

Self- consciousness again

We have outlined a schema, as we have in my *In Defense of Common Sense*. We have indicated some transfinite levels, *transfinites* in the sense of the term used by Georg Cantor, the famous mathematician of the nineteenth century, but also in a broader sense, although not inconsistent with Cantor's usage.

We have, first of all, the level of simple experience: Consciousness of simple experience is one level of transfinite: consciousness of events happening to one, not merely perceptual consciousness, but consciousness of a theorem-ordering, that something is happening. One thinks in terms of causalities, simple causalities respecting day-to-day experience, or assumed causalities. That is the simplest level of true consciousness, apart from mere awareness/perception.

Then, we have the second level, which we introduce forcefully by aid of a negative view of consistent deduction.



"God Separating the Land from the Waters," by Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel, Rome, ca. 1509. "On the higher level, man is locating himself or herself as a sacred individual, as in the image of the living God, as the embodiment of a sovereign quality of potential for creative reason, in which self-interest is associated with the discontinuous development of that potential."

That second level is the Kantian level: the fact that all mutually consistent theorems, i.e., perfectly consistent deductive mathematical physics, can be reduced to a set of underlying axioms and postulates, which axioms and postulates combine to represent what is called the hereditary principle. That is, that no theorem can be constructed in deduction, by deductive means, or otherwise, which is not simply an elaboration of something already asserted implicitly in the hereditary principle in the underlying set of axioms and postulates.

Thinking about the changes from one such set of axioms and postulates to another, is the second, or next higher order of consciousness. By thinking about that, we mean thinking about some notion of an ordering of change from one set of axioms and postulates to another set of axioms and postulates, and thinking at the same time of the changes in our notions of causality, on the simple level, simple causality, which are accomplished by these changes in choice of set of axioms and postulates. We also are thinking about the evidence in the empirical realm, which might be called *crucial experimental evidence*, which compels us to see a flaw in assumption within a set of axioms and postulates, and thus forces us to reform our axioms and postulates, to generate a new set of axioms and postulates. So that is the second level of consciousness, an awareness of this.

The second level of consciousness also includes the notion that there is an inherent ordering which ranks one set of axioms and postulates as higher in rank and order than another. This notion of rank is inseparable from the notion of power, which is why and whence my work in physical economy comes directly into play as reflecting the essence of philosophy in this matter.

The notion of *rank* and *power* is associated with an increase of the power per capita of the human species to survive successfully, which means to continue the development of that power.

This takes us to a *third level of self-consciousness, which is looking down on the level of succession of the sets of axioms and postulates.* On the third level, we are into the realm of true Socratic thinking, in which we are not merely negating the errors, obvious errors, or reducible errors in a set of axioms and postulates; we are now looking at the ordering principles, the choice of ordering principles, by means of which we might order progress among alternative sets of deductive axiom and postulate arrays.

So there is the third level of self-consciousness.

In each of these cases, what is involved is consciousness; that is, our actual human consciousness, as an individual, taking our consciousness on the relatively lower level, as a *subject* of consciousness, as an *object* of consciousness, and thinking about our thinking. That is, going to a higher level, to thinking about our thinking on a relatively lower level.

So we go from the level of thinking in terms of simple causalities, subsumed by only one set of axioms and postulates, to thinking about the differences in notions of simple

causality associated with an ordered change in choice among implicitly alternative sets of axioms and postulates. That is the second level.

On the third level, we take the activity on the second level as the object or subject of consciousness; and we might also think about, in the third level, our consciousness on the third level.

Thus, as long as we are able to do that, to achieve these three levels of consciousness as consciousness by no mysterious means, no mystical means, nothing more than precisely what I have described in essence, we have two results. We can master our fate to a large degree, as we are not compelled to follow blindly the current consensus of the Bush administration combination. We can choose sanity, we don't have to put butterfly nets around ourselves, as most of the Bush men should be doing. We can also conceptualize creative reason as a consciously comprehensible form of human thought and activity. We can do what Immanuel Kant, Descartes, and Aristotle, could never succeed in doing, and which they denied could be done; but, we can do it.

This latter is obviously what was done by all the greatest scientific discoverers and greatest artistic composers. Whether or not they were fully aware in the terms I have just referenced of what I have described, they practiced consciously what I have described.

This is related to something which can be called spiritual; that we all have, in a sense, two natures.

