

(18th May 2022)

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KNOWLEDGE, REASON AND REALITY, ASSIGNMENT 2

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ESSAY

This is an interesting piece of work that reveals a clear engagement with a wide range of reading materials. There is a large degree of individuality apparent in your treatment of the material & no way has your material approached the essay question. However, the links to the essay question tend to get sidetracked in places amongst your other discussions and say sometimes more quietly & drawing to focus on no question, drawing explicitly on no more frequently. The reader would want a more highly structured argument. By contrast, this is a well prepared, interesting & maintained work.

akin to the Kantian principle of the Enlightenment to dare to use one's reason, and in the belief of the mind to transform the world in light of this reason—are productive in the sense that they do not distinguish so firmly where the line should be drawn between art, literature, subjectivity, value, and, opinion and the more strict “scientific” methods of science—seeing each as complementary and being more able to understand the subjectivity in scientific thinking as well as being more robust in building scientific systems of subjectivity. The rehabilitation and recognition of this type of thinking as productive, is a point that much of science and more purportedly subjective disciplines need to recognize in their shared heritage, which once realized, I think, only superficially dichotomized the cultural and the scientific spheres into a radical schism and opposition. Goethe, incidentally, seemed much at home in scientific as well as cultural studies and his aesthetic as well as disposition suggests an interrelationship and co-formation of shared methods and observation being both rational and at the same time subjective and dependent upon each other; Berkeley states this observation more systematically—a central part of his work, in *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* and his *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* by arguing for the sole existence of a subjective perception of the world, known as idealism, while denying that there is a separate independent and non-conscious material world that can be inferred from consciousness (our only means by which to argue anything, including materialism); consequently, Berkeley's argument, and similar idealisms such as Hegel's—as found most famously in his *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and implicit in much of his other works—which I will not find it necessary to belabor, are distant from, opposed to, and are fundamentally characterized and differ from the bare materialist assumptions found in other materialist antecedents. This include but are not limited to, of course, those found in, Thomas Hobbes, Bacon, and later Diderot then Marx in dialectical materialism (incorrectly inferred as a consequence of the Hegelian dialectic) and implicit (before Diderot and Marx) in the whole

scientific revolution (Copernicus (b. 1473), Galileo (b. 1564), Newton (b. 1643) etc.)
often times or more recently in Dennett (see *Consciousness Explained*), and Quine (see the
essay "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"); they are found in more mixed forms in say the
functionalism of Fodor or the dualism of Searle, or earlier contemporaneous with Quine in
Carnap (see the essay "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology"); they are also inherent within
the other logical positivists (philosophers: Ayer, Neurath, Schlick) and scientist Godel—some
twenty or so primary members in the "Vienna Circle" in addition to others, systematically
promoting a scientific worldview expressed notably in the programmatic outline of their
worldview by Neurath, Hahn, and Schlick, in "The Scientific Conception of the World. The
Vienna Circle". In any case, suffice it to say there is a large historical following of
philosophers and scientists primarily promoting and/or involved with material concerns. One
of my main concerns, as specified prior in this essay, will be to located and to differentiate
these material approaches from, from my preferred approaches found in the "idealism"
present in the mixed interactionism and idealism of Hegel, Cassirer, Berkeley, Heraclitus and
so forth. Unfortunately, Hegel, however, and Heraclitus are the only thinkers that I could
afford to go into in an essay of this length. But my argument, if extended, and relying on the
prior knowledge and intellectual imagination of the reader, should I think be found to apply
and be relevant too much of continental thinking more broadly and constitute a critique and
reformulation of science more generally. I leave it to the reader to determine for themselves
whether I have succeeded in this undertaking and to supply the necessary corrections, scrutiny
and additions as will be found to be wanting in what can only be an incomplete, though I
think largely correct if not suggestive characterization of these issues.

