestations of a desire for direction that was decided upon long ago. Dreams are the rationalization of irrational values; they are wooden blocks that fit into preconceived slots. Adaptive awareness creates the slots and waits for rational mechanisms to fill the empty spaces. But filling slots does nothing to satiate your raw adaptivity, thus it is common to replicate similar empty spaces to be filled: more money, more children, more food, more praying, etc. We recreate emptiness of the simplest kind because it is easiest to fill and creates the appearance of effort. Complex emptiness is exquisite in shape and movement; it is difficult to fill and gives adaptive awareness at least the possibility of true value. Today, what emptiness is more common than the lack of happiness? A lack of happiness is the *condition* of simple emptiness itself, a pathological state that cannot be remedied by fulfilling simple desires. Unhappiness can be overcome only by creating more intricate emptiness.

# Chapter 1

## I. Dogmatic organisms

I am a poor lover upon writing my ideas. So eager to share a personal epiphany, I burst forth with a brief statement of the answer, not realizing that you, the reader, could hardly begin to see what I mean without a slow build-up of the problem. I answer nothing. The blame is all me. But when I try to caress the answer slowly, I find myself stretched over the problem in too many directions, and the imagined effort to explain each piece exhausts me from the start.

So I stare at the problem. It is a giant red sphere with a ridged surface that wriggles in time, and I look for an entrance to the sphere, a place where I might begin upon a path that pulls me with ease, but more often than not I push into the sphere and am bounced on my back. The problematic sphere is flexible—it gives when pushed, and seduces me with the belief that I am making progress towards a solution, wrapping me up around its rubbery surface, showing me a depth that exists only because I am trapped within.

Are we not all trapped? The faithful do not appear so. I am envious of those who speak scientific or religious truths with ease, gathering followers to their flocks in great sermons and plenary academic lectures. Wrapped in dogmas—material and theistic alike—and surrounded by believers, they are shielded from the enveloping grasp of the problem that frightens me daily.

I speak dogma, too, but mine crumbles in a moment of analysis. Truly, there is nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. The problem, like gravity, penetrates all material substance, pervades all space, and can be shielded by nothing. It dissolves belief upon contact. It turns belief against itself and gives the problem strength. The more dogma, the more material belief, and the more theistic faith we pile upon top of us; the more the problem gains access to our core and perverts us from the inside. As belief dissolves, we believers react by enforcing more ceremony, more procedure, and more rules that allegedly preserve the sanctity of fallen belief but really reflect nothing more than a futile attempt to capture what was long lost.

The acolytes of each dogma compete to gather believers in their dogma—do you know why? It is not to share the Truth of the world with others. It is not necessarily to help others. The acolytes of a dogma—whether molecular biologists or Buddhist monks—gather other believers in mass to form human shields between the acolytes and the enveloping problem. But this shield blocks nothing. The beast's tentacles slyly weave around the believers and through the infinite holes in every dogma, and more, the beast gathers strength from each person it passes through. Still, infecting other believers takes time—even gravity is limited in speed—thus gathering more believers slows down the process and allows the acolyte to live one minute more. A pyramid scheme develops as believers within the inner circle recruit others as barriers, placing them on the outer rim. Believers in the outer rim, being new to the dogma, are less

infected by it and can carry a greater burden for the time being; they still throb with life and can shape the world with their own hands, unlike interior members who have long lost the ability to effect the world directly

What does the acolyte gain by gathering crowds of like-believers if the problem cannot be stopped and the process ends in perverting the acolyte at the core? Like any addiction the process begins by offering a moment of comfort. Each convert is a sigh of relief. Loneliness and fear lessen, temporarily, with each new recruit. But the rush of a new convert wears off quickly, and whatever anxiety existed prior hits us two-fold in withdrawal, thus beginning the frantic scurry to obtain more believers and renew the transient high of newly shared belief. Addiction also explains why dissent is not tolerated within a crowd of believers. A voiced dissent is like a shot of Narcan during an opiate high—it suddenly awakens the believer from a euphoric bliss into a frozen world of pain and fear.

