

The Paradox of Unity: Exploring Existence as a Point with Parts

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As we gather for the IPSA Zoom gathering on April 11, 2024, our minds are once again drawn to the mystery—the world itself. In our discussions spanning philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, and theoretical physics, we seek to illuminate the essence of our being and our place within the cosmos replaced by a set of pronouns in language—Anaphora, suggested by Don. Kunze. Claudio Sgarbi initiates a captivating exploration of Zhuangzi's enigmatic butterfly dream, igniting an energetic dialogue. This annotation serves as a continuation of that vibrant conversation.

Dream of Zhuangzi and the problem of identification with the butterfly instead of the world



Zhuangzi / Zhuang Zhou (via nopic.com)

Zhuangzi experiences the disorienting sensation of being a butterfly, blurring the boundaries between human and insect. The paradox arises when Zhuangzi questions whether he is Zhuangzi dreaming of being a butterfly or if he is, in fact, a butterfly dreaming of being Zhuangzi. This paradox highlights the limitations of ego-centric perception. The message of the narrative is to reconsider the nature of identity and reality. Rather than identifying solely with the butterfly, Zhuangzi's experience invites us to transcend individual perspectives and

recognize the interconnectedness of all beings within the vast expanse of existence. This reminds us of Gestalt theory. The Gestalt perspective encourages us to view the dream not as a product of individual cognitive processes, but as a holistic expression of the interconnectedness between the

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dreamer and the world. In this framework, the butterfly, the air, the flowers, and every other element within the dream are seen as extensions of the dreamer's psyche. By embracing this broader perspective, we transcend the limitations of positivist reductionism (which might say that a butterfly lacks the necessary sophisticated improved brain to dream like Zhuangzi) and recognize the profound significance of every part of the dream as an experience instead of a narrative. A narrative is subjected to human language, pronouns, syntax, and hence time, etc. whereas a pure experience has no such limitations, however, without language, it is impossible to communicate it unless using *Lalangue*.

There is a famous aphorism attributed to *Shams Tabrizi*, the mentor of Rumi:

من گنگ خواب دیده و دنیا تمام کر. من عاجز م ز گفتن و او از شنیدنش

I, the mute, have seen the dream, and the world is full deaf. I am incapable of speaking, and it is incapable of being heard.

This encapsulates the ineffable nature of the dream/spiritual experience and the limitations of language in capturing its entirety. The permanent challenge of translating subjective experience into language or narrative. Just as Zhuangzi struggles to articulate the paradoxical nature of his dream—whether he is Zhuangzi dreaming of being a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming of being Zhuangzi—Shams Tabrizi grapples with the impossibility of fully expressing the depth and magnitude of the dream he has witnessed: A mute who tries to narrate his dream to the world as deaf.

In *lalangue*, which refers to the fluid and elusive aspects of language beyond conventional linguistic structures, the dream of the mute symbolizes the ineffable and untranslatable nature of lived experience. An archaic short circuit of Word back to the Flesh. Some studies have suggested that infants who receive less physical contact or social interaction may be at a higher risk for developing autism-like traits or difficulties with social communication later in life: They learned by themselves to talk in the mode of *lalangue*. Just as the mute is unable to articulate their dream through spoken language, *lalangue* is a useful term to emphasize the impossibility of fully narrating or expressing the depth of subjective experience through conventional linguistic means. Despite this inherent limitation, there exists an urge—an almost compulsive drive—to convey the ineffable through the act of speaking, even if it results in nonsensical or fragmented *blablabla* utterances.

Shams Tabrizi's aphorism suggests that the speech of a Sufi, though nonsensical, can serve as an *anaphora* of a profound and complex experience. In this context, we can refer to this nonsensical or fragmented speech of Sufis as *collective autism*. In this *fellowship of utterance*, the impossibility of fully expressing the depth of a dream through language could be reflected in *Shat-h* شطح that sounds *blablabla* in the ears of those who do not belong to this circle of utterance.

In Sufi philosophy, *Shat-h* شطح refers to a spontaneous utterance or expression that arises from a state of ecstatic or mystical experience. It often takes the form of poetry, music, dance or a single sigh or cry. among sufis, it is seen as a direct expression of the soul's longing for union with the divine. The Sufis believe that in moments of intense spiritual ecstasy, language and conventional

forms of expression become inadequate to convey the depth of the mystical experience. Therefore, they turn to *shat-h*, a *Lalangue* mode of expression released from any function of/for communication. It is rather a means of transcending the limitations of language and connecting with the divine on a deeper level. A direct expression of the soul's longing for divine union or even a bodily impulse resulting from an immediate touch and confrontation with the Real, *shat-h* as a sort of cultural conceptualization of *blablabla* can be seen as a spontaneous utterance that emerges from a profound and complex inner experience of dismissing the "I": An illusive house made by language in which the ego lives as a pronoun of the truth as the true owner of the house. Ego is just a *subject* of the *Letter*: the landowner who lives in the distance but *lets* its subjects work and live on its land.

