

The God Contention is a thought experiment aimed at those who believe in God but may be looking for a more rational way to understand

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INTRODUCTION

We are living in a time of great excitement in science, some say a second age of enlightenment. We draw ever closer to understanding the core elements of existence: life; energy; & much else in our nearby corner of the universe.

Yet despite this, we have advanced very little in a true understanding of why we are here or why things are arranged the way they are.

This was the job of religion - to provide those elusive answers and in so doing, giving us clues on how to use our brief lives for good.

I use the past tense because I don't see any organised religion keeping pace with science. Modern religions are thinly veiled vehicles for exploitation, often only superficially disguised commercial enterprises. Ancient ones on the other hand, such as Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism & Islam all still rely on mysticism to explain the human condition, drawing from this their models of life conduct and augmenting it with many layers of rules, rituals & behaviours.

If the span of spiritual belief was like a spectrum with science to the extreme left and magic to the far right, most religions would generally occupy a spread, somewhere from the centre to the right hand side. They rely heavily on mysticism to express their ideas and are positioned well away from the rigour of science.

Mysticism alone is not enough for me. I don't reject it completely but scientific literacy requires more, even at my modest level.

It is to answer this need that I conducted this thought experiment, one illustration of how God could indeed exist explained in more rational and indeed practical terms. It is still a huge leap of faith from where science has so far taken us but it is at least an achievable destination for the imagination and a model rooted in real knowledge.

I should stress at the outset, that I am not putting forward hard theory here for scientists or anyone else to critique. Rather, this is an illustration of how belief in God & the embracing of science can coexist. It comes from my imagination, there are many variations possible. The point is, rather than a feeble minded delusion, faith in God, the afterlife and much else besides can be compatible with what we already know and perhaps more importantly, what we have yet to discover.

Who Did I Write this For?

Initially for myself. But as I wrote I realised there must be many folk like me who have faith born out of instinct & upbringing with a desire reconcile it with what we know from our scientifically enlightened world. This may, of course, mean departing wholly or partially from an established religion. So anyone who doesn't have the time or maybe inclination to have a stab at such an endeavour themselves might be interested.

This is not likely to be of interest for *confirmed* atheists; it is not trying to persuade. If you have already made up your mind that there is no God that's fine, don't waste your time on this. But if you are marginally agnostic you might be curious to look further.

Similarly, if you are a devout believer in a particular organised religion and are happy with it's mysticism as your anchor, this text is unlikely to be helpful for you.

Despite the privileged position enjoyed by organised religions in our legal and constitutional affairs, the overwhelming weight of contemporary opinion in art & media is atheistic - often mocking & patronising in tone towards those with a different view. No matter how solid your instinctive feel may be for some form of God centric belief the contemporary forces arranged against you are formidable.

Why Did I Write This?

As I've grown older, the need to enhance my faith so that it becomes a rational set of beliefs has become irresistible. I say enhance rather than replace because I can never entirely escape from its origins nor do I think I want to. But I do need to face up squarely to what my faith in God grew from and how it has evolved so that this desired enhancement can stand up as an emotional as well as philosophical credo. Whatever this leads to is still faith in my books: a leap of faith, an extension of beliefs beyond what can be proved.

Why did I need clarity? Partly because I couldn't explain clearly what I believe in or why. When confronted with the atheist challenge I found myself floundering as I tried to explain a deeply held conviction in terms that could be advocated in our scientifically mapped world.

Trying to live by the rules of a half-baked faith has always niggled at me and so when the opportunity to spend time building a more rigorous explanation presented itself, I seized it enthusiastically. After all, I thought, if I have this clear new vision then a clarity of purpose for me & my life must surely follow.

God Doesn't Exist - It's a Scientific Fact!

According to our *existing* body of science the mystical version of an all seeing, all knowing, interventionist entity presiding over everything in the universe⁴ cannot be valid. There is simply no physical place for such an entity to exist or mechanisms for it to operate. For most of us this is hardly news, after all, the word faith comes from the idea of a 'leap of faith', a step beyond what can be shown or proved.

For some of us, however, that leap of faith leaves a nagging, even gnawing irritation.

As new knowledge arrives, higgs-boson, dark matter and maybe one day, the new, perfect unified theory et al, the evidence or even opportunity for existence for such a God seems to move further away.

As someone who loves science (at least so far as I can understand it) and respects it completely, I find this unacceptable. When I say 'this' I don't mean the science or the challenge it is seen to pose to religion, I mean the lack of response from the faith world to embrace it.

The source of my frustration is that despite the beauty and power of scientific understanding and confronting as openly as I can the case against God, I still find myself believing. Instinct tells me that God not only exists It is central to everything we know and more importantly, the key to the vast expanse of what we don't.

I'm aware that this may be entirely born out of my own psyche trying to help me cope with the unpleasant reality of mortality. If instinct alone was driving my beliefs I would perhaps be better off leaving things as they are. But there is also an intellectual objection to deal with: a deep seated conviction that there has to be a purpose behind existence and by implication, our lives. Using the psychological defence as a reason to avoid this exploration seems to me as much a cop-out as the blind acceptance of religious dogma at the other extreme.

What is needed is a bridge between the scientific and faith worlds. Not just any old faith, mind, but one re-defined & re-anchored in the universe we know about.

Ok, having read the above sentences you may now be confused. First I say God can't exist according to science, then I say It's existence has to be justified in terms we understand according that science!!

This is the dilemma that has left those of us with faith on the one hand and a healthy respect for science on the other in a kind of philosophical limbo.

So, that bridge I was talking about has to be defined or expressed in a kind of hybrid language with elements of both the faith & science worlds. For want of something better I'm calling this pseudo-science. Using such language will, of course, alienate much of both the scientific and religious communities. After all, there's nothing here that can be staged as an experiment to collect & analyse data; there is no scientific method at work, just the hypothesis. As for the theologians, well, my attempt to reduce the mystical to mere mechanics, no matter how far-fetched will no doubt be viewed by some as sacrilegious if not in fact blasphemous and by others as futile.

Undeterred, with a little more effort I believe we can achieve a significant refinement of religious belief which could open the way to a stronger, more vivid & useful structure for thinking & living. This response to 'doubt' maybe be shameful to religious leaders. I can hear the words of Jesus in the Christian gospel when referring to doubters: *'blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe'* ringing in my ears as I write.

I excuse myself with the idea that no pseudo-scientific explanation can ever constitute having 'seen' God in the sense intended. Nothing short of tangible scientific fact would represent such a thing and I'm confident that will never exist in our lifetime.

If you want to go straight to the pseudo-science, zoom forward now to Model No1 or M1 as it is referred to hereafter. This is the foundation illustration of what I will hereafter refer to as the Rational Faith. That is, belief in God underpinned in some way by science.

On the other hand, if you are willing to arrive at the model via a brief description of my journey to its creation, continue from here.

Overcoming a Cosy Legacy

I was born into a spiritual household. My parents were not only believers, they had met through a faith based organisation and worked on projects to enhance the spiritual life of our country's youth through what they called the dignity of work. Their approach to life was heavily influenced by their Roman Catholic religion, as witnessed by the procreation of a large family of 5 children despite very modest means.

As a result, I inherited a structure of belief and worship: Sunday Mass, monthly confession etc. as well as segregated education where schooling was governed by the church.

This is not to say I had a pious or po-faced childhood. In most regards, it was similar to other poor, working class inner-city families in the emerging era of the materialist, post-war, baby boomer world.

Nevertheless, though many who were brought up in non-religious households might consider my roots as oppressed or narrow, I, like millions of Catholics found it both comfortable & credible.

Comfortable, because there was enough in the core teachings of the church to resonate with my innate sense of good & evil as well as how civilised people should live and treat each other.

Credible, because the structure of gospel parables, commandments & explanations seemed a coherent platform of symbolism and mysticism offering a dimension beyond the material where an afterlife was possible and where rewards for a good life might be enjoyed. I still regard this faith as a gift of great value if not now entirely credible.

Looking back in my late 50s and enjoying an early retirement, I can see how lazy I was in accepting this structure of belief. I knew, deep down inside that it was a bit of a tangle of the profound and valid on the one hand and flimsy propaganda on the other. I can offer the excuse of a busy life, scratching out a living, looking after my family etc. Not that I didn't ask myself about many of the flaws in my inherited religion, it was more that I didn't have the energy or motivation to embark on a full and thorough search for an alternative. Many people of faith live with this sense of imperfection & incompleteness but still feel enlightened and enriched with the parts that work for them.

Additionally, for me, any alternative would have to be pretty good if it was to replace what I had been gifted by my parents, my schools & my church.

So like many, I soldiered on in life with my rickety crutch of half-practiced religion until a combination of factors drove me to find that elusive alternative.

Detectives talk about the means, motive & opportunity which lead to identification of a particular criminal. For me, those same three things had to coincide before I was able to kick away that crutch and stand on my own two feet.

The means and opportunity were both gifted to me through the release of time as I escaped the rat race through a fortuitous early retirement. The motive was always there but was never powerful enough on its own to overcome the other obstacles.

The Catholic Church also provided a trigger, alienating me, along with millions of others, with the scandal of child abuse and especially the church hierarchy's handling of it. This, and a wave of conservatism bordering on fundamentalism exposed the poverty of thinking and vision at the heart of the church as never before. Examples include the status of women & gays, the ongoing insanity of the birth control policy and even the recent ugly translation of the English mass into an incoherent babble. A pitiful journey of self-destruction. So be it, Pope Francis has a lot to do!

The Dawkins Trap

Another trigger was reading Richard Dawkins' book '*The God Delusion*¹'.

Building on his earlier work ('*The Selfish Gene*²') Dawkins vents his anger at the misconduct and downright evil behaviour of many organised religions carried out in the name of God. He interweaves this with a critique of some of the belief structures of these religions. Citing what we know from biology and broad science, he exposes the implausibility of what is put forward in many religious explanations (e.g. the American Creationists³).

Reading *The God Delusion* was just the jolt I needed. I started reading it in a slightly argumentative mood but as I continued I found myself sharing much of Dawkins' anger at the behaviour of organised religions and their distorted status in our modern social & legal structures.

But there is a problem. There are religions and there is faith. Though all religions are built around faith of some form, we are in danger of seeing the misdeeds of organised religions as an argument against the belief structures they were built on. In other words: those who believe **do** evil so what they **believe** must be evil (or at the very least, wrong).

I know very well that Dawkins's objections to religious beliefs are primarily scientific of course. To me, however, the *emotional* weight of his book did fall into the 'evil belief breeds evil actions' trap. Because so much evil has been and continues to be done in the name of religion, religion is evil and by implication, all religious belief is evil (or at the very least, wrong).

For me, *The God Delusion* was a catalyst in my quest for a better foundation of belief but it didn't offer any answers to the core question of why?

Why? Still Trumps What?

Why do the biological mechanisms described by Dawkins & Co exist? And beyond this *gateway* question, others such as 'where did it come from?' and beyond there, how and especially, why?

