On Being, Reality, and Chaos:  
An Analysis of Language, Abstraction, and Indeterminateness

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Introduction

It is readily apparent from the history of mankind that there is a fundamental human desire to understand the nature of reality. Such a pursuit requires inspection of the underlying principles in the three primary philosophical frameworks: the epistemological, the ontological, and the metaphysical. First, this analysis of reality focuses on distinctions as epistemological constructs in language, the purpose of which are to further propositions in argumentation, the nature of which collapse under the recognition of an assumptive metaphysic. For this purpose, distinctions, here, are the abstract opposing connections that are formed in the language between philosophical conceptions or perspectives to create tension among the arguments of those seeking to advance a proposition without necessarily being concerned with abstractions of a more deeply unified level.

Next, the ontological construction of reality builds on this foundation of the epistemological negation, or redefinition, of distinctions and connects to underlying notions in regard to the idealisms of Hegel, Schelling, Fichte, and others (as applied to their methods and not necessarily their conclusions). This analysis also commands mention of certain perspectives from Aristotle, George Berkeley, and Immanuel Kant, to name only a preliminary few.

Finally, as a matter of metaphysics, this analysis determines that what may be said about reality points toward an eternal state that exceeds all limitations in terms of distinctions (or unnecessary language) and being, as will be discussed. Reality, then, for the sake of this discussion, will be defined here as “existence that is absolute, self-sufficient . . . and not subject to human decisions or conventions.” That is to say, reality is that which is not ontologically bound to the

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epistemological limitations of language, nor to the human condition, and is entirely capable of possessing being in itself. That said, the purpose here is to develop an epistemological method of eliminating distinctions in language so that the ontological condition of reality is not limited to a specific metaphysic—the conclusion eventually being that, at the core, reality is a manifest state of pure chaos, or indeterminateness, as posited by certain pre-Socratic philosophers and possibly connecting to current conceptual understandings in quantum mechanics and sub-atomic particle physics (albeit briefly, as a lengthy discussion of abstract mathematical theorization in the physical sciences would be both inappropriate and beyond the scope of an inquiry of this length and nature).

Discussion of an Epistemological Method Concerning Language

To begin, one must assess the principles of human knowledge as pertains to language and the complications of distinctions that appear at a fundamental level of understanding. What is important in this philosophy is to develop a structure that supports some notion of how humans can gain, and, by extension, explain, knowledge about the cosmos, through abstraction. For example most common practice applications of contemporary science assume that knowledge may be procured through observation of the physical world. How strictly one decides to adopt this perspective is what distinguishes a simple empiricism from phenomenalism, or the “doctrine that human knowledge is confined to . . . appearances presented in the senses.”

This also draws the distinction between a priori knowledge and knowledge a posteriori. That is, a position of phenomenalism would confine one to the knowledge that can be obtained only through experience via the senses, or a posteriori. Therefore, reason, or knowledge a priori, consists of that which is known by the rational faculties rather than by experience. Now, the paradox one finds in this distinction is in realizing that experience can never be known beyond reason, while reason can never manifest in the absence of experience, in humans. That is to say, there is a view that posits a clear division between experience and reason that depends on the assumption that these two parameters are entirely distinct. However, experience only exists relative to reason, and reason relative to

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experience, so it serves the purpose more clearly here to eliminate such a distinction, or, rather, to redefine it such that negates the contradiction stated.

To remove reason from the cosmos would consequently remove experience, and vice versa, therefore, to exist, each must negate the other so as to manifest present-as-one. It is this existence by negation and reduction to oneness that one will recognize repeatedly as these distinctions are analyzed in determining the metaphysical nature of reality. For the purpose here, accept that reason is experience (and vice versa), and notice that there is no necessary basis upon which to draw the distinction otherwise. In analyzing the epistemological perspectives inhibiting distinctions, the principles of human knowledge begin to express many similar contradictions.

Extension of the Method to Ontological Conditions of Reality

To further this inquiry, one must realize the implications of this eliminative epistemology in regard to the construction of a framework depicting the nature of being in the cosmos. Being has been explored by many of the most prominent philosophers throughout history, and among them, several have developed similarly eliminative philosophies. For example, the absolute idealism of G. W. F. Hegel is built through his dialectic method of analyzing history as a progressive, essentially dynamic process of grounding being as an unlimited absolute.