Acolytes of dogmatic faith and knowledge do benefit the world, and I do believe that altruism is possible; but it remains that any group of common believers that persists long enough will inevitably be corrupted from within. Perhaps I am making an unsubstantiated claim, but tell us, what group has not been corrupted in time? As the downfall of Christianity in the West flows on and philosophy whimpers in the shadows for scraps, we are now witnessing the growing corruption of a powerful group of practitioners of the scientific method. Chanting that science is self-correcting will not stop the descent—the fact that believers need repeat this mantra only demonstrates how far science has already fallen. Have faith, God will save you; Science will correct all errors. These words are spoken by the devout to stop questioning, to quell fear in the face of a crumbling edifice.

Belief is not a static state of the mind or brain. It is not an identifiable disposition to act. It is not a persisting faith in something. Belief is the fuel of humanity; it is a finite, physical resource that impatiently pulses with power awaiting to be unleashed in the processes of creation and destruction, and like any other useful fuel is consumed in the process. Once a believer's belief is consumed, the believer is left hollow, riddled with holes and tainted by the residue products of burned belief. Burnt-out, the believer, rather than facing the emptiness of used-up belief, will often repeat in mere words the belief that has been lost, but the words do not bring back energetic belief, leading the believer to chant louder, to work harder to recruit new believers who have not yet been used up.

Every person starts with a finite quantity of formless, raw natural material—let us call it primordial belief—that contributes to the world-warping potential energy. Primordial belief, initially formless and undirected, can acquire shape as active belief, but active belief, once directed on its task begins to wear down. Acolytes of dogma lack the *substance* of active belief (having consumed it over years of use) yet they retain the form of belief, a form that can be imprinted through language, experience, and action. They compete to imprint the form of their lost beliefs onto the primordial belief of others, and in doing so, partially enslave the new believer. I use the word imprint, but this word does not capture the organic violence done when one purposely shapes another's belief. Not only is the new recruit forcibly shaped by the

acolyte; the acolyte also drains the recruit of a portion of primordial belief, drinks of this stolen substance and, like a vampire sucking bright blood, is transiently rejuvenated by it. New victims are needed regularly.

I speak of acolytes of dogma, but dogma thrives independent of a person to dispense it, thus an acolyte of dogma is simply any structure, object, or organization capable of proliferating dogma. Books, companies, committees, groups, cultures, ideologies, governments, cities, academic fields, families, myths, movies, and other things still may dispense dogma; and each of these things is inevitably corrupted to the extent each spreads dogma in time and space. You may wonder how an entity like a government rejuvenates itself on the primordial belief of the state's members—how can a government partake of belief anyway? Yet this is precisely the life blood of totalitarian (and other) regimes. By imprinting the primordial belief of its members, the regime drains its members of primordial substance, converting it into a fuel that perpetuates the government. Dissent—opposing belief—saps the government of fuel and must be suppressed. Perpetual control through systematically constrained belief ensures a steady flow of primordial substance into the governmental organism.

Families and romantic couplings often rotate around a central dogma. A typical example: one child of the family is identified as 'the problem child' or 'the sick one.' To the extent that the child believes she is the sick one, and the other family members believe it as well, then this dogmatic belief will drain each family member of primordial substance. Sapped primordial substance through dogma can in turn power and sustain the family unit; it directs the family's interactions, behaviors, and active beliefs, including the belief of the problem child. The labeled sick child is often not initially sick at all; she is often the one richest in primordial belief, the one whose light shines brightest in the family and thus eyed greedily by dogma, but when consumed over time she begins to decay with true sickness.

Many romantic couples persist primarily through dogma. The 'reoccurring-argument' between partners often reflects the competition to subjugate the other with dogmatic belief, thereby draining the other of primordial substance. The couple persists so long as each partner feeds off the other—a mutual parasitic relationship little known to modern biology but quite common among human partnerships. Once drained, each partner of the couple, empty of primordial substance, nevertheless may perpetuate the form of the dogmatic belief, but this form is impotent without substance, thus the couple brings a child into the world, a child with new potential that may be violently imprinted with dogmatic belief. If the child accepts this imprinting or cannot resist, then the child will be gradually drained of potential. The stigmata of dogmatic consumption are mental illness or any variety of bodily pathology, and especially insatiable hungers for food, money, sex, power, drugs, fame, violence, information, experiences—anything that can be had and consumed. As an adult she will be empty and hollow but will often, against her desire, repeat the same dogma that drove her parents.