We have one nature, which is essentially below the belt, including treating the mouth, and sense of smell, in terms of aesthetic aspects of the mouth and sense of smell, as upward extensions of the gut. That is the lower level. That is the level on which man is closest to the nature of a beast. He is a little bit brutish, bestialized, shall we say; he is egotistical in the narrow sense; he is a *pragmatist*, which is a form of bestiality.

Or, man is on a higher level. On the higher level, man is simply thinking and locating his or her self-interest in terms already referenced. Man is locating himself or herself as a sacred individual, as in the image of the living God, as the embodiment of a sovereign quality of potential for creative reason, in which self-interest is associated with the discontinuous development of that potential. The development of that potential is associated, not merely with the progress which enables mankind to increase power for the survival of the human species, but is located, as we have indicated, in a conscience-strickenness respecting one's debt to past, present, and future humanity as a whole, and respecting man's role as a species: as a servant of the Creator in respect to Creation as a whole. That we are responsible to the Creator to assist in the process of continuing upward Creation.

Once we locate the meaning of our individual lives' soul, then we look at what we are thinking, as well as what we are doing. From that critical standpoint, that enables us to say, is our belief correct? or is our belief absurd, as opposed to

the person who says, "I was raised that way, and I'm going to believe that way until I die": which is not very intelligent, is it?

One says, "I believe that way, not merely because I was raised that way, which was an advantage to me; but I have come to understand why this choice of Christian civilization, for example, was the right one; why anything else would be a mistake; and why this is not merely our civilization; it is something, the best of which we hold in trust for all mankind."

That is the beginning of the *emotional*, intellectual ability: to rise above the relatively bestial level of thinking in terms of simple causalities. Then, when you think further, and become a philosopher, in the sense that Plato, and Plato's Socrates identifies this, a philosopher-king, a true statesman: Then one must think, and say, "What *is* creative reason?" And we think of what is creative reason in terms of what we must do, what we yearn to accomplish; the yearning for atonement, so to speak, with humanity as a whole, and with Creation as a whole.

We are sensible of the fact that we have short lives, mortal ones, in which all the sensual pleasures of modern life go into the grave with us; and so we sense our immortality, not in respect to the survival of our mortal flesh, but rather, in terms of the mission, which makes us useful to past generations, as well as present and future ones. Thus, we are able, in thinking in those terms, to reach out and see ourselves in respect to a necessary existence in the service of Creation as a whole.

We seek that quality; we seek to find that identity; and we find it within ourselves in creative reason. We yearn for it; we yearn to distance ourselves from that which denies us the development of that quality in ourselves. We have precious little time to do it; because we are going to die soon. It may be years, it may be decades; but we are going to die. That is a short time to get the job done, with limited opportunities available to us. So, we yearn for it.

People who are of that cast of mind, and who have achieved a certain amount of rigor (which takes time in

achieving that cast of mind), can go more or less readily to the second and third levels of transfinite as I have described. Thus, what I have talked about, as the problem of change and change/no-change, in the preceding, should be understandable; should be comprehensible, in practical terms of reference.

What do we care, in the long run, of these little things that most people care about? We care about them; they have to be taken care of. But we do not obsess ourselves with following the simple causalities, which are seemingly given to us, by an established way of looking at these things. What we have to do is to outflank the problem. We go to a higher level, the second transfinite level of consciousness. And look at ourselves engaged in this play; and we look at ourselves as Swift's Gulliver might look at the Lilliputians, and look down on them, and say, "There am I; I'm that little Lilliputian over there, I'm looking down on myself. What am I doing? What kind of silly fool am I, playing this game?" Or, as a playwright, putting a great tragedy on stage, in which he may put something of himself or something of somebody else; where you recognize yourself on that stage of that tragedy. You say to yourself, "That's me up there; what am I doing? What am I doing?"

That brings you to the second transfinite level. A choice of the set of axioms and postulates, so to speak, which govern causality, particularly one's own role in causality. But that is not enough. That is useful, it is necessary, but it is not enough. One is driven, thus, to find, "Well, what is truth? This is true, this is more true than that; that is false. We have proven that." "But what is true?" That requires going to the third level of transfiniteness, in which we understand the ordering principle, and understand a relative absoluteness. We recognize this as the Good. And when we reach that level, and when we think in those terms, we are good. When we think in lesser levels, we are not good.

Thus, those of us who would be good, must be, from the standpoint of outsiders, from the Lilliputians looking up at us, as Gullivers; we must be preoccupied with these three levels, and the problems of change, and change/no-change.