Scientific atheism is bound by what we currently know and by inference, holds that even extrapolations of this body of understanding preclude the possibility of a God.

Part of the reason for the stalemate of science & religion is the core definition of God itself. Most religions use archaic imagery to depict God and its deeds which distracts from the core proposition of a supreme entity or force.

Given all this, it would be easy to give up and accept the imperfections of faith, live with the contradictions and wait for the divine revelations (or lack of them) that will come at the moment of death. Most believers take that path.

Not for me though. The death bed revelation is still available if all else fails but with all the gifts of reasoning we have been given I simply couldn't accept that it was impossible to put forward a plausible model for the coexistence of God in a scientifically explained universe.

Just for the record, I do believe that many of the foundations of organised religions originate from something sound & valid but have been distorted by centuries of contemporaneous interpretation. More of this later.

So, where to begin?

For now, I think it easiest to address the ideas through those well know questions about God, our world and our condition. M1, which follow that discussion, springs from my quest to back up the philosophical answers those questions with some practical illustrations showing how.

THE QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD

What do we mean by God?

Part of the problem with the dialogue, or lack of it, between atheists & people of faith is the lack of precision around the term itself.

For now, I'm going to restrict myself to a very simple definition:

God is a force. This force is the source of everything which exists in the true universe.

Note that this definition holds that God is not a person. Using gender identifiers such as Him or more seldomly Her is understandable but unhelpful when one is trying to get to a more rational definition. Given this I think we should train ourselves to use 'It' instead of 'Him'.

For me, a person of *rational faith* starts with this definition or something like it.

All further references in this text to God stem from this definition unless stated otherwise.

Thus far, of course, my definition may well be acceptable to many atheists as many of them belong to scientific schools of thinking which do indeed acknowledge a primary force.

That said, the meat of my illustration, M1 is focussed on the nature & origin of this force and its implications for us. This is where we part company since that illustration envisages a moral purpose in that force.

Why believe in God?

This is the question most often posed by those without faith: 'why do you need to believe in a God, why can't you just accept the world as it is?'

The subtext of this question is often that God is a construct created to help us cope with the prospect of absolute death; the black curtain & endless nothingness.

This and many other critiques of traditional faith & religion are, of course, valid. Avoiding the black curtain is not a good enough reason to believe in God.

Any form of faith, even the rational kind may just be a crutch, no matter how subconsciously buried or disguised. Even without the fear of death excuse there are the deeper philosophical arguments about the nature of reality outside human cognition some of which also transcend the scientific models.

I don't believe fear is the source of my belief. The problem with the atheist lines of thinking is that they render everything, no matter how beautiful and inspiring completely pointless. It surprises me how so many of the great minds of our species have been prepared to accept this pointlessness. I wonder sometimes if this 'resignation' occurs because nobody has proposed a half way plausible model for purpose.

Searching for the evidence and explanation of purpose is therefore what drives my quest: addressing the question *why?* and I believe I share that motivation with most others who could also call themselves rational believers.

One source of my drive towards this purpose is through frequent contemplations of infinity. Take either the macro or micro view of our world (or our universe if you prefer) and the same question poses: *what lies beyond?*

What is beyond the edge of the universe or perhaps the multiverse or perhaps before the big bang⁵?

Or, in the micro domain, what is matter smaller than the smallest known sub atomic particles made of, or what occupies the so called space between them, what is dark matter & dark energy? The answers to these puzzles will come, but only to reveal more questions.

Of course, all this is really saying is that we don't understand everything and by implication, never will. Added to this is the frustrating reality of our finite brains as we strain to understand the infinite nature of the universe. No matter how clever our abstractions, can we ever really comprehend infinity?

The question *'what lies beyond'* goes with *'what is driving the universe?'* and *'What makes things develop the way they have?'* or if you prefer *'What makes the gene selfish?'*

Atheists might at this point re-state their question *'why does there have to be a force driving everything?'*

Atheists often propose that seeking purpose actually means seeking human purpose and that implies some kind of human centrality in the nature of our universe. This, they would argue is what renders the very exercise pointless. Few could support the idea of a human-centric universe given what we know today about our remote & relatively isolated position as a species.

All this I take on board. For there to be a purpose which is comprehensible to us we have to accept that there is something in our nature which is larger than our species. Something common to many species and to many aspects of how the universe works.

A great divide now opens up between those who might accept such a reality & those who cannot go even this far.

Obviously I am one of those who believe in this idea of shared nature. As I look for the evidence of purpose am I objective? Of course not. The great divide I speak of is a philosophical one borne of instinct. I do not, however this invalidates the search of the ideas which flows from them.

I start my answer by citing examples of evidence like the structure & mechanisms of DNA & the laws of physics. Codes, rules, order. Unbelievable complexity and sophistication. Knowing all we know, with all this evidence is it more rational to believe there is a prime force than not? By prime force I mean that there is a relationship between the mechanisms of our defined universe which ultimately converge to a single source. That source is most comprehensible in that singular moment just before the big bang when the means to deliver everything in our universe was created.

Of course all scientists acknowledge individual code(s) as branches of knowledge and some are even prepared to accept they are related to each other. Virtually all scientists hold, however, that they have evolved as successful and beautiful things from the many others which failed and disappeared without trace. This super evolution idea is one I return to later in M1 but for now I will just say that it does not sway the argument for God one way or the other.

So my answer to the question (why believe?) is: *'it is as rational given what we know, to believe there is a driving force for everything than not'*

Of course this answer does not refer explicitly to God. This I believe is optional when naming the author of the codes. For me, however, this is indeed a version of God in which I can believe and serve. It is minimal when compared with some of the ones most religious people are familiar with but no less valid for that.

Further on in this text as I extend this definition to adjacent areas of morality & identity I hope my reason for applying the God 'label' to this entity will become more obvious.

What is God is for?

If God is the source of the code that drives all life, energy, matter etc. we are still left asking why create it?

The range of answers are surprisingly limited:

- 1) for a reason beyond our understanding
- 2) for no reason (for the sake of it)
- 3) to enhance the interests of God itself

Of these, only option 3 lends itself to further useful discussion. Of course 1) is self-evidently out of reach and 2) is where most scientists and atheists already reside and can speak for themselves.

The interests of God in option (3) have, of course, to be ones which are comprehensible to us. At first glance, the way I have expressed this implies an identity for God in some sense equivalent to a person. So here I have to re-state that though we may have to think about God as a kind of super person, it is more likely to be a highly complex force or matrix manifesting itself in many ways. Given this, what could those interests they be?

The only practicable way to answer this is to look at those codes and the forces of evolution to discern some form of pattern that could indicate an overall purpose. There is evidence of diversity, adaptation, enhancement in everything we can observe but there is also destruction, chaos & waste.

If we take what we can see and compute to exist in the universe we are looking at creation, production on an immense scale. So we can assert creation as one of those purposes. But what of all the destruction and what about all that has gone before and disappeared without trace?

This is where I have to propose the mechanism of *Extreme Diversity*.

Most scientists believe that the range of alternative paths for the evolution of everything from cosmology through physics to chemistry & biology are near infinite. This is the reason why such successful and wondrous things are available here and now for us to enjoy, our own existence included. The price of all this wonder is the failure of all the other paths we mostly cannot see or trace.

I think this makes a lot of sense and it answers the often posed questions about waste, failure & destruction (see later). However I draw different conclusions from it. Could *Extreme Diversity* be the mechanism chosen or designed by God to deliver creation? I consider what Extreme Diversity might actually be as part of the M1 illustration later but for now let's just accept it as a force which breeds variations in all things.

That original code at the time of the big bang would have contained the instructions for *Extreme Diversity* not as an end by as a means to the end.

Which brings us right back to the question why? Why make creation the purpose?

For me, the clues to the answer lie in our own condition, the conscious human. I'm not saying that we as a species represent a sole destination or end point, (though we might), but our ability to choose *what* to think and make moral as well as practical decisions is striking. What if morality is not purely about human values but a broader and more far reaching dimension of existence? Our ability to apply it and create decisions from it may be a critical clue in understanding the purpose of God.

This implies that morality is part of the original 'big bang code' and our ability to access it is highly significant. So why is this relevant to the question of God's purpose? For me, the morality code is an enabler, just as with Extreme Diversity, whereas ED opens the door to a proliferation of forms & species, the morality code adds an additional dimension which brings us very close to the nature of God itself.

If you were God and designing on the scale of our universe you might create a coded mechanism such as the one we've been discussing to deliver your vision: one part to ensure there is enough diversity to increase the probability of success and the other to deliver the ultimate objective from that diversity.

More on the mechanisms, output & implications of such creation later but it is this realisation which leads me to my answer for the question what is God for:

I believe God exists to create & enlarge goodness.

I could have said God exists 'to create and enlarge everything' and left it there. But the trouble is that creation & expansion for its own sake would make our universe just a random and largely pointless generation of matter/substance. Back to options 1) & 2). Ok from an atheistic standpoint perhaps. It allows our existence to be explained as an inevitable if rare outcome from all of the near infinite possibilities in the evolution of the universe. Valid but a dead end as far as this thought experiment goes.

Before going further, I have to acknowledge that several times in the last few paragraphs I've conceded the possibility of pointlessness & rejected it simply because it chokes off further discussion. You might feel the weight of probability bearing down on you now, with this arbitrary choice of a purposeful God occupying a path which seems increasingly unlikely when viewed against all those other rejected dead ends.

I think this is a misunderstanding however, as it overlooks the fact that there are probably as many variations leading off from the path of the purposeful God as there are leading in the direction of pointlessness but we have reached them through a route which has drawn more attention to those dead ends.

Why Does God Need Morality?

Another way to pose this question is to ask why does God want to create & enlarge goodness, that morally positive stuff so hard to define? Applying human values to answer this question leads to some interesting possibilities the most compelling of which is that God wants company. It wants to share the great gifts and

powers it has. Whether this is a sociable trait or some other form of motivation it resonates with our own drive when blessed with good fortune. Isn't the first thing we want to do when we experience good fortune of any kind is share? We want to tell our friends, celebrate, give them some of our happiness..

That deep and primitive drive may well be the biggest clue of all on how the morality code works.

This may at first seem like a very human-centric way to interpret God. God wants to socialise? Really? With us humans?

But I think this is posing the question the wrong way round. We have been programmed to 'socialise' with God, or more accurately we have been given the desire and means to do so but tempered with freedom of choice.

Why is this so? Why can we only access this goodness stuff by overcoming distractions and temptations? This goes back to root of a pre-destined universe versus one with genuine choices where we (and others) make our own destiny.

Returning to the question of why God needs morality I am proposing that it is the chosen mechanism for enlarging itself through the efforts of our species and others like us.

Can Evolution & Morality Coexist?

When I mentioned earlier that it was my own observations that led to me to believe that God exists & is the driving force in the universe I was thinking of many things: the beauty & complexity of life in all its forms; the miracle of human consciousness; the amazing development of human knowledge and the drive of all this towards the conviction that there must be a higher purpose.