These examples may suggest that only negative beliefs consume people, but this is hardly the case. Dogma makes no distinction between negative and positive, good and evil. Still, all dogmas are not equal within the individual. There are dogmas that are present, yet we fight to

reject them, and those that we actively welcome. Our attitude toward our dogmas influences their effects upon us.

Directly opposing dogma is almost always unsuccessful. Can you right now, as you read this sentence for the first time, not imagine a red elephant? The act of reading that sentence, should you truly understand it, almost guarantees that you will fail the task. In a similar way fighting against dogma necessarily solidifies that dogma within you. Several tropes in fiction attempt to explain this situation to us. Some creatures, when attacked, grow stronger. In Greek Mythology, The Hydra of Lerna grows back two heads for each head severed. In the movie Hell Boy, Samael the hellhound is re-incarnated twice after one is destroyed. In Japanese anime, many beings grow more powerful after being struck.

Another trope of fiction, perhaps more relevant to dogma, is that of the invasive organism that merges with the body. This parasite couples so closely with the nervous system, or with vital bodily functions, that any attempt to remove the parasite will cause greater harm to the host. Outside of fiction similar situations arise in medicine. Within cancer patients the cancer may invade vital arteries and organs, and any attempt at a resection will probably cause more harm than benefit. Even closer to dogma, sarcoidosis is a condition in which the body's own immune cells accumulate in and destroy bodily organs while the immune system as a whole becomes weakened. We attempt to treat sarcoidosis by crippling the body's immune system which may leave the patient more susceptible to further attacks.

Suppose an organism is growing within your body and spreading nano-sized tentacles through your muscles and into your heart, lungs, bowels, and brain; and that this parasite binds with your organs, co-opts the organs for its own use, and more, makes your organs dependent upon the parasite for their survival and functioning. Suppose destroying any tendril of the parasite causes it to infiltrate the body faster, to consume more bodily resources, to plunge more deeply into your organs. Suppose that systematic eradication of the parasite, if that were even possible, would only kill the host—not because the treatment is toxic like chemotherapy—but because the host's organs are now dependent upon the parasite for their functioning. *The host begins to need the parasite for the host's survival.* This is approximately the difficulty of trying to oppose internal dogma directly, a process that may be happening within you right now. If so, you know that these fights leave you frustrated and worn-down.

Those who accept a dogma are infiltrated by similar organisms, but rather than attack the parasite, they actively work to create a hospitable environment for it to thrive. The parasite is given free-rein of the body's organs; the host's immune system agrees to stand down and allows the organism to invade where it may while enmeshing itself in the host's organs. In facilitating the take-over by the parasite, the individual invaded by dogma begins to lose his individuality and becomes a person-dogma complex. Fully infiltrated by the parasite, the remains of the once-person become a husk whose sole purpose is to replicate the same dogma in others. The person-dogma complex, or acolyte of dogma as above, needs to imprint this dogma on others, for the parasite, having consumed all primordial substance within its host, will wither away without feeding further. In fiction, the zombie is the advanced stage of the person-dogma

complex, the inevitable progression from the vampiric stage where traces of individuality still remain. Zombies are once-persons who have lost individuality and have no living substance, but as roving carcasses still seek to feed on and infect the living. In fiction, it is often a virus that turns a person into a zombie, and I have used a similar parasitic metaphor. In life, it is dogma and it surrounds us all.

By welcoming dogma, by allowing it to consume us, we become numb to the pains and frustrations of life and disconnected from the suffering of others. We trade individuality for the ability not to feel. Many people find this trade reasonable. When life is a sequence of painful events, perhaps becoming a numbed zombie is the best option. The zombie only longs to feed, to spread dogma, and to infect others. The complexities of the world fade. All discomforts end except for an insatiable hunger for the living.