He adds to the notion of an absolute identity that is proposed by Friedrich Schelling, who expresses that there is no distinguishing between the subjective and the objective. Schelling writes, “Nature begins as unconscious and ends as conscious; the process of production is not purposive, but the product certainly is so. . . . The self must begin (subjectively) with consciousness, and end without consciousness, or objectively; the self is conscious in respect of production, unconscious in regard to the product” (Schelling 1800: §1). That is, in order for a subject to have any sort of existence, the subject itself must be relative to some object in negation (or non-subject).³ In other words, nature, to use Schelling’s

³. This notion also underlies the principles of Descartes’ Fourth Meditation, in connection to negation, or nothingness, and that which encompasses the “Supreme Being.” “[E]xperience shows me that I am nevertheless subject to an infinitude of errors, as to which, when we come to investigate them more closely, I notice that not only is there a real and positive idea of God or of a Being of supreme perfection present to my mind, but also, so to speak, a certain negative idea of nothing, that is, of that which is infinitely removed from any kind of perfection; and that I am in a sense something intermediate between God and nought, i.e. placed in such a manner between the supreme

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terms, is indistinguishable from consciousness (unconsciousness) in that the progression through subjectivity into, and out of, objectivity is sustaining in itself, or self-sufficient. Just as an object is only an object to some subject, such is the same for the subject relative to the object.

Schelling expresses this perspective against Fichte’s conception of the “I,” or, here, the subject. In this case, Fichte posits, “All being, that of the ‘I’ as well as of the ‘not-I’, is a determinate modification of consciousness, and without some consciousness there is no being” (Fichte 1797: 4). Here is the fundamental property of being, the affirmation of itself through consciousness, and, as a result, consciousness expressing itself through being. This leads into the absolute idealism seen in Hegel, which holds that reality only exists in infinite qualities, since finite qualities have existence that is purely conditional upon other finite qualities. That is to say, Hegel expresses his absolute idealism in terms of being, as well as in regard to nothingness, stating that “Being is the indeterminate immediate . . . in relation to essence” (Hegel 1816: §130). By that, he is saying that being is that which occurs at this moment, right now, and is entirely undefined as a universal. Being seems inherently undefinable, infinitely indeterminate, expressing constant, rather unlimited, existence (through non-existence), and having a direct impact on reality by the principle of its connection to all things.

Next, Hegel expresses this position on being, proposing an ontological framework through the negation of contradicting distinctions in the abstraction of the subject-object, or consciousness-nature, dichotomy, but he concludes that this is to support an idealism focusing on the absolute identity realized in this analysis, or the principle infinity of being, immediately and for the self only. However, this is perhaps a misstep, as it serves the purpose, ontologically, to negate the distinction between the object and the subject in any qualitative way without returning to an arbitrary metaphysic. Hegel, in fact, writes, “In being—for—self, qualitative being finds its consummation; it is infinite being” (Hegel 1816: §318).

Being and non-being, that there is in truth nothing in me that can lead to error in so far as a sovereign Being has formed me; but that, as I in some degree participate likewise in nought or in non-being, i.e. in so far as I am not myself the supreme Being, and as I find myself subject to an infinitude of imperfections, I ought not to be astonished if I should fall into error.” (Descartes 1641: Meditation IV)

4. Here, consciousness is best understood as awareness, but recognize that neither of these are meant to be interpreted in reference to the human condition or some human state of affairs.

5. This connection is consciousness as understood above.
He furthers this thought by noting, “Being—for—self is first, immediately a being—for—self—the One” (Hegel 1816: §319). This oneness is critical to properly expressing reality as it is, for these distinctions create alternate categories of representation that fundamentally contradict what most philosophers actually attempt to define.

Is it not entirely the point of this inquiry to eliminate these paradoxical distinctions wherever compromising? In addition, many other philosophers have argued similarly in the school of idealism, and to what avail? George Berkeley wrote that only that which is in the senses can be said to have any existence at all, opting for an empiricist idealism revolving around the subject for support of external objects by virtue of perception “attending to the passions and operations of the mind” (Berkeley 1710: §1). By this, Berkeley concludes that all things exist, not in relation to any human mind, per se, but to God’s mind, in which all things must exist, by his reasoning.