Geneticists argue that even moral choice is routed in the sophisticated part of the selfish gene idea. Specifically, that it is 'selfish' to do good because we, those similar organisms, thrive by so doing not because it is morally right to act in that way.

On the tricky subject of choice, that same school will argue that even here, the area of intellectual human choice is governed by heavy genetic programming with nature winning over nurture. Whatever lofty moral spin we apply to decisions we take, they are all still rooted in the primitive drive to survive & win. This is undoubtedly true for much of our thinking & decision making but surely not all of it?

Of course in our highly evolved and developed state we are capable of a great deal of free and independent thought with a high degree of abstraction. These gifts may well have come via that selfish evolution but if that very process itself is just another consequence of extreme diversity we are back with the prime code, from God via the big bang.

So it isn't necessary to argue against the selfish gene idea, I just think it is bigger than the geneticists themselves realise.

I've already mentioned my sense of wonder at what we see in nature and the cosmos but even more breathtaking is the miracle of our own consciousness and what goes with it.

Which brings me back to the subject of choice.

Any genuine freely taken choice requires some kind of decision faculty to drive or support it. I'm sure most of us have felt the pressure or inclination to make choices in a 'good' way and conversely felt guilt when we choose the alternative. From my observations this is irrespective of our moral grounding - ie atheists, agnostics and followers of many religions all experience it.

To me, this is the pull of the moral force imbedded in the code and acting upon us. But it does not control us. We do have a genuine ability to ignore the pull and take the other direction. But choice is the means by which we are given the ability to create, not in the material sense we're more familiar with but in a moral sense, the consequences of which I discuss later.

Whilst choice also renders the ability to waste & destroy I think it noteworthy that there seems to be a natural bias towards the positive. Without choice of course, we would just be following a pointless script for its own sake but with it we escape pre-destiny, genetic or otherwise.

So to exclude the possibility of such a driver for evolution is arbitrary if not downright dogmatic. If you suspend disbelief for a second and entertain the idea that evolution contains a higher, additional purpose than mere survival you might catch a glimpse of the mechanism of the moral universe.

If someone had told a medieval doctor that every single cell in living things contained a complete set of instructions on how to make itself you would likely have been burned alive at the stake. Yet we now know this to be true. Unlikely enough in itself but even more fantastic when you consider the mechanisms by which DNA replicates itself or perhaps the fact that we ourselves have discovered and understood it.

How is it that we can now acknowledge these miraculous mechanisms yet resolutely refuse to consider even the possibility that other, equally 'miraculous' and complex mechanisms might exist to implement a moral purpose for our existence?

Even if we ignore this possibility we are still left with the question why? The code that drove our escape from mere biological formations into the stupendous world of thought and intellectual creation must, I believe be leading somewhere. Whether that somewhere is a moral destination can only be a matter for argument, my purpose in this text is to illustrate that if is, how it might work.

What is the Purpose of Moral Creation?

All this talk of a moral universe, a domain in which morally positive decisions are relevant begs the question *why?* to be posed again. What is a moral universe for? Why might it exist?

I take my inspiration for the answer from my inherited Christian faith. At many points in the scripture are references to an afterlife, a continuing existence beyond death. But this idea is not merely a comfort, an escape from the horrors of mortality. It is also a part of the solution for the puzzle about the purpose of creation. If moral creation was the means by which we gain access to the afterlife then the act of making morally positive decisions & choices is key to that creation.

But what is created? Later in this text in the illustration M1 I describe the means by which this act of moral creation might produce the very substrate⁶, the stuff used to host our afterlife. The more good we do, the more of this we produce and the bigger & better our afterlife.

Would we humans be the only species with this capability? I doubt it. Assuming for a moment that this moral creation is the means to deliver an afterlife and that in turn is our means to find unity with God it provides the ultimate answer to the question of purpose. We live to create via morally positive choices (in the widest sense of the term) and by so doing we get to co-exist with God itself & maybe even become part of it.

Many more questions are posed of course, some of which I consider next.

What is Life For?

If access to the afterlife is via morally positive choices and we humans are the only species capable of this then what is the point of all the other life and diversity in the universe?

What of other primates on our own planet: the dolphins and great apes for example?

All this implies a pecking order with we humans at the top and all else subordinated.

Part of the answer is via another question: do we really know if some other animals have minds? Are they capable of higher thoughts?

Even if the answer is no they clearly qualify as innocent life on a moral par with human infants or the mentally disabled.

No doubt a large part of the answer is extreme diversity. Much that exists in the universe supports or augments our (and potentially other) species' life quality. It has no place in the afterlife apart, potentially from featuring in the memories and emotions of moral species who arrive there. This is certainly the view put forward in the Old Testament.

But rather than seeing humans as the top of a life scale and the only one able to access the afterlife I prefer, in the context of the vastness of the universe, to see us as one species on a ladder of 'immortal species' ie those capable of an afterlife. Each of these have different routes to the same destination: God and the afterlife.

What Are Humans For?

Given the foregoing it is possible to see our existence as a means to deliver God's mission of creation. Creation, that is, as morally positive choices, freely entered into. Of course our decisions pertain to here, our physical world and their impact is also here. I believe that it is the quality of our intentions which really matter and that quality is what endures in the afterlife. More of this later in the M1 illustration.

As a definition of the human purpose though, this is not without problems. For example, what happens when we aren't making morally positive decisions, when we're just idling along and more trickily when we transgress? How many good decisions are enough? What are the rewards and punishments?

Also, who defines what is morally positive? Is there a hierarchy of morally positive choices? What about those who can't make moral choices because they are mentally disabled? What about very young children?

In my legacy religion (Roman Catholicism) we were taught that small children who die go straight to heaven and have the status of saints because they are innocent of sin (or the capability of committing it).

Like many teachings of ancient religions this bears closer examination. The idea of innocence holding a superior place in the moral hierarchy would potentially place primates and other organisms ahead of humans in some way as they are incapable of evil according to this definition.

But if this was true why doesn't catholic teaching hold respect for animals as equal to human babies? Obviously there is something about the human condition which sets it apart (and above) in the moral hierarchy. The Christian bible says that God provided animals for our use (e.g. for food and work). So we have to think hard on how living, feeling creatures without a moral intellect fits in this scheme.

My current thinking on this is that animals differ from babies and other human 'innocents' in that they can never have moral capability. By this I mean they can never have the ability to weigh up choices and make them from moral criteria instead of practical or biological ones. If we learn some time later that some animals do have moral capacity then, of course, like other such species in the universe they would enjoy similar opportunity for eternal reward with us. Additionally, I should say here that the moral capacity that is sometimes attributed to dolphins & Ape's, if it exists, may well be the kind the geneticists refer to - i.e. the kind which serves the survival programme and nothing more.

Why Does it Matter How We Behave?

If choices are simplified to doing good things, bad things or nothing then how does their impact play out in a way which matters to us as we live our lives?

Somehow, there has to be a pay-off for being good, for creating instead of destroying for giving instead of taking etc. beyond just a selfish feeling of pleasure in so doing.

The payoff is not just rewarding good positive use of our faculties but more importantly for delivering a partial fulfilment of God's purpose to create goodness which nonetheless has to be earned via choice and often sacrifice.

It's important to pause here and remember that we are talking of a moral dimension of the universe, not the physical one we are more familiar with.

Earlier on I mentioned the how the act of moral creation might be the means by which we create the very stuff in which our afterlife occurs. This idea is explored more fully in the context of an infinitely connected universe in the model illustrated later in this text (see M1). Simply put, the idea is that once created, our every moral thought or some form of counterpart of it lives on as an impression. Like recordings of our moral mind, these impressions would be connected in a web of such impressions formed from other morally capable beings.

If I do something good, the moral impression created by my decision, its intentions and its associated actions is saved like a trail stretching back throughout my life.

All this adds up to a kind of moral scale model of a life. An imprint, scaled by how we have lived. Its purpose? I believe it could drive the creation of that elusive entity where we exist in with some form after physical death. With our identity intact, at least initially after death we would live on in a newly liberated state similar in some way to our living dream state but free of any biological encumbrance.

Imagine further, that these moral 'imprints' are active and connected in a larger structure with all similar imprints: my 'trail' connecting with all other similar (morally positive) trails existing in the universe. More on this later in the illustration in particles.

For now I will just propose that a moral pay-off exists in this afterlife of unity with all that is good (or perhaps more accurately, all that has been good).

How is Goodness Measured?

The most important thing to grasp is that goodness or evil is created in the mind. Although those thoughts often translate into actions I believe it is the thought which holds the key to our moral destiny as judgement, decision and then volition in the act.

In the thinking which leads up to any act we engage many faculties from our brain including the moral centre, my name for the place where our awareness of the rights & wrongs of potential choices reside.

The engagement of the moral centre is a subtle and complex business. How we recognise and weight up decisions is a multi-layered process and the way in which our thoughts are translated into actions is similarly complex. Somewhere inside these processes I propose a moral key (see M1) would be generated. This would signify the polarity (good or evil) and scale of the thought.

I should say here that my version of a morally positive thought and any associated action is anything which is consciously creative. By creative I mean something which enhances life in some way produced from the resources & capabilities available. This is a broad interpretation and it means that a morally positive life need not be a pious or religious one in the classic sense of those terms.

As for the spectrum of moral severity, absolutes are easy enough: to commit murder is evil because it is the opposite of creation - the destruction of life. All the worse because the life is human and therefore highly weighted in the moral hierarchy.

Acts of pro-creation seem to carry a high credit in this scheme but what if it is committed via rape? The violent intent of the rapist and the suffering of the victim create a large negative imprint which forms a path to punishment for the offender.

An artist creates work which inspires and entertains others. A sportsman achieves similar heights. A business owner creates jobs, all are creating, adding and potentially improving. The higher the intent and the greater the positive impact on others the larger the positive moral imprint left and attached to the originator.

It is worth pausing to reflect on great achievement versus great intention. Many sports & arts folk strive to reach the top of their field. On their journey they create inspiration and joy in others, they destroy nothing so what they do is morally positive. But their motivation is partly selfish. The glory of being first, best etc. The glory is for me and nobody else. I think this uncomfortable truth means we have to be careful with motivation. To strive to be best because we have an obligation to make the most of what we are given (born with) is morally valid & positive but in moral weight it scores lower in my mind than someone who dedicates their life quietly & modestly to the support of others - say handicapped children.

Of course many of our world's most famous & successful folk know & accept this, compensating by giving time or money to good causes.

Harping back to the old religions for a moment, the idea of sins as tokens of evil or wrong doing are well used. But what of good deeds, the opposite of sin? Interestingly there is no single word for this so I will propose one: a sain. A sain is a good deed made of good intent which earns credit for the Afterlife.

How Are We Judged?

Given all this, if we create this moral imprint decision by decision how is the relative weight of one such decision weighed against another? This is like asking about the size or shape of what we make as we decide. Even if our moral deeds come in different sizes according to their severity, suppose I spend every waking minute of my life doing good deeds and then in the last minute carry out a suicide bombing? Does that one, massively evil act cancel out the vast number of good ones?