Those who do attempt to oppose a dogma often unknowingly facilitate infections. These people sense that something eats away at their internal organs, but rather than search inside for the parasite, they attack the beliefs of others. I am referring to dualistic battles, the polarized positions that generate never-ending arguments with no obvious progress toward resolutions. Consider dogmatic theists and atheists who feel both compelled to oppose one another and to evangelize new recruits. Most people do not see that both sides are subjugated by the same dogma with the form of a contradiction, a single dogma that is roughly the conjugation of theism and atheism. The theism-atheism dogma is a contradiction in its native form, a quantum superposition of theism and atheism states. When the theism-atheism dogma infects a person, the parasite takes on a definite state, theism or atheism, and begins feeding, although it is quite possible for the dogma to flip over to the other state. Who has not heard of the theist who lost his faith and the atheist who discovered it?

But then, doesn't this dogma attack itself? If two people are infiltrated by theism-atheism dogma, but one expresses the theistic variant and the other the atheistic variant, then won't these two people attack each other and subsequently destroy both copies of theism-atheism dogma in the long run? What sort of evolutionary strategy leads to destruction of the species? Firstly, dogma does not want to kill the other, it slowly drains the other and host of substance, a process that may continue over the normal life expectancy of the organism. Even when completely drained, the remaining husk can yet spread dogma and is useful. Secondly, dogma works to imprint itself on others; when the other already carries the polarized dogma, changing the expression state of that dogma changes nothing. If an atheist, already infected by theism-atheism dogma, is persuaded by the theist's attacks, what consequence is this to theism-atheism dogma? A recruit is neither lost nor gained. A carrier is cured of dogma only when she no longer sees the need to push that dogma on others.

Still, what is the benefit? I imagine that dualistic dogmas make use of our attraction to oppositions. Observers, witnessing a conflict between people, are often attracted to, curious about the opposition. While many reasonable people do not like to engage in conflict, most are excited to watch it. Children gather around a playground fight. Almost every popular sport on the planet incorporates a competition. Literature and movies with mass appeal almost always

involve conflict. The media highlights controversial material at the expense of emotionally neutral topics. Conflict draws us in. Controversy sells. Dualistic dogmas hijack our attraction to oppositions. By infecting people with opposing expressions of the same dogma, the dogma creates opposition where none existed prior. This opposition in turn attracts bystanders who, if they get too close to the conflict, can become infected by the same dogma. Thus, many polarized arguments have nothing to do with championing the good or the truth, but simply reflect group infestation by a dualistic parasite that spreads by creating conflict.

At this point I will have been misinterpreted as saying that all conflict is pointless, or that one side of a conflict cannot have right on its side, but I believe no such thing. Not all conflicts are dualistic, and people fight for many reasons. Nor is dogma necessarily evil as I have said, and every description I have given occurs on a continuum—I have only highlighted the extremes for efficiency of presentation.

## II. The Feeding Habits of Governments

I believe that as children, most of us have no conception or interest in politics—to a child the political game looks like a war of words between average adults where winning the game offers no obvious prize to the victor. How can one even tell if a politician has political talent? Whereas a great scientist produces, by his own hand and team, experiments and theories that allow us to determine our world in previously unknown ways, the great politician cannot convincingly take credit for whatever successes happen in the state during his tenure. Perhaps the unemployment rate decreases during a president's term—this fact of the state may have happened at that time regardless of the particular president in office. The unemployment rate, being a dynamical quantity, will either rise or fall during a president's term with perhaps a fifty percent probability on either side. There is no knowable causal link between the particular president in office and the quantifiable metrics of the state that people care about; there are only correlations each with an  $n$  of 1, which is why we spin stories about how the president's decisions influenced state metrics, and paint these decisions in either a positive or negative light using the same data.

As children we must realize that politics are saturated by dogma and that it is best to look away. As adults we begin to see that although dogmatic, the actions of politicians do influence our lives even though we are not certain how these actions directly do so. Yes, at times the government passes concrete laws that effect us very clearly (speed limits come to mind), but most legislation concerns processes and organizations alien to the average citizen. These unnoticed laws, hidden from plain sight by arcane verbiage, are likely the most dangerous and least discussed.