Kant, in turn, proposes a transcendental idealism that expresses a division of reality into things-in-themselves as applications of some noumena as compared to the phenomena of experience. He distinguishes between the previously mentioned reasoning a priori, or synthetic, and reasoning a posteriori, or contingent knowledge. Of space and time, which seem inherent to the understanding of the noumena, or for the purposes here, reality, Kant writes, “Space then is a necessary representation a priori, which serves for the foundation of all external intuitions” (Kant 1781: §2). He writes similarly, “Time is a necessary representation, lying at the foundation of all our intuitions” (Kant 1781: §5). Thus, Kant distinguishes space and time as precursory to the representation of the phenomena that humans experience through the senses. In this progression of creating distinctions within the categories of knowledge and philosophy, one only forfeits to the assumption that a new definition, or division of previous definitions, might provide universal truth rather than continuous contradiction.

To express this more clearly, one need only look to contemporary science, where assumptions are granted, to see why a process, such as Hegel’s or the one expressed here, could reveal key flaws in the products of scientific study that make such assumptions. Physics, for example, assumes a position of materialism, or the “doctrine that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications.”6 This position stands in contrast to the idealism of Hegel,

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Berkeley, Kant, and others, yet does it present any more tangible solutions to the issues of language and distinction that arose in idealism? Indeed, the materialist philosophy of G. E. Moore seems to mirror the contentions of a scientific method. Moore, clarifying a devised list of propositions (that he knows to be absolutely true), writes, “Some . . . are propositions which cannot be true, unless some material things have existed and have stood in spatial relations to one another: that is to say, they are propositions which, in a certain sense, imply the reality of material things, and the reality of Space” (Moore 1925: §1). Moore, along with Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and others, effectively built the analytic tradition of philosophy, and Moore, here, is supporting a common sense ground for materialism through this analytic tradition. Russell and Moore, in fact, advocated a correspondence theory of truth, or the contention that “truth is correspondence to a fact.” Facts, in this sense, are generated either by experience, through empirical observations, or by reason, from the intellect. This distinction, having been scrutinized, reveals that idealist and materialist philosophy function upon similar foundations, yet reach entirely different conclusions because of propositions distinguished from others for the sake of argumentation. Thus, this inquiry calls for a complete revolution against distinctions for the theoretical purpose of expressing reality as a metaphysic built upon the notion of pure chaos.

Abstraction of a Model Regarding the Metaphysical Nature of Reality

The final phase of this analysis is suited toward pursuing a return to certain pre-Socratic notions of reality in order to develop a worldview attempting to encompass existence as one all-inclusive whole, or singularity. Is this not the final goal of this philosophy of reality? Indeed, do materialism or idealism not attempt to unify everything in the cosmos as either indivisible matter or in the substratum of a mind, respectively? This is perhaps the overarching essential pursuit of this inquiry. As a matter of logical necessity, then, by the process of negating distinctions, contradictions, and assumptions, one concludes that the principle nature of reality must be a singular, distinct state of being. This aforementioned

oneness⁸ becomes the final end in a long chain of negations and redefinitions of critical terms in logic.

However, this is a difficult notion to express, as it abstracts upon the nature of a consistent, fundamental chaos. This chaos is perhaps best defined when understood in terms of pre-Socratic notions of eternity and indeterminateness. Aristotle writes, “But there cannot be a source of the infinite or limitless, for that would be a limit of it. Further, as it is a beginning, . . . there must be a point at which what has come to be reaches completion, and also a termination of all passing away” (Aristotle: Physics III). That is, the infinite, here, connects to Anaximander’s conception of the “to apeiron,” or the indefinite.⁹ Simplicius writes, “[Anaximander] says that it is . . . some other indefinite (apeiron) nature, . . . and those things, from which there is coming-to-be for the things that are, are also those into which is their passing-away, in accordance with what must be” (Simplicius: 13ff).¹⁰ This notion of the indefinite is not to be understood as some sort of infinite form of matter or ideas, but rather as a fundamental indeterminateness at the principle level of reality. This inherent indeterminateness, or “to apeiron,” is recognized to be the medium of being, or existence, as a single, immutable whole constructed through a return to pre-Socratic conceptions of reality.