In my legacy religion, any act of murder carries the penalty of eternal condemnation in hell fires. Yet there is also the facility of true repentance & forgiveness. How do these things tie up?

There are 2 separate things to consider: the way goodness or evil might be measured and how the tally might be performed for a whole life.

For now, I will propose that each episode of thought exists as a pattern of particles and somewhere in that pattern is the moral key I mentioned earlier which signifies that it is a morally positive. The means by which this key created, detected and measured is something I consider further in the illustration M1 later in this text. That mechanism would also provide the means to measure the magnitude of the decision, almost certainly via

the motivation and awareness behind that decision. Perhaps most important of all as we see later, it also incorporates the relative capabilities of the individual. Creation by a weak or disadvantaged person would be amplified to take account of their lesser capability whereas those of the strong & privileged would be attenuated.

The tally would use these keys in some form of balancing in which good and evil acts, represented by their associated motivation and awareness are cancelled off against each other. When the tally is finished there is either a balance of evil or good and this in turn would determine the size, if any of the 'entry ticket' to the afterlife.

Why Are Great Imperfections & Injustices Allowed?

People starve and die of terrible disease. Millions die in natural disasters. Greedy & evil people survive, prosper and brutalise the innocent. How can all this be permitted by a moral God?

There are several strands to the answer.

Firstly, for God's purpose to be fulfilled, there has to be genuine freedom of thought & action. We must have the ability to choose evil instead of good otherwise everything in our world is pre-destined and choice is an illusion. Extending this, for true creation to occur there must also be the possibility of destruction.

Secondly, God's chosen enabler, Extreme Diversity, leads to many negative outcomes some of which cause suffering and injustice. If there was no counterbalancing reward or compensation for this it would be hard to call this God of ours a moral one. Fortunately, there are.

When judged in single human lives there is no perfect justice or fairness. For every winner there may be many more losers. For each happy life, many sad ones etc. But taken in the larger, eternal whole, our path back to unity with God via the afterlife does not depend on happiness or fulfilment in this our single, current, life.

Victims who suffer are neither wasting nor destroying, moreover they create goodness by enduring. This is a very hard idea to grasp, particularly when we observe the extraordinary misfortune of some. Life imposes impossible endurances on them leaving little or no scope for happiness of any kind. We instinctively want to blame the higher power for the existence of their suffering particularly as we are generally addicted to pleasure & status as a species.

If we could more tangibly see the moral credit of our life tally as we went along, indicating what lies ahead for us in the afterlife we might almost see everything in reverse, pleasure as pain, success as sin etc.

What at first seems to be a very uneven and unfair set of fates and opportunities becomes a more complex proposition when judged this way. Those born with privilege have the greatest opportunity to do good or ill. The biblical expression '*it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven*' reflects this. Acquiring and enjoying great wealth & power often involves destructive and evil actions. To be able to minimise these and create alternative, morally positive outcomes is extremely hard to achieve. In the context of moral eternity and the structures envisaged above, great wealth & power is a curse. A life purely consisting of personal pleasure & indulgence brings with it the certainty of oblivion in the afterlife or more accurately, no afterlife at all.

Does this mean that all pleasure and enjoyment is negative or evil? Of course not. Private enjoyment of nature, art, food, sex or whatever constitutes minor creation of a kind provided it is not at the expense of some other person or creature. But a life excessively biased towards private pleasure is one in which our gifts & talents are under used, devaluing any creative credits for whatever good we do and therefore minimise our opportunity for reward in the afterlife.

To fully grasp this we have to remember that the key is the engagement of our moral centre. This is the place where consideration for others is possible and for the consequences of all we do.

Imperfection

Beyond the choice related issues there is also the question of imperfection. Why do we have faulty genes? Why do diseases exist? Why do natural disasters like earthquakes happen?

This question goes back to the root of the code, the original source of everything in the universe. I have suggested earlier that God chose a path for creation which I've called extreme diversity. This is the natural tendency to maximise the range of potential outcomes from any source: chemical, biological or cosmological.

It is the path which led to evolution and all its wonders but it is also the path which makes what we see as imperfections inevitable.

The reason we see these things as flaws or errors casting doubt on God's existence is, once again, that we skew our understanding of everything to this, our microscopic and fleeting mortal lives. In the afterlife, none of these things have any consequence yet we can live there, volcanoes cannot.

Does God know about every individual?

The idea of a personal God, one who 'knows' about me and who can hear my thoughts is core to many religions.

If I pray for release from some suffering or threat and this is followed by good outcomes does this mean that God has intervened?

A common argument against the possibility of such intervention is that with 7 billion people living in the world and perhaps half of them praying to God how could It ever hear?

But if God is the source of the everything, It is clearly not a single human-like organism of consciousness where every petition has to queue up for access. Rather, it is likely to be a vast complex of interaction in which an infinite number of simultaneous connections would be possible if they occur.

If God can hear, how could It respond?

I've previously referred to how imprints of our moral mind might connect together in a structure which provide the medium for our afterlife. In the model, M1, I've illustrated the mechanism for how these imprints might be created using channels connecting the world we know about to the one where the afterlife exists. If such channels exist they could work in both directions: to & from the domain where the afterlife exists. If God intervenes explicitly and directly in our lives it would be via this channel.

Let's play this out. 'Dear God, please let me get this job tomorrow'

God favours me...hears my prayer...generates positive thoughts in the mind of my interviewers which drives them to give me the job. .

What if the outcome I seek cannot be obtained via a direct human thought but through translating to action?

Let's play this one. 'Dear God, please cure my child's cancer'

Actually, this is no different from the example above, this time the arrangement of particles might be in the liver rather than the brain. The cancer dissolves, the prayer is answered.

This is not to say that God necessarily does this at all, let alone frequently; it merely holds that such interventions are possible.

The answer to the question 'Does God Know about Every Individual' is clearly yes but whether this 'knowledge' is via our arrival in the afterlife or all the way through our existence from the moment we are conceived or born is a matter for discussion.

I'd like to think it is the latter but a Rational Faith does not require it to be so as long as there is a path available which eventually leads us to God's presence.

How Should We Live?

All this suggests that in order to 'buy' a place with God in the afterlife we have to live our lives according to this 'creative' code.

So how to make this a practical day to day proposition?

If we take the 10 commandments in traditional Judo-Christian religion and view them through the lens of core moral principle it is possible to see something much simpler:

1. You should create
(*you should not destroy*)
2. You should respect
(*you should not abuse*)

3. You should be true
(*You should not lie or deceive*)

I will explain the thinking behind these 3 commandments and what it would mean to live by them in the later section 'Living By The Rational Faith'

For now, I would suggest that adopting these would offer the opportunity for a moral convergence which could drastically reduce conflict in our divided world.

What Happens When We Die?

Since this model argues that our brains hold the key to our afterlife, the point at which that organ becomes inactive and permanently incapable is when death occurs.

It might be argued that we are in some sense actually living a dual life from the moment we make our first moral choice since it is then that our moral imprint would begin to form. But I don't believe our consciousness lives in the imprint, it is planted firmly in our living brain. During our mortal life I believe the imprint is just that, a static record, like a series of 'recordings'.

Earlier on I spoke of the tallying process which occurs after death where the credits & debits of our moral life are cancelled off against each other. Only after this has taken its course could what is left of our moral imprint become energised.

In the later sections of this text I've tried to show how this physical journey might be made & after that I go on to speculate what the afterlife might be like.

But what kind of experience would the act of dying be like according to this model?

Of course there are many near death accounts to draw on describing what the massive release of endorphins feels like, the bright lights, visions, out of body experiences etc.

I like to think of this as something like the experience of listening to AM radio in the evening when I was young. As my local stations went off the air around midnight the sound of distant foreign stations filled the dial to take their place. There was no silence, just a different and altogether more exotic sound.

After the moral tallying is completed and our spiritual imprint becomes energised we begin this new, exotic type of consciousness, filled not only with our own memories and emotions but also that of loved ones and many others.

But this misses out the actual moment, the instant one life ends and the other begins, what does that feel like?

I'd like to think it is like the sleep of general anaesthesia: one minute you are falling into sleep and the very next instant you are awake again with no sense of time passing between the two moments.

But of course we can never know until that moment arrives.

And beyond that moment, what would we feel and see as we begin our new existence?

The easiest speculation of what such a transition might be like is to consider a dreamscape. Imagine you are trying to explain the experience of sleep to an alien race which stays awake all the time. The idea of losing consciousness and then entering an artificial world where the physical constraints of our waking world are no longer active would be both terrifying and perhaps unbelievable. Yet it happens every night. We need it, we mostly enjoy it. The journey from our vivid, mortal state to our afterlife state would, if it occurs, be in some way equivalent to falling asleep and entering this parallel existence.

The difference between this afterlife and our dreamscape bears closer examination of course. Most of us would probably say our waking, conscious world was in some way superior to our dreamscape because it is real. We would say this when we were awake and not when we were enjoying the experiences of the dream world where such things as levitation and instant healing are commonplace.

But when we wake each day, we resume where we left off and we are immediately bombarded with powerful sensory stimulation from everywhere. Noise, taste, touch and above all vision competes in a mad chaotic jumble with our sub-conscious mind which might be contemplating the day ahead.

Dreamscapes, however are seemingly random, often repetitive, sometimes disturbing. This is, of course, because they are the by-product of our brain's physical maintenance programme. The afterlife by contrast would be free of this burden. Down at the molecular level, dreaming is much like being awake, neurons are still firing, signals are still moving between cells and somehow the whole 'mind' is still functioning albeit in a reduced mode, analogous perhaps to the energy saving or standby mode of a TV.

In the afterlife, the formations of memory and the interactions of thought processes may have been replicated into a different physical place (see later in an illustration in particles) and here they are unconstrained by the maintenance programme. I would offer that if this were true, the experience of existence in this unconstrained mental space would likely be exhilarating, especially if it were joined, forming part of a larger structure into which all our forebears had similarly transitioned. Such a structure might well provide the facility for interaction of some form.

Even if the journey into the afterlife starts with a trauma, once we've been cut off from the nervous system and its ability to deliver pain. Then follows the release of massive anaesthetic (those endorphins) which overwhelm us with a sense of euphoria and wellbeing as the closedown begins. At some point, between the release of the endorphins and the completion of the physical shutdown comes the end of the mortal mind.

In some ways here I'm reminded of discussion I once had on the subject of brain transplantation. The discussion went along the lines of asking if a brain transplant operation was ever possible would it not, in reality be a body transplant, since most of us believe that our mental self, our mind, lives entirely in our brain. To move the physical organ would in effect mean a new body for that mind, the donor would in fact be the person's whose body was offered to take the brain.

Why do I mention this here? Because this is the nearest I can get to explaining the moment when the mortal mind ceases to exist but its content, or least its moral extract moves on.