As I was saying earlier, Heraclitus not only embodies the principle of flux in his
perspective but also the *logos*, etymologically meaning "reason" or "plan" and often
associated with "divine reason implicit in the cosmos", "giving it form or meaning"

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assumptions. Let me explain. Our coined dual term phraseology of "hylomorphic" for instance, as talked about in a book I read some of, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, written by Rorty. Such is fundamental to Descartes' dualism, for instance, which Rorty is criticizing as mirroring nature. I'm more a Berkeleyan myself, but by entertaining the idea of "dualism" and the other possibility "eliminative materialism" or what I have called "strict materialism" which is also another term for this I notice what appears to be a basic fatal irony in this materialism, one in fact which I have noticed earlier on, namely, that without this mirroring relationship of dualism, without the "hylomorphically representative" relationship of a hylomorphic representative, materialism would in fact be impossible to confirm owing to the reliance on empirical methods that require a conscious person to read, look at, and interpret the data. To state again, more simply, consciousness would be needed to confirm the existence of matter in order, quoting myself, 'read, look at, and interpret the data' which was necessary to notice the existence of atoms molecules and so on. It can't be, therefore, argued that consciousness doesn't exist. So, in a sense strict materialism is self-refuting. This has several implications for the discussion of flux and how Heraclitus's dual emphasis on flux and *logos* avoids this rather simple but perhaps difficult to realize because of its simplicity, objectionable metaphysical and epistemic trap. As I will discuss, and as restated more specifically as compared to earlier, Hegel's and Cassirer's analysis and interplay of a consciousness directed towards different forms in matter, as forms of consciousness (world historical and cultural) as a species of "hylomorphism", will benefit through this assessment, whereas the various tenets that propose that only matter exists will find it difficult to support their contention for the reasons mentioned so far, as I will go on to demonstrate later in the paper. For now, I will turn to an imputed quote of Heraclitus' according to the doxographical tradition in relation to a key point regarding the differentiation between the profane and

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itself in accepting the idea of change (in perception, sensation, etc.) and stabilizing in stillness one's soul, while ignoring these changes by accepting and coming to peace with the idea that things change, which can then be used to direct the understanding of the mind from the soul.

Hegel's *The Science of Logic* makes this key distinction when comparing a

specification of existence within the underlying "unity of opposites", as such, "The principles of the metaphysical philosophy gave rise to the belief that, when cognition lapsed into contradictions, it was a mere accidental aberration, due to some subjective mistake in

argument and inference." (Hegel, Marxists.org) According to Kant, however, thought has a natural tendency to issue in contradictions or antinomies, whenever it seeks to apprehend

the infinite. We have in the latter part of the above paragraph referred to the philosophical importance of the antinomies of reason, and shown how the recognition of their existence

helped largely to get rid of the rigid dogmatism of the metaphysic of understanding, and to direct attention to the dialectical movement of thought. But here too Kant, as we must add,

never got beyond the negative result that the thing-in-itself is unknowable, and never

penetrated to the discovery of what the antinomies really and positively mean. That true and positive meaning of the antinomies is this: that every actual thing involves a coexistence of

opposed elements. Consequently to know, or, in other words, to comprehend an object is

equivalent to being conscious of it as a concrete unity of opposed determinations. The old

metaphysic, as we have already seen, when it studied the objects of which it sought a

metaphysical knowledge, went to work by applying categories abstractly and to the exclusion

of their opposites." (Hegel, Marxists.org) The meaning of what Hegel's says here should be

clear in light of our on-going explication of the concept of opposites as unity of opposites,

which is closely connected to the idea of *logos*. This quote by Hegel also situates and clarifies

the caution of the simplistic application through predication of universal metaphysical

concepts to the sphere of metaphysical life, that sphere of becoming or change (Heraclitean

as flux). Such definitional and simplicities merely vaguely distort the underlying "Dialectical

movement of thought" captured as it was in the corresponding idea of *logos*: reason,

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therefore, becomes impossible if we merely substitute ontological terms of specification which are merely redundant, definitional, and non-apposite, in the metaphysical or dialectical process of becoming: thusly clarified they merely impeded the movement of thought or cast a veil, that is, they obfuscate the proper movement of thought in relation to being; the unity of opposites becomes an essential leitmotif, an essential boundary of clarity apposite in the non-appositively (inappropriate) definitional alignment to a polar stability within the apparent positivity of concepts that conceals the nebulous fluidity and change of the fluxes of phenomenal life casting it in the assured calming azure of neat and tidy categorical renunciation of bios (life) as a dynamical principle and change of spontaneous existence. It is, thusly, anti-life.