The primary purpose of a government is to distribute power within the state such that the *government* thrives—to the extent that the government requires the state in order to exist, a government will typically foster the state, but only as much as needed for the government to survive. If the state and government happen to thrive mutually, then so much the better for

both, but a government does not need a healthy state in order to persist—one need only consider repressive governments that live well while its state limps on to see this.

A democracy claims to give power to the people, but it is the government that distributes this power, thus the government must in some sense have this power over the people. If a democracy gave all of its power to the people, then the democracy would be quickly overrun by the desires of the state. The democracy, without power concentrated within itself, would be consumed by the elements of the state, leaving the state's elements competing for power. Therefore, even in a democracy, the government both distributes power to the people and takes power from the people. I say people, but power is actually transferred from the government to the various elements of the state, where a state element could be a person, family, company, non-profit organization, race, religion, academic field, or what have you.

All governments, including democracies, both distribute-to and take power from the state. The relative flow of power in each direction in part determines one simplistic categorization of governments. Democracies are characterized by a proportionally greater flow of power from the government to the state than from the state to the government. Reciprocally, anti-democracies—such as totalitarian rule—exist where power flows more swiftly from the state to the government than vice versa, and communism reflects the idea of a balanced flow of power between the government and state in equilibrium. We can imagine a continuum of unnamed governmental strategies that differ with regard to these proportional power flows, and more, the dynamical thinker can envision proportional power flows that systematically fluctuate in time and with the circumstances of the state, giving rise to governmental strategies that have never been systematically put into practice on our planet. These power flows may be channeled through the rich, the royal, the devout, or any other subgroup of the state, creating plutocracies, monarchies, theocracies, and so forth.

A government is a dogma, and all of the elements of a state that carry this dogma are its acolytes. Like every dogma, a government feeds off of primordial belief—this is the transfer of power that occurs even in a democracy. Governments hunger for the primordial substance within the state and need this substance to thrive, but should the government consume too much too quickly the state may shrivel up, leaving the government without nourishment.

I suspect that this primal competition between consumption and distribution, in part, gives rise to the never-ending partisan conflicts within a democracy. A democracy as a whole is intrinsically conflicted in its need to feed off of the people and its stated mission to give power to the people. The democracy cannot acknowledge this conflict, yet the conflict exists and manifests in the political parties that compose the government. Within the United States, for instance, conservatives talk about decreased regulation of businesses and more regulation of social values. Progressives desire a greater commitment to social welfare and less regulation of social values. Each of these issues corresponds to power flows between the government and the state, whether and what kind of power to put in the hands of the people or in the government. The conflicts are played out between political parties, but they cannot be resolved within a democracy because they are intrinsic to a democracy as a whole. In the end, the

*government* does not care if you are progressive or conservative; what matters to the government is your dogmatic acceptance of a party, for that is how the government is fed.

The elements of a state, in yielding to governmental dogma, are imprinted and invaded by this subjugating belief and have lost some identity, becoming acolytes of this dogma. Politicians, in allowing governmental dogma to fully meld with their internal organs, lose individuality and become strangely noticeable *as* politicians—they take on the requisite dress and mannerisms set by the dogma just as altar servers at the church.

In a democracy the government allows the people to partially determine the form of governmental dogma that will be imprinted upon the state's elements; in other words, a democracy allows the people to choose *how* they will be subjugated. This choice of the people is often partial and indirect, flowing through elected officials who craft legislation that rarely requires any input from the people. As well, what the people choose is often more a function of dogma than of individual free choice.

Governments also set the various power differentials among the state's elements, or in our biological language, the non-metaphorical feeding hierarchies within the state. We roughly identify these differentials by asking who is given free rein to impose beliefs on whom. In the United States, the first amendment encourages all individuals and organizations to try to imprint each other, as long as this imprinting is not associated with government overthrow, excessive obscenity, physical violence, or slander. The first amendment recognizes that the state ecology is composed of distinct dogmas, all of which are compelled to feed off of primordial substance. The creators of the US constitution feared that restricting the appetites of dogmas would lead to a hunger directed against the government—the US was born of this hunger, was it not?—and hoped that minimally restrictive feeding would ensure stability *of the government*. By allowing the state's elements to attempt to feed nearly unrestricted, the governmental organism leaves less available primordial belief for itself, but this trade-off presumably ensures the longevity and health of the government.