This line of thinking gets us into the area of brain versus mind, of course. For me, the mind is that miraculous assembly of physical, conceptual & abstract thought held together in time and space for long enough for it to be tangible. It is also the processes which allow changes, the moving in and out of the mind frame of our state for that moment. If there is an afterlife, these processes contain the final procedure, the passing of our mind frame from the physical brain into that external space where our imprint has been formed. Living through the moment might be almost unnoticeable, like moving from one type of dream to another or emerging from that aesthetic.

But what about mental deterioration? Dementia, Alzheimer's for example? If the mind becomes faulty for a prolonged period, does this change the experience of dying or the afterlife?

The part of our lives which were impaired by lack of mental (and especially moral capacity) does not add to the moral imprint so our afterlife is not dependant on it and would contain no image of it.

So, if one is afflicted in life this way, the tortured, confused world we exit is replaced by one of perfection and wonder, certainly devoid of pain since there is no body to generate it.

For those living with the demented & confused there is the consolation of knowing that there really is, as the pulpit cliché often has it, a better place waiting for them.

But if this is true why not euthanasia in such cases as the morally capable being has ceased?

I don't believe that mercy killing would change the spiritual fate of the person dying unless that person has made a morally conscious request for it to happen. If that is the case there would be some penalty to pay for opting out of life and drawing others into the act since it works against the core commandment - *you should create*. However, this penalty would, I believe, be mitigated by the extent of pain & suffering of the person who requests the release and if this suffering is particularly extreme, perhaps completely 'forgiven'.

Decisions made by friends or relatives without the involvement of the sufferer would not affect the afterlife of the subject because s/he made no morally valid choice. There is, however, an impact on those making the decision to 'impose' the merciful release on their loved one. It is not impossible for such a decision to be made free of penalty in my opinion but extraordinary lengths would have to be gone through to mitigate the decision to end life for this to happen. This is quite apart from the legal & social consequences of course.

I will return to this topic later after I've spend some time on the practical illustration of this place where our afterlife would occur.

What is Life After Death Like?

After the journey, when all transitions are completed, what then? If this is the reward for all that sacrifice & hard work, it has to be pretty good?

At the risk of being glib I would say that this is what old fashioned religious believers call heaven. It is the place we achieve a liberated state, as reward for a morally positive life.

To make sense, it would have to offer more than a mere replay zone where we can wind backwards and forwards through the moral imprint of our own lives with its accompanying memories. It would likely provide an ongoing existence of some form, retaining something of our identity but extending our capabilities, for example to re-connect with our loved ones, living & dead.

But how does God, the source of all this, make its presence felt here?

If heaven is anything like this then by being there we are already closer to God. If God is some form of controlling matrix at the core of the universe then although we are now granted new freedom to navigate and enjoy what we are, at the same time we are now constrained by our closer join with the source of all the power.

Understanding what freedom of choice means here is a real stretch for the imagination.

Is the Afterlife a Poor Relation of Consciousness?

What I've so far described in the Eternity Zone may seem feeble compared with the thrill of conscious, sensual living in our mortal world. A little bit like waking up relieved that the real world is so much more vivid & exciting than the dreamscape we have just left.

There are several things to consider though. When we are asleep & dreaming we are seldom aware, inside those dreams that we are actually dreaming. The absence of direct & real sensory stimulation doesn't make it seem less real until we wake up & make the comparison. Put more simply, we do not dream blind or deaf though we may not perhaps be aware of touch & smell to the same degree as when we are awake.

All this gives us a clue that we can exist richly in a place where the direct, physical connection with our senses is lost. Extending this further, I believe that our unconscious dream state is but a tiny preview of what could be waiting for us in the Afterlife where our stimulation extends way beyond the narrow range of senses the able bodied of us enjoy in our mortal life.

Consider what it is like for a person born blind to suddenly have the gift of sight. An amazing, almost overwhelming experience at first followed by wonder & excitement way beyond what the rest of us, born with sight can ever enjoy.

Consider suddenly having a dogs sense of smell & a dolphin's sonar added to our existing senses and you begin to see what might be possible.

But this is only the start. I would further speculate that time & space opens up as further avenues of exploration, by which I mean the ability to navigate or experience the mortal world in any scale or moment, for example, at constellation level in the cosmos or at cellular level in the leaf of an apple tree, at the dawn of life on earth or at last gasps of the human race.

This may sound like pure fantasy. But constraints of time & space are bound by the science of our known & tangible world. As I will try to illustrate later, the domain of the universe where the afterlife would 'reside' would be a place where virtually anything is possible, requiring as it does entirely new classes of particle systems & energy.

Why Not Go Back & Solve the World's Problems?

If everyone who has ever lived and exercised a balance of positive moral choices eventually arrive in this mysterious place as 'eternals' and have access to all this power & freedom, why haven't they made their presence felt in our real mortal world?

This is actually the same question posed earlier about why God allows injustice & imperfection in our world. Though I believe the eternals (as I call these lucky, liberated souls) might have the power to intervene in the physical world of we mortals they would be constrained from so doing by rules laid down by God. Much like the

prime directive⁷ beloved in the science fiction TV series, Star Trek, this is a rule that preserves the freedom of choice & action in primitive or developing species; a principle central to God's purpose.

I believe that the extent to which the eternal are allowed to intervene in the mortal world is therefore heavily restricted effectively limiting them perhaps to whispering in the sleeping ears of loved ones or contriving indirect events which have only subtle influence. Furthermore, once delivered into this highly superior enhanced state would we not evolve away from the pre-occupations of the world we left behind to something more significant?

I could speculate forever about the mechanisms for this constraint but in the end it doesn't matter how it is applied, just the fact that it is applied is what matters.

What Lies Beyond the Afterlife?

Inevitably, the contemplation of infinity which led me down this path brings me to the same driving question which brought me thus far: 'what lies beyond?'

Sadly, my brain has no faculty to process beyond the Afterlife. I can however offer a couple of observations. Firstly, if we do reach there we may well then acquire the ability to answer this question. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, the answer to this question then brings us even closer to an understanding of the true God, one which is more than the proxy so far described here. If that is true, what then?

How Could We Believe Any of This?

And so to the ultimate question. I've painted a picture of the Rational Faith but I haven't explained how, in practical terms, these things or more importantly, something like them could actually happen.

The model below is my attempt to satisfy that need.

MODEL NUMBER 1 (M1)

Many of concepts in this model were introduced in the previous pages of this text alongside a philosophical explanation of how and why they were created. As I believe this model needs to be free-standing, they are defined below from scratch with most of the philosophical discussion removed. If you have not read that discussion and find yourself arguing against these ideas on a philosophical rather than practical level then you may wish to go back and read those sections for a better context.

SUMMARY

Is it possible to be both rational & a believer? Belief, that is in God's existence. For such a thing to be possible a practical model is required, proposing some of the forms & mechanisms required to make such belief credible if not provable. If we had models like this to refine and develop we might at least partially escape from the refuge of mysticism - the fairy tale version of God. Escape too from oblivion, the fall back of the atheists on the other. One such model is laid out here, my stab at this impossibly difficult puzzle. I call it Model Number 1 (M1) with the hope & expectation of more to follow from other authors.

M1 is scientifically sympathetic because it is built on loose extrapolations of contemporary knowledge alongside a few of the more compatible ideas from ancient religions.

It proposes firstly that the big bang, a phenomenon which the majority of scientists and many lay people believe gave rise to everything in our universe, was based on a Master Code, embedded in something I have called the Primordial Entity, that single thing which was brought into existence to trigger the Big Bang.

This Master Code contained the enabling mechanism for the inflation, expansion and creation of all matter & energy issuing from that initial 'ignition' and with it of course, time itself.

Two other things I propose were included in this code: the logic of Extreme Diversity (ED) and a Morality Key.

ED is my term for the force or influence which causes continual expansion of the directions, forms and functions in the universe.

The Morality Key is a means of distinguishing certain formations of matter & energy according to its content.

Taken together, these elements form the basis of the moral universe, one ordered by moral thoughts and deeds, accountable to its creator through the exercise of free choice.

Morality keys would be accessible to any species evolving to a conscious, self-aware mind state. By exercising positive free choice in decisions involving both the balancing of right & wrong and an awareness of consequences, these species are able to escape absolute death. This escape is achieved through access to the Afterlife, the continuation in some form of the life essence: that is, energised identity and consciousness of the individual being.

The 'template' for morally positive decisions and the means to create those decisions are contained in the Master Code.

The source of the Primordial Entity & its Master Code is the superior entity we call God. The means by which it was authored and planted are likely to remain beyond human understanding. All we now see & understand in our universe & much of which remains invisible or incomprehensible to us originates from there.

As yet undiscovered particle classes and associated processes need to exist to carry out the necessary transformations of energy & matter to support such a moral universe & its afterlife domain. These would act in some sense like biological systems though their existence lies out of reach from current science, perhaps somewhere in the domain we currently call the dark universe.

Our place as humans in this model is as one of potentially many qualifying species. Our brains have evolved to the point where we can make moral decisions and convert them into acts. Because of this we have been given the ability to rise above the challenges and shortcomings of our brief, mortal lives. We can gain access to an afterlife of superior quality and duration where we can cohabit with other such species and perhaps God itself.

This model is purely illustrative. But it is a serious attempt to depict a more rational version of religious faith without compromising the core idea of a morally centred purpose for our lives. Just as the models of the ancient religions offered a version of the truth compatible with the wisdom of their times, this model hopes to do the same for our scientific age.

THE BIG BANG & THE PRIMORDIAL ENTITY

The majority of scientific opinion now agrees that everything we can observe, discern or understand in our universe originates from the Big Bang. That single event was the moment in which all matter & energy 'exploded' into existence beginning an expansion which led to the creation of stars, planets and ultimately us. The expansion continues to this day.

Some faiths are happy to accept the Big Bang as an event within God's creation believing it to be the first of many interventions ranging in scale from the huge forces which continue to shape our universe down to the tiny ones which order the minutiae of our individual lives.

But the Big Bang could not have been the beginning. It may have been the first physical event but there must have been something prior to that event to have enabled or cause it.

M1 proposes that an entity was brought into existence just before the Big Bang occurred which contained everything required to make it happen in the way that it did.

This Primordial Entity would have to exist outside or beyond the universe explained by our current science since it would have to exist before time, energy & matter appeared. It would be the smallest, purest or simplest form of matter-energy, incapable of further subdivision or disassembly.

M1 is no different from other religious & scientific schools of thought in requiring a device to overcome the contradictions of the Primordial Entity. This is essentially the issue of infinity: before the beginning, beyond the edge etc.

There is no choice but to use such a device since human understanding, even the extraordinary abstractions of our greatest scientists and mathematicians are all perceived via the human brain, a finite organ operating in an infinite universe.

Yet we cannot explain God or the purpose of our lives without addressing the problem of infinity since the true universe, the one in which the human universe sits, is where the Primordial Entity was created.

By human universe I do not mean a human centric one which requires the existence of our species to in some way explain or justify. Rather, I mean the version of the true universe fashioned by the limitations of our understanding, some might call it the quantum universe. It is a subset of the true universe not an alternative to it. The Human Universe is likely to be similar to versions perceived by other advanced thinking species in the universe as they grapple with the same problems at the edges of science & philosophy.