From the force and reality of this illustrative argument from Hegel and myself we can intuitively see that the Kantian system negates life. Perhaps, the system of life as life, as found in someone like Goethe or Hegel would be better. Since Kant and as I said earlier on, since the scientific revolution, and the operative "The Scientific Conception of the World" (see Vienna Circle) by logical positivism more recently (and the various names associated within this lineage of philosophizing, Comte, Quine, Popper, Dennett, etc.) as well as scientists through time Newton, Kepler, etc. a certain sterility has preponderated and been seen as more sanguine and amenable to scientific studies—being as it were more scientific in its mindedness—hence, the corresponding scientific "method", and the idea of the scientist as the "fact man" and as being more legitimate and objective. A thorough, correct and intuitive grasp of even Hegel's most basic concepts dispenses with these illusions and is enough to satisfy the demands of the labels of those engaging with "scientificity" and being "scientific", through notions like these, rather than a proper "scientist": hence we have the charge of "scientism" through its neglect, apathy, lack of creativity, and intellectual laziness in its neglect of the Being question including its corresponding excuses of the unscientific character of such questions. Overall it is a dismissal prospect, for the cool and calculated, for the armchair thinker, for the weak, degenerate, obsessive, and myopic scientist discouraged by failure of the élan vital, and all too fussy, stodgy and hung up that others should join

him/her in the scientific enterprise, afraid, seemingly that anyone should rise up and say, "away with this so-called science", "enough". Instead, science ever encroaches, especially the hard sciences, like religion, in its need to proselytize and profit from its high social standing and perceived prestige and demand that it be viewed as the center of society in a desperate need for attention given perhaps the fear that it is "not good enough". This is not to criticize science so to speak but to deconstruct the general psychology of much of science, with of course not generalizing to every scientific practice and scientist involved, although one seems, unfortunately, tainted by association to the mass of scientists and liable through a group think to take on the characteristics of scientific ideology through the appropriation of their general practice. In any case, in the last part of this essay, I would like to propose a new direction for science, and to present a discussion on the epistemology and foundations of science and thinking more broadly, in a basic way, based upon the preceding discussion with regard to Heraclitus.

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Fundamental to this new constructive scientific vision, that I am about to sketch, is the viewpoint that the social sciences, which I assume the reader is familiar with, should be viewed as closer to life, closer to the flux, than the so called hard sciences. This presupposes an understanding of flux, or interchangeably life, and the life process, as the primary and central phenomenon of importance and interest to be studied and lived through and science more broadly as a reflection of flux as the correlative resultant of this flux. Rather than inuring itself within the faux logo-systematic schematism of objective so called truth, science *should* understand itself a result of a life process; the products of science, after all, would not exist without humans. So, to go back to earlier this would imply a corresponding

understanding of humans, like the gods, as world builders within the larger cosmology of life. In this sense, I think that science could be ordered and ordained most constructively and readily through an appropriation of science that constitutes the new hyperrealism of

hypermodernity, postmodernity, and so forth, and various varieties and vagaries of futurism more broadly, focused on shifting the humanities, philosophy, and the human sciences and leaders in the forefront of the so called more objective sciences. Heraclitus' studies and

assessing his philosophy as an early starting point in the history of philosophy is one small but important step towards the area of study that currently is now called the "sociology of knowledge", "the philosophy of the social sciences", "the philosophy of the human sciences", etc. This is a larger project that must systematically at some point be accomplished. In the history of philosophy I perceived gains in this direction in the lesser thinkers of Dilthey and Cassirer. Perhaps, at some future time they will be seen as important forerunners, and possible catalysts to the reorientation that is necessary if science, as an institution, is to be healthy again. More importantly, however, is that humanity that groans under the weight of scientism be healthy again. A reprioritization and recognition that the social sciences, philosophy, and metaphysical thinking in general are not necessarily inferior but if done correctly may be seen as a superior way to see reality and orientate as a method of and as a way of creating change in the natural and social world is a crucial if not often recognized point that will facilitate the change towards the idea of a life-directed science as a part of a life directed life. Heraclitus' doctrine of the flux but also the corresponding idea that there is logos within this flux, to stabilize the flux and not merely flux is a central underpinning and recognition necessary for the foundations of knowledge i.e. epistemology. Heraclitus reminds us through his idea of flux and logos in interaction and co-constitution that flux is not a bi-product of logos merely to be eliminated, as per science, but rather actively shapes and determines logos in interaction and interplay as well as logos creating interacting to create flux. Thusly, a return to a more rational (logos) understanding of life and a more life determined science should help to heal the cleft that too long has existed throughout the history of the world. And as Goethe, a great scientist, as well, as a great human being, said, "Formation, transformation, Eternal Minds, Eternal Recreation." (Goethe, Faust, II, 413), as echoed, nearer the beginning "Everything is in flux. The flux is subject to a unifying or rational principle." (Heraclitus, Presoc. Read., 43)

✓ Good conclusion

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