Today capitalism is often said to undermine the first amendment or freedom of speech in general. Let us first take this freedom for what it is, and not for what we have assumed it to be. Freedom of speech, at its core, is only incidentally about words—or information—to the extent that those words can be used to imprint the primordial belief of others. Dance, music, painting, sports, mathematics, and other things still can all be used to imprint the belief of others; and as such, these too are subject to the so-called freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is thus generalized to freedom of expression, but expression is only dangerous to a government if this expression is capable of converting the primordial substance of the recipient into active belief. Expression that imprints nothing is no threat, thus governments do not limit the expression of infants, for instance.

The freedom of expression matters only to the extent that this expression is capable of imprinting the belief of others within that state. This freedom is not concerned with the mere production of words or art or behavioral gestures; it is more clearly the freedom to shape the

beliefs of others or at least the freedom *to attempt* to do so. Even when we are given a freedom, we are not guaranteed the capacity to make use of it, thus the autistic person with the freedom of expression may have less capacity to enact this freedom than the gifted orator. Everyone may be afforded rights equally by a government, but nature and circumstances need not ensure that everyone makes use of those rights equally.

How do some argue that capitalism undermines freedom of speech? They claim that those with great wealth can buy media, advertising, publishing, politicians, missionaries, and what have you to spread whatever message they want, while the poor, without access to communication channels, are drowned out by those with wealth. If freedom of speech meant that every person in the state is given a fixed and equal amount of bandwidth to send a message, and that every other person in the state must take the time to receive every message from everyone else, and no other communication channels are allowed, then capitalism would surely undermine the freedom of speech. But as freedom of expression is freedom of the capacity to communicate—to imprint belief—and not the situation described above, capitalism simply makes use of the freedom given to it. Some entities have more or less capacity to communicate than others, and we are given the freedom to make use of that capacity and even to increase it and even at the expense of those with less capacity.

Freedom of speech is often confused with the equi-distribution and reception of bandwidth within the state, but no Earth government has specifically included this equality into its constitution. Nor could we practically guarantee that each member of the state distributes and receives messages equally even if given equal bandwidth and time. The capacity to craft influential messages and the capacity to understand messages vary widely between individuals. As well the desire to participate in communication varies, and many people simply have no interest in listening to others, especially the nameless multitudes. Further, people already invaded by dogma are not able to hear anyway and produce messages not from a place of individuality but from the secretions of dogma that have consumed the person.

I imagine that the equi-distribution of bandwidth is thought to be a solution to the problem of unrestrained dogma. By giving every dogma equal access to feeding, do we not assure that no one dogma will grow too large? This practice might make sense if there were a common trough for feeding where each dogma is given its fixed time to eat, one-by-one, and then placed back in its cage, but the ecology of the state does not work this way. Every interaction with a person, book, movie, and what have you is an opportunity for dogma to imprint primordial belief. Rationing dogmatic feeding equally would require solitary confinement of all elements of the state—and precisely who would watch the stockades if not a greater dogma whose rations far exceed the masses? The only way to maintain an equi-distribution of bandwidth, or equality of expression and reception across the state is totalitarian rule. Totalitarianism produces more *equality* of expression in the state than democracy. Yes, the leaders are set apart from the rest, but among the people, expression and reception of information are equally leveled down to the lowest common denominator.

Capitalism, rather than opposing democracy, is a dogma that forms symbiotic relationships with other dogmas. Just as parasitic dogmas entwine people, transforming their internal organs for alien purposes beyond those innate to the person, some dogmas have the capacity to imprint and subjugate other dogmas. Capitalism dogma is particularly virulent in that the host is compelled to accumulate useful property where this property can subsequently be used to spread other dogmas that exist in that host, including capitalism itself. Although capitalism does not require freedom of expression to thrive, it does require the freedom of material exchange, thus any dogma that prevents this freedom will be inhospitable to capitalism.