If the creation of our universe was like the inflation of a soap balloon then the Primordial Entity was not just a blob of soap, it was a blob of something which contained the soap chemicals, the air pocket and the means to trigger it. The very act of creating it made the inflation of the balloon inevitable.

Of course the Primordial Entity embodies the infinity paradox itself: if this entity contained all the ingredients of energy, matter and the means to 'ignite' them then what is this pre-energy and pre-matter stuff made of? There can be no complete answer for we humans for the reasons already stated but the easiest way to grasp the idea is to think of it as a cell in biology, containing all the means to re-create itself as well as to go about the business of existing.

Just as biological evolution has mapped out the path of physics through chemistry into the biological forms which eventually led to those cells, M1 proposes there is a similar map to be discovered and understood explaining both the evolution and make-up of all matter & energy forms in our universe as well as the true nature of time.

I propose that the design, coding and creation of the Primordial Entity was carried out by the supreme or at least superior being we call God and our entire human universe exists in the 'bubble' created by the making of that entity.

The multiverse, infinite parallels & oscillating⁹ Big Bangs are all possible variations of this version of the true universe but they are not pursued further here as they do not help to answer the core question of what purpose for us & our God?

THE MASTER CODE

M1 differs from many ancient faiths in placing the Big Bang & Primordial Entity in the centre of things.

Specifically, it proposes that they are the primary means of intervention used by God to interact with the universe we understand. This doesn't necessarily mean that God only intervened this way. It does, however, suggest that the primary intervention was at the moment the Primordial Entity became real. The mechanisms which gave rise to life and all else were triggered by that act. These mechanisms we know about: quantum mechanics, general relativity and evolution for example. These our science is beginning to explain.

I say that we understand these mechanisms but of course there is one we don't. This is the one which bridges the gap between the creation of the Primordial Entity and the Big Bang.

This is where before-time meets time, before-matter meets matter, before-energy meets energy. Here a whole class of particles and energy forms live, existing as they do for a very particular purpose: to bridge what I've called the human universe to that larger domain, that place I call the true universe.

M1 proposes that embedded in the Primordial Entity was a code or programme if you prefer - a formation of pre matter and energy which ordained how the big bang would unfold. This is not to say that all the events following the big bang were predestined. Rather, the code is analogous to DNA, an instruction set used by other mechanisms to achieve an end.

In the case of DNA, there is an instruction book on how to create, for example, a human being. It is used by biological systems to build an entire organism. What the organism does after it is created however is determined by a much more complicated mechanism than DNA or biology. The only label science has so far put on this larger system is chaos.

M1 suggests that this larger, apparently chaotic system is itself defined by a code or program which ordains the means by which everything else was formed including biology, physics & cosmology.

Whereas DNA is now known to be a highly structured language for use in the biochemical manufacturing of living organisms, the Master Code at the core of the Big Bang is much broader, containing not only the trigger for the ignition itself but also the formation of all energy & matter that follows.

Modern science & mathematics have mapped and explained much of the forces and events from early creation but there is no single, coherent unified theory explaining everything we can observe, measure or compute to exist even in our universe.

In biology, the process of evolution explains much of how living things have developed over time to the vast array of species & forms we see, even on our own little planet.

Evolution itself is a process. It seems to be designed to promote survival and expansion of every organic form. People of faith sometimes point to the beauty & variety of life forms as evidence of a God, arguing that the chances of such a broad and in some sense preposterous range of forms happening by chance are virtually nil.

M1 takes a different approach. Namely that biological evolution is merely one manifestation of a much larger pattern of behaviour in our universe, not just in biology but also in chemistry, physics, cosmology and beyond. From the formation of particle types to planets from cells to systems, from elements to neutrinos the same underlying action is at work whose instruction set resides in the Master Code. I call this behaviour Extreme Diversity (ED).

ED is not an end in itself however, rather it is an enabler for an end. The objective of the Master Code in which ED is embedded, is to create, to amplify and enlarge not just matter, energy and life but most importantly, moral goodness: a 'substance' of interest to the author of the code: God.

Moral goodness can be seen as an end state or, as this model would have it, the means by which God enlarges itself and creates other, free-willed entities with which to share creation. Not on a par with God but in its image and with free access to It.

The means to deliver this is 'written' into the Master Code.

In the simplest form, the Primordial Entity consisted of a substance and a means. The substance was the material which contained the potential to generate all the matter and energy in our universe and the means is the Master Code, in computing terms, like a programme and an interface.

In the sections which follow, I discuss some components of the Master Code: especially the Morality Key, Extreme Diversity & The Channel.

The Morality Key represents the purpose, the 'why?' in the story of the human universe.

Extreme Diversity is the uber mechanism for creation, the mother of evolution and much else besides.

The Channel is the means by which the layers of the true universe interact: the human universe (our universe) being only one such layer. That place where the afterlife exists occupies another.

THE MORALITY KEY

The Morality Key is part of the Master Code and is the means of distinguishing certain formations of matter & energy according to its content. Conceptually, the morality key is a pattern which signifies positive outcomes; positive that is, according to a mode defined by God and interpreted here as morally positive choice.

To be useful it has to be translated into forms suitable for each qualifying species, that is, ones capable of making moral decisions.

The keys we are familiar with in everyday life have 2 things in common with the Morality Key:

- 1) they use rare & complex patterns
- 2) they operate locks fitted to doors which lead to precious or private places

The morality key is in effect a template pattern which can signal the presence of moral content in any formation of matter or energy. It is created as part of the Big Bang Master Code, embedded in the Primordial Entity, copied and distributed through the mechanisms of Extreme Diversity.

Dormant through most of creation it is now in active use as conscious, morally able species such as ours begin to appear.

The particle structure of a human thought is not broadly understood in current science. It certainly consists of bio-chemical formations in the brain which change over time. M1 suggests that this structure is the tip of a vast iceberg of particle classes and actions of great complexity. They extend well beyond the physical organism of the brain and into the surrounding area albeit at such a sublevel that it is well beyond current particle physics to describe. Somewhere in this extended structure is the pattern of matter forming a morality key. This would contain both the original pattern from the Master Code 'template' and additional attributes representing the identity of the brain of its originator. Finally of course, it would also contain material reflecting the nature of the thought itself.

As our brains generate thoughts they rapidly replace them with fresh ones and much of the bio-chemical 'space' in the brain-tissue is then overwritten with this new thought.

However, M1 suggests that some or perhaps all of the previous thought is copied & preserved as a brain-stream outside of the organ or indeed it's skull. Here it feeds a processes, a conversion of thought into a non-organic substance. This material would be far beyond the range of even our most advanced theoretical particle physics.

Though this might seem far-fetched consider the analogy of radio waves. They too have an ongoing life as they continue on from their transmitter, out of the earth's atmosphere and onwards forever into deep space. Though the musician or announcer in front of the microphone has long since gone, their performance continues. The radio waves are still waves, still made up of electromagnetic particles arranged in a particular way which has a mathematic relationship to the original sound waves emitting from the voice of the singer or announcer. The equipment used by the broadcaster: microphone, preamplifier, frequency encoders, power amplifiers, cables, masts and all each render the content into new forms. Eventually waveforms are emitted capable of conversion back into its original form given the right equipment. This conversion could be centuries hence but the sound would be the same.

The equivalent process in M1 is called the Channel. The after-image of a cluster of thoughts are condensed into a purer form. These are attached to other related 'thought-clusters' to form a new entity. This process centres on the presence in those thought structures of Morality Keys. If some part of the source thinking involved moral judgement it causes the Morality Key, present in all matter in its neutral form, to be changed to reflect this content, triggering its preservation.

Whereas our conscious brain deals in small subjective snapshots we call moments, the brain stream deals with much larger structures whose boundaries are formed by moral outcomes, imagined or actual. Each of these

contains a distinguishing Morality Key; a new one of which is created each time the boundary between one moral transaction and another is crossed.

Mentioned earlier were the 2 components of these keys:

- 1) identity
- 2) content

Identity here does not simply mean a unique identifier to single out the originating brain from others. It also carries information about the capability of the brain - its health & maturity. Its cognitive capacity & other context would also be included to reflect the relative capability of the individual to which it belongs.

Content does not merely mean the subject matter of the individual thought. It also carries information about the emotional and moral awareness of its owner at the time the thought is created.

So Morality Keys are large, complex things which are part inherited (from the Master Code), part generated (from the involuntary development of the organism which host their formation) and part authored (by the wilful execution of moral judgement).

The purpose of the channel is to convert the original thought (equivalent to the announcer's voice) into a form where it can live on long after the brain of its originator has disappeared (equivalent to the radio waves).

Whereas radio waves are detectable and manageable with our current technology, the brain stream would exist in a dimension of the universe which we cannot currently see or explain. The 'size' of the transformation required would be massive. The physical cells which make up our brain pattern at one end of the process and particles so small they are beyond anything detectable or even predictable in human science at the other.

It follows that although an after-image of every thought we have ever had might seem like something large to preserve somewhere, in fact it would be in another dimension of existence, so tiny it is almost invisible.

But beyond the questions of the form of this transformation are the more important ones about purpose.

M1 proposes that whatever use or purpose we humans can conceive of as beneficiaries of an Afterlife, the real purpose of the moral universe is God's - the enlargement of goodness through the actions of aware, morally capable species. In human terms God is seeking the satisfaction of creating more of itself.

But it could be argued that this mission could be achieved without an afterlife. We could live, understand, create through morally positive choices and then die. For a brief time, the goodness we create lives as a real thing, in our brains & through our emotions. The sum total of all this for every species for all time would still be worth something?

M1 holds that the answer to this question lies in the idea of a generous God, one which wants others to experience the satisfaction it does from these positive outcomes, this moral creation. If God is perfection this seems more plausible than the more selfish version which merely uses the transient moral achievements of a species for its short term entertainment.

This question returns in the next section on Extreme Diversity.

EXTREME DIVERSITY

Many discussions about our universe centre on what we can see now or what we can extrapolate . But there is much more that has existed and disappeared, sometimes without trace. This applies to constellations, individual planets, to species, organisms, microscopic forms, even our thoughts. The processes which have shaped our universe and given rise to human life on earth contained many permutations, wrong directions, blind alleys etc. From these came much waste & destruction on a scale we cannot comprehend. Even within the successful branches of creation, such as our own planet, there are examples of this seemingly random destructiveness: meteors, earthquakes, deadly diseases etc continuing of course to this day.

Yet M1 argues that they are not random. Instead they are manifestations of the method chosen to deliver creation: Extreme Diversity (ED).

It is important to stress here that though ED would have a powerful, maybe central role in the way our universe has developed, there are other components in the Master Code, especially the Morality Key discussed

earlier. None of these components on their own account for God's method or purpose, it is only when they are taken together that a coherent whole is revealed.

Though the outcomes of ED are vast it has a simple underlying mechanism - to create variation in all things. Where there is a single direction create 2, where there are 2 directions create 4, 10, 100, ∞. Similarly, where there are positively charged particles, make negative ones or neutral ones.

As Extreme Diversity gives rise to advanced structures of matter and energy some of these forms can be deemed successful if they survive and themselves gives rise to other refinements and ultimately evolutions.

The best understood output of ED is biological evolution here on earth. The development of life from the most primitive forms to the ultimate organism to date, the human brain, involves a journey of many diversions, chance encounters, failures and disasters. The extinction of the dinosaurs is the most popular example of evolution and accident combining yet this event was highly likely given the methods of Extreme Diversity.

In nature we see a vast array of life forms and wonder at them. We cannot help but ask the question why so many variations? The answer is the power of the underlying force of Extreme Diversity influencing biology as it does every other facet of existence.

Conversely, Extreme Diversity is responsible for all the flaws, errors and failures in creation, indeed they are inevitable. This includes errors in our own DNA codes, diseases of all kinds as well as the impacts of human actions & choices.

In the context of this model, the biggest question about Extreme Diversity is why choose what might seem like such a wasteful and arguably inefficient route to creation? And since many of its outcomes are destructive and highly distressing why would God choose such a means in favour of a kinder, more ordered and perhaps harmonious route?

The answer may be simpler than is immediately apparent. What would be the alternative to ED? A narrower, less diverse mechanism which delivered only positive and in our terms benign outcomes?

Such a mechanism would require an extraordinarily pre-determined model of outcomes which would, in effect, remove freedom of choice from the resulting universe. This is because, no how subtle and indirect, all outcomes have been ordained to avoid those things which we would consider negative.

We humans would enjoy only the illusion of choice since everything we experience would have to be 'hard-coded'. It follows that such a world would likely be free of injustice and suffering, free of disease, free of imperfection of any kind. But to what end?

There is no scope for original creation, especially human in such a universe, most importantly no opportunity for genuine free moral choice.

So could there be a middle ground, instead of Extremely Diverse, what about Semi Diversity(SD)?

The problem with SD is that it is in fact an extension of pre-destiny. God would have to decide which elements of diversity were allowable and to what extent. It would need a criteria to decide quite minutely the fate of all sentient species. Allowing freedom of choice opens the door to evil and destruction but to disallow it leads back to pre-destiny.

In the end the choice is binary, one or the other, ED or pre-destiny.

Which brings us back to the central proposition of M1, that God created this universe for the purpose of enlarging creation generally and moral goodness in particular. If you accept that moral goodness can only be created by the exercise of free choices within a system of ethics & values then ED is the only mechanism to deliver it.

Those systems of values & ethics are of course, themselves products of ED and as such are subject to imperfection and corruption.

Religions or other ethical codes built on misconceptions or distortions can & do lead to evil. The effect of this on the fate of individuals depends on the level of awareness of each and their role.

This leaves us to the general question of the negative impacts of ED: the imperfections, injustices and ultimately the finality of death.

Here M1 proposes (alongside most ancient religions) that God resolves this by offering the reward of a life after death for those who choose to use their life for good to the best of their awareness and ability.

Extreme Diversity is where science & God can meet & co-exist, it is also where the need for an afterlife becomes most apparent if God is merciful & generous. Suffering & imperfection in a short, biological life seems less significant in the context of an eternal existence in a perfect and beneficent domain of the true universe.

It is quite possible of course for Extreme Diversity to exist in a different kind of universe, one without the Morality Key or the afterlife. This would be a cruel universe, chaotic and disturbing, particularly because of the nature of the God presiding over it. Though it may seem intellectually necessary to explore such an alternative, it does in fact belong to that class of explanations I will call here the cause of pointlessness. It's an argument I prefer to leave to others.

M1 concentrates on this more coherent model with God's generosity at its centre.

THE CHANNEL

M1 places thought at the centre of the process of moral creation. This is because actions are merely the by-product of thought and by the time we have translated a thought via a decision into action we are into a purely physical chain of events. The moral episode has passed.

Here I define a moral episode as 'that period of conscious thought in which the mind's decision faculty is used to generate an action where the consequences of that action are partially or wholly understood'.

This is not to say that the effects of actions are irrelevant. They change our awareness of consequences and so inform future decisions but they can't change what has already been thought & done.

M1 also proposes that thought has a life beyond the moment of its creation and the brain from whence it came.

In the earlier sections I touched on how a moral transaction, a series of related thoughts would be streamed to a process outside the physical brain where they would form larger structures, each distinguished by a unique morality key.

The brain stream and its associated processes is one example of The Channel at work. It is the interaction of classes of energy and matter for the purpose of conversion: conversion, that is from things like thoughts which are manifest in the human universe to things like the brains stream which exist beyond it.

We know from physics that things which appear solid are in fact made up of many smaller complex objects surrounded by lots of space. We also know that physical boundaries are illusory. Radio waves can pass through brick walls for example. The wall is no less real or solid but the particle chains which make up radio waves are small enough to pass through its structure.

Similarly, the skull of a human brain and the layer of brain tissue just beneath might be considered to form an absolute boundary for our thoughts but M1 proposes otherwise.

Here we immediately hit another boundary: the limits of current scientific knowledge. If the higgs-boson or the neutrino is as far as we can go then M1 is just fantasy.

For the brain stream and the other similar channels to operate there needs to exist many levels of matter & energy beyond the ones so far imagined or proved.

Even the language we use to describe these layers is flawed. These phenomena are definitely not matter and energy as we currently define them. But these are the best words available to us and the substances are related if only as distant cousins.

The brain stream channel for example is a mechanism for receiving and converting a continuous flow of thoughts. These are converted it into new forms of matter & energy which encapsulates identity & context as mentioned earlier.

The conversion includes, for example, a massive reduction in physical scale. The bio-chemical formations in the brain where the thought originates is tangible, visible and even partially measurable. Each of the relatively

massive elements of this physical structure is surrounded by a much less dense dimension which in turn is similarly situated in a less dense one still.

Changes of state over time have similar relationships with the layers 'beneath' the ones we know of.

These layers are not passive, however. Rather than a mill pond disturbed by a pebble thrown into it, these domains contain active fields and process - currents in the analogy of the pond. The interaction of these layers is what creates the conversion and this interaction is generated by a process ordained by the Master Code.

But this is only the initial step. These moral transactions are joined together via their common keys and pass through further transformations to form the stuff of the afterlife. Conceptually, M1 proposes these further channels build two distinct dimensions:

- 1) the vessel
- 2) the content

The vessel is best understood as the physical space allocated for one distinct afterlife entity for its initial period of existence. The larger the vessel, the greater the extent of reward. As hinted earlier, it is not just the nature of the individual moral decisions which determine the content of their Morality Keys; other information conveying the capability of the individual is also included and this is used by the channel to determine how to size the reward.

The mechanism by which this context & capability material is processed centres on the Morality Keys. For example, a brain limited by disease would reveal this through the content of the Morality Keys attached to each episode. These would reflect a lower level of awareness and activity at the time the episodes occurred (the original time of the thoughts).

All this implies that the Morality Keys are like an audit trail, capturing core information about our state alongside our conscious thought. The channel uses elements of the Master Code to understand these keys and convert them into a vessel of appropriate size.

The content passed by the channel is what our identity purifies into. Composed from life memories and a distillation of emotional energy it would constitute the ingredients for a new life form, capable of further thought & emotion albeit free from a mortal host.

What such life forms would experience and do for the rest of 'eternity' is discussed in the following sections.

MORTAL v MORAL LIFE

This model shares with many religions the idea that the Afterlife is the reward for moral creation during a mortal life.

This doesn't mean that the only purpose behind our universe is to facilitate this reward, it merely proposes this is what has been devised for we morally thinking species.

Other species and indeed other entities may have their own rewards - outcomes which constitute something superior to their transient states.

For M1, however, we are restricting our discussion to the moral life as the route to human reward.

The idea & purpose of moral life is to access the Morality Key, embedded in the Primordial Entity and replicated throughout the universe following the big bang.

As matter & energy expanded in volume & complexity so too did the Morality Key & its mechanisms. Initially, the key would have existed as an original pattern of some kind, incapable of subdivision. As the expansion & inflation of the Big Bang occurred it will have adapted in form & function.

Ultimately, as organisms such as the conscious human brain emerged, the means of applying this code became accessible.

Just as animals in nature have advanced faculties to detect smells, vibrations, magnetic fields and other phenomena and put them to good use, humans have developed the most sophisticated of all such faculties: moral consciousness.

To be conscious, rational and capable of abstract thought is miraculous enough. To add to this the ability to sense right and wrong and then build a value system based on it takes us to the very limits of what is possible in our universe.

Conscious thought and everything that goes with it is a gift of evolution, ultimately of Extreme Diversity which of course, according to this model originates from the Primordial Entity, God's initial and absolute creation.

Wonderful though consciousness is, it can seem a very cruel gift. Given that rare ability to contemplate our own death while most of the species around us are oblivious to their end would we prefer a life without it?

Perhaps, but with the opportunity for life continuing after the death of the body & brain comes the incentive for moral creation. As we see the world and apply what we understand to be morality we acquire the ability to create the very substance of that Afterlife.

As we make those moral decisions, 'imprinted' as they are with our identity and relative capability, we build our claim for a place in the afterlife.

Where a life has never achieved a morally capable state there is no claim. Any material created by its brain stream is absorbed back into the cycle of energy & matter continuing in the universe until the end of time. There of course we re-join the larger subject of the fate of non-thinking species and other entities. But these are out of scope for this model.

Before going on to look at the afterlife, lets pause for a moment to remind ourselves that this model is not created for its own sake. It is a practical illustration of how a moral God can have created the universe we know about, providing a purpose for our lives and rewarding us for a good one. It is the same universe where general relativity & quantum mechanics vie to explain existence itself, where biological evolution and the selfish gene unveil the mysteries of life.

So what place does M1 have in this enlightenment?

Partly, as comfort from the fear of absolute and empty death but perhaps more importantly as an incentive to use our great gifts to start building that perfect life here, in our material world by understanding and adopting simpler and better rules to live by. In that spirit, the following 3 guidances are suggested:

- 1) You should create (and conversely, you should not destroy)
- 2) You should respect (and conversely, you should not abuse)
- 3) You should be true (and conversely, you should not lie or deceive)

If all of humanity accepted and lived by these rules would we still be killing each other in the name of God?

I doubt it. I doubt too that the brutal and wasteful machine of capitalism would still be functioning as it does. It has only thrived this far because we failed to converge as a species on a better lifestyle. One which fuses morality and human nature with all its flaws. More on this in the later section 'Living By The Rational Faith'

AFTERLIFE

To start with, Afterlife can be defined as some form of continuation for individual personalities after the mortal death of the body from which they came. But it also refers to the whole domain, or place where such individuals are 'hosted'. A place where even some form of eternal co-habitation is possible.