The concept of *shat-h*, then, highlights the universality of the human experience of grappling with the limitations of language and expression. Whether in the mystical utterances of Sufi poets, the nonsensical speech described in Shams Tabrizi's aphorism, or the meaningless sounds we utter during a dream or the first word we shout after jumping up from a nightmare, we see a common impulse to transcend linguistic boundaries and connect with our *letter* as the deeper truths of our existence. *Shat-h* شطح is a symbolic placeholder for the recognition of the *letter* as the Truth.

In this anthropological context, "collective autism" would not trivialize or diminish the seriousness of autism spectrum disorder, but rather highlight the universal challenge of translating subjective experience into communicable form. Again, by invoking the concept of "collective autism," we acknowledge the inherent inadequacy of language to fully capture the richness and complexity of lived experience of being touched or being in touch with the Real as the true owner of the house.

The Intricate Machinery of the Brain

*Die Sprache ist das Haus des Seins. In ihrer Behausung wohnen wir.
The Language is the house of being and in its home we dwell.
_Mrtin Heidegger*

Language is the house of being. This invites us to reflect on communication as a mystery and the ongoing quest to bridge the gap between the ineffable and the articulate while the truth behind it is an illusion. Why? because this "I" that is talking all the time is not the true owner of the house and he already knows it very well. However, he likes to play as the owner because the owner of the house has let him to stay in his house for a while. This pronoun is itself a deputy, anchored (*anaphora*) to an ego that does not even exist. The true fear is the truth itself: The owner is back!

We all know that we all die. A house is a metaphor for our body. Architecture is a second skin. It is there to "second" (=support) our bodies. It always needs a lot of work to be maintained in its

former situation. We cannot understand that a room is untidy unless having a picture of a tidy room in our head. A map. Memory is against death and decay and chaos. It seconds our bodies against the entropy and hence it is aligned with the axis of time. Brain wants to relocate the past and as such is like a machine swimming on the opposite direction of entropy and hence is subjected to time. Within this intricate machinery of the brain, a relentless drive emerges—a quest to relocate the past, to reconstruct the fabric of memory and experience. This endeavor, akin to a machine swimming against the current of entropy, propels the brain into the domain of time. Time, with its inexorable march forward, becomes both the canvas upon which memories are painted and the force that shapes our perception of reality. The brain, in its ceaseless pursuit of coherence and order, navigates the temporal landscape, weaving together the threads of past and present to construct a cohesive narrative of existence. This is how you understand the meaning of this very sentence. Your brain as a machine that swims against the sea of chaos and disorder is related metaphorically to Dirac's sea as a deeply topological theory.²

Ego-sack is the Boundary

میان عاشق و معشوق هیچ حائل نیست. تو خود حجابِ خودی حافظ از میان برخیز

*Between lover and beloved, no barrier doth sprout,
Thou art thy own veil, Hafiz, both within and without.*

Thinking of ego-sack as a sphere might help to see the answer of Zhungzi's paradox: Two spheres whose surfaces are paradoxically glued together. This sphere is not imaginable inside a 3-dimensional space. Outside the sphere is another sphere that one feels inside of it as soon as it crosses the first one.³ Within this framework, the surface of the ego-sack represents the boundary between the inner world of the individual and the external environment. However, this boundary is not fixed; rather, it is fluid and permeable, allowing for the exchange between within and without.

Two spheres, representing the individual psyche and the external world, are topologically glued together, forming a unified whole. The boundary between these spheres is not rigid but dynamic, reflecting the constant interplay between internal perceptions and external stimuli. This interplay is blind of direction. It is disoriented. *Free energy principle* or FEP is a solid proof of this as it is indifferent of the direction of the world or brain as the topos of the psyche. This principle posits that the brain minimizes surprise or uncertainty by forming internal models of the external environment and updating them based on sensory input. Crucially, the FEP is indifferent to the directionality of the world or the brain, treating them as integral components of the same dynamic system.

² This sea of particles, governed by the principles of quantum mechanics, serves as the backdrop against which the symmetries of group theory unfold. Just as the sea represents the underlying fabric of spacetime, topology provides the mathematical language to describe the structure and connectivity of this fabric.

³ Imagine this ego-sack as a sphere embedded within a four-dimensional space, characterized by the symmetry group $SO(3)$.

In the framework of the FEP, the brain's objective is not merely to perceive the external world but to actively engage with it, constantly refining its internal models to better align with external reality. This process, known as active inference, highlights the bidirectional exchange of information between the brain and the environment. Just as the brain seeks to predict and interpret sensory inputs, the external world exerts its influence on the brain, shaping its perceptions and actions. We all know the merits of good sleep: It kills the mind. The dream is a malfunction: There is somewhere a stimulus that hinders a proper act of killing.