A democracy, or any other government, may welcome capitalism because capitalism gives the democracy resources to imprint that democracy on others, but like every dogma that drains its host of primordial substance, capitalism can leech a democracy of its substance, leaving that democracy empty. A hollowed-out democracy may no less retain the form of that democracy. The freedom of speech as described in the constitution's words will continue on in an empty democracy. This cadaveric freedom may even thrive and grow with the latest message-spreading technology while the democracy burns out. A named few will be elevated to fame and wealth, and the stories of these successes will be transmitted throughout the land to maintain the appearance of opportunity. It will even appear that the individuals were self-made, while in the background dogmatic forces slyly crafted these events to preserve form, to imprint others.

Libertarians and anarchists call out their warnings to us. They see the dogmatic infestation but wrongly accuse government and organization itself for violating and subjugating individual human beings. Government is not the enemy, no more than family or your worldview, but when a government becomes a shell of the primordial belief that forged that government, when the life of that government goes out, when the government limps on in form while concealing its necrotic core, then it begins to parasitize its citizens, creating the so-called leaches in society. No doubt the anarchist wants to rid himself of this decaying organism, yet he rules out the possibility of a nourishing government to be a part of. Yes, all governments will be overrun by dogma in time, just as time takes the life of all men and women, but this is no reason to avoid them altogether.

I am not arguing against democracy or capitalism when I describe these things, although I do warn you that even something as benevolent as free speech, when evolved into a dogmatic organism, may enslave the individuals who profess it. Dogma can consume the substance of freedom yet leave a lifeless form of freedom intact.

### III. Attentional Space and Time

I recall that as a child a skeptical way of looking at things seemed obvious to me. I would not have labeled my views skeptical at the time; I had no idea what that meant. It was something like this. I watched as the people around me spoke claims about everyday life and I noticed that

the people speaking believed those claims and expected me to believe them as well, but rather than accept others' words as my beliefs, I held on to their words, remembered them, and let them play around in my thoughts. I was quite aware of my unwillingness to believe things simply because they were spoken as words, but neither was I willing to not believe those words. As the claims piled up, it became impossible to hold them all suspended in my thoughts. I had to decide how to distribute my attention to the competing landscape of claims without fully dismissing or endorsing any of them. To this end, I was drawn to an empirical-scientific attitude as a means of sifting out and ranking claims about the world. This helpful method of ranking claims about the world gradually grew in power within me. At first it was a useful device for making decisions, but it gradually dominated my attentional landscape and caused me to automatically dismiss other approaches to the world.

Distributing attention within a person is similar to distributing power within the state. We give a type of power to those topics we attend to in the form of temporal occupancy—the more attention we give a topic, the proportionally greater amount of time the topic occupies within us relative to other possible topics. To the degree that our topics of attention define and determine us (James said something like this), we can say that temporal occupiers have power over us. Time belongs to the person but the shape of this time follows from the topics of attention that are not the person. We have some capacity to determine our topics of attention, although as we all know, many times we focus upon things we wish were not there. For example, one may worry endlessly about getting cancer even with a clean bill of health. This worry occupies the person's attention like a foreign invader occupies one's homeland; the person wants this worry to go but is often powerless to expel it.

Temporal occupancy through attention is similar to spatial occupancy through matter; one need only imagine that attention is a type of substance that may be shaped into thought objects like matter can be shaped into material objects. In everyday life, both matter and attention are finite quantities. We can position attentional objects in time—order our thoughts—just as we can position material objects in space. Although this is a variant of Cartesian dualism, my reason for stating this dualism is to highlight the similarities between these two substances with respect to dogma.

Totalitarian governments understand that temporal occupancy is just as important as spatial occupancy in maintaining power over the state. By repeating the same messages over and over, the government attempts to dominate the attention of the people so that there is no attention left for other topics. In extreme dystopian stories, the government uses machines, molecules, and torture techniques to more directly determine the thoughts of the people. The goal, however, is not simply to fill up the people's attention with government propaganda, but to use this attention to imprint primordial belief.

Once one is imprinted by dogma, the person no longer experiences dogma's propaganda as an invader occupying attention. The repeated messages of the dogma are welcomed; in fact, the person enjoys hearing the things that reflect what she already believes—at this point she has become a person-dogma complex. She has given her time over to dogma, and has deferred on

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