As we've discussed earlier, the existence of an afterlife resolves some of the problems of injustice & imperfection arising out of Extreme Diversity. By providing a much larger context for life than this brief flicker of mortality we can rise above the anger, sadness and frustration provoked by much of what we see.

It also offers rewards both to God and the creatures qualifying for it. Put crudely, for God there is company, living entities sharing a domain of the universe outside the reach of ED. For us, some of those potentially lucky qualifying creatures, there is a liberated form of existence continuing forever alongside our creator.

All afterlife exists in a domain of the universe currently out of range of science - maybe in what we currently call the dark universe. I refer to this later in this text as the eternity zone.

Our known universe, that part which can be seen, detected or explained by current science exists in the same space as the dark universe and there is a direct link between them which we do not currently understand. A picture of this coexistence is provided in the section 'an illustration in particles' below.

As we've discussed above, the action of Morality Keys and the Channel mechanism have rendered our essence into a new entity and delivered it into this mysterious 'place' - called by the ancient religions - heaven.

But what kind of 'life' would we enjoy in such a form, in such a place?

During our lifetime, consciousness resides in parts of our brain where sensory information is brought together with other elements of intelligence. When we dream, this process continues despite the absence of direct stimulus from our senses. Dreams provide an important insight into the possibility of out of body consciousness.

M1 proposes that the Channel mechanism uses our morality keys to pass some of the output of our brain stream to an entity with an alternative mental apparatus. Here it waits in this 'brain space' before becoming energised after our death.

Initially and in fact throughout our mortal life this structure would be inert, a static image of all our preserved memories surrounded by a reserved space, made and scaled by the Channel process.

At the moment death becomes final (this may be some time after the moment medics would define it) a source of energy is introduced into the brain space, causing it to begin acting like a consciousness albeit one in a dream state.

This newly energised brain space has access to all of the mortal memories and much of the emotional content which made up our living identity.

The point at which this energising takes place is the point from where the moral brain cannot be revived. As to when precisely this occurs and according to what rules, I will leave this open for now.

Now, in the revived, dream-like state our Afterlife would begin. The size of virtual brain which has been made for us and the quality of its content has been determined by the moral quality of our lives signified by the Morality Keys generated during our life.

A wasteful, neglectful or evil life would be reflected by a small space with meagre memories and minimal surviving identity. Exceptionally there might be no brain at all. Generous and productive lives would result in a large space with much of our identity & capacity intact.

But to what end? What now for these disembodied structures, these Afterbrains?

I think it likely that a new journey would now begin. Initially the identity of the life from which the Afterbrain emerged is strong and its interests would reflect the personality & life it came from. This might involve the desire and perhaps ability to connect in some subtle way with those still living, relatives and friends via a feint particle channel. I think it unlikely this connection can do much more than eavesdrop on the thoughts of the living and maybe 'whisper' in their dreams, perhaps not even quite that much.

Over time, however, the Afterbrain would become more interested in the other Afterbrains, joining with them in some way to form communities with shared memories and capabilities. A journey of excitement, discovery, stimulation and revelation would continue. Those earning the greatest rewards would enjoy the longest journeys. Imagine if the memories of those figures in history became part of your own. Their experiences are now also yours and vice versa.

Eventually, each one of these community shifts would likely result in a weakening of individual identity in favour of the collective until ultimately the final community is joined.

This is the one with the closest link with the creator: God. Not completely one and the same entity but linked sufficiently for its common consciousness to share the mission of God & many of its capabilities.

But what of the lazy & evil?

The conversion which takes place in The Channel uses the morality keys created by our life decisions to allocate the afterbrain space. This is according to the net lifetime moral contribution. It follows that with meagre contribution comes very limited space allocation, a small afterlife. But what does small mean here?

I will speculate that by the time the morally positive memories and emotions have been separated from the negative ones and the limited entity resulting has been joined to its tiny brain space, the afterlife resulting will be very limited in scope and depth. The journey through the communities would be a shallower experience due to the small surviving identity, there would be less scope for exploration and understanding, less pleasure in the widest sense of the word.

Of course those who have lived entirely or overwhelmingly evil or neglectful lives do not reach this point. For them, there is no Afterlife, just oblivion. For these, The Channel would merely re-cycle the mainstream matter where it would ultimately find its way back into the cycle of matter-energy.

Does the Afterlife End?

The most likely outcome for our universe according to M1 is the reversal of the Big Bang's inflation and the eventual collapse of all matter & energy back into a Primordial Entity. It is possible to see this process as one which has to lead ultimately in the destruction of the Afterbrain spaces. If this is so, it would be at a time very far forward from where we are now but time, in this context is not such a helpful tool.

I will offer, however, that things might be a little more interesting. As the implosion of the universe begins, much of the world of our known matter and energy will become unstable. The compression of the universe would, however be less meaningful in the physical space where the afterbrain forms exist. Mapped as a timeline of implosion, this zone would be at the very core of the universe, in other words, the last place to feel the final 'compression'. Further, I think it highly likely that part of the process of implosion and the re-assembly of the Primordial Entity would be the opening of a portal, passage or conduit through which the accumulated brain space is passed. Passed where? That's another story.

AN ILLUSTRATION IN PARTICLES

Introduction

In the sections above I have spoken of brain streams and brain spaces housing a non-biological form of intelligence. I've acknowledged that for such a thing to exist even hypothetically we will need additional dimensions of existence, new particle classes and systems interacting between them. Only then could such things as the master code, morality key and the afterbrain conceivably exist.

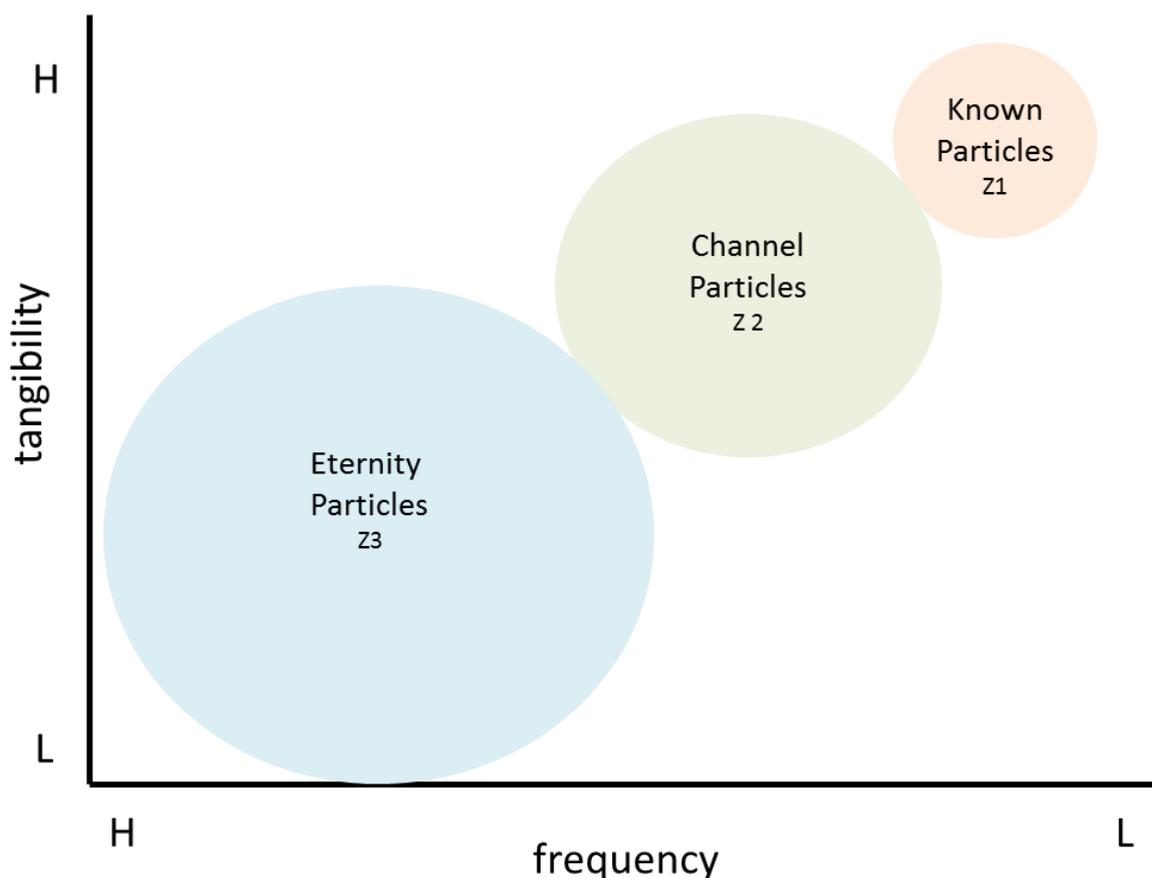
In the next few pages therefore, I have laid out a more practical illustration of how some of this would work.

Since the human mind is a complex system using biological organisation and processes any thought-based existence after the brain has died requires some form of conversion. Such a conversion would render the Afterbrain to a state where it can host human thought just as when it was in the biological form. This existence though would be in a purely particulate form, ie away from living tissue.

If you've accepted the possibility of thought preserved as matter encoded with moral attributes you can now go the extra mile and imagine how this could work on a practical level.

To imagine what the journey into this world might be like as a practical proposition we have to strip away the complexity for a while and think about a single particle, just one of the trillions which would make up that stream.

To start this discussion I'd like to use a diagram for some context:



This chart tries to illustrate the relationship between the various classes of particles required to play host to this moral universe. I restrict myself to particles here because I think the distinction between energy & matter is irrelevant to this discussion as they become interchangeable at the sub defined levels imagined here.

I use 3 bubbles to distinguish between domains in this illustration. They are plotted via their tangibility (visibility) & frequency (commonness).

To explain, I'll start with the top right-hand bubble - the Known Particles.

As you can see, it's the smallest of the 3 bubbles and this is deliberate for I propose that there are fewer of them than the others. This class of particles includes everything we know to exist within current science from those we can see or detect to those we can only propose through mathematical modelling.

I'm suggesting that these are relatively small in number when compared with other particle classes but are much easier to visualise and understand. Low frequency, high tangibility. I've placed all of these particle classes in a single domain which I've called zone 1, Z1.

All relative and quantum science lives there. Whatever new science comes from fields such as super symmetry, quark decomposition et al remain firmly in this bubble; the tangible, dare I say, the obvious.

In the middle of the diagram is the second class of particles, the Channel. As you can see, there would be more of these proportional to known particles but they are harder to find. Impossible, in fact, using 21st century science. This class of particles is the one which joins our more familiar universe and all its forms with the place where the Afterlife would be hosted - the Eternity Zone.

For M1 to work there would need to be a huge and highly complex system of interworking matter-energy whose job is to convert and transmit billions of brain streams to their new home. The Channel is also where any interaction between the Eternity Zone and our real, tangible universe would be facilitated.

Finally, at the bottom left is the Eternity Zone. The place where Afterlife is hosted at least for as long as our universe exists.

These particle classes would include everything needed to support the individual Afterbrains