Finally, this analysis must be realized not to be merely a mindless negation of distinctions in language, but rather a restructuring of the intuitive faculties regulating the way humans think about reality. This return to chaos, or that which is infinitely expressed in an indefinite state, also begs the question of motion. Aristotle defines motion as “The fulfillment of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially” (Aristotle: Physics III). This, in accordance to a purely chaotic indeterminateness, must be realized as occurring eternally, or timelessly (as eternity is not to be defined simply as an infinite expanse of time or space). All things that exist potentially, must exist actually, for, as discussed previously in Hegel and others, being is rooted in a qualitative non-being to support existence. Therefore, it seems that there is nothing that can have no being, for all things that

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⁸ Here, this is best understood as an abstract state of single-pointed concentration— that is, oneness is the state of single-pointed concentration of eternal consciousness (explained above) in terms of Chaos, as will be explained below.


¹⁰ Ibid.
could be, potentially, must fundamentally embody being, actually. However, one must be careful not to assume this to be a concrete, or determinate, being. Simply put, for the purposes here, to be is not to be.

It follows that, from a state of pure chaos at a fundamental level of the fabric of reality, motion remains a state consistently extant against non-motion. That is, this analysis determines that motion is non-motion, again expressing existence through negation, since the principle indeterminateness of pure chaos requires that one eliminate preconceptions of what it might mean to be stationary versus mobile. Even contemporary science supports this notion in principle (not in terms of assumptions based in materialism, as mentioned), and quantum mechanics and subatomic particle physics reveal that, at the microscopic level of observation, only probabilities can be said about quantum states and never certainties. This, if anything, is evidence of an underlying, inherent state of pure chaos that supports the entirety of reality.

Fundamentally, reality is indeterminate by inherent principle of its being, yet humans seem to stand apart as somehow distinct. Rather, this may be nothing more than the potential for what is defined as a single human life (what one could call “my life”) to exist and experience being in such a way as to present some sort of “consciousness” manifesting as an actuality relative to the infinitely indefinite nature of the negating states of non-being. In other words, perhaps humans exist as an actualized potential in the chaos of reality, capable of recognizing systems and order. This order, however, is naught but an illusion of the macroscopic experience of the human senses, which also are only manifestations of the infinite potentials that exist relative to themselves and the remaining non-being in negation to their actualized existence. Thus, this inquiry has effectively concluded discussion of the restructuring of the principles of human knowledge as they relate to underlying fundamental notions of reality that have been misguided by contradictory distinctions in language.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this reality is bound in illusion by the restraints of language. Language provides a medium through which distinctions may form between arguments and their propositions, while reality is a fundamentally all-encompassing state of limitlessness. The phrases conjectured to represent physical objects in the world, such as tables, deserve the response, “There is no table.” The table, as experienced, warped through language, has no inherent existence as a
table outside of the arbitrarily defined aspects of “tableness” that language presents as humans know them. Epistemologically, the language exists for humans to understand the table as a product of the indeterminate immediacy of being, but this in no way supports the inherent being of the “table” itself as an essential property of the cosmos. This applies to all things, all objects of the senses that appear to be external, all ideas in the mind that appear to be intellectual, and all abstractions in the intermediary that appear to give structure and order to reality. These things are illusions in that they are capable of being delineated by humans only through the potential for this type of individual human lifespan (which, in this sense, can only be thought of as “my life”) coming to manifest actually by virtue of this eternal chaos. That is to say, simply, that the human condition is only among the smallest fractions of the entirety of reality, and, as such, mankind simply may not be able to fully comprehend the scope of chaos in its purest form.

This pre-Socratic notion of indeterminateness reveals itself to be at the heart of this conception of reality as a product of the analysis of being in regard to the epistemological limitations of distinctions in language. That is, to conclude, reality is pure chaos, at its fundamental core, yet humans are only exposed to a small portion of this infinite and eternal spectrum, which becomes the universe and everything we know about it. Simply put, chaos is the highest form of order. In parting, this does not negate entire positions outright, rather this inquiry attempts only to abridge the mode of understanding reality with hope that this method becomes standard practice for determining further contradictions in the pursuit of the complete nature of reality to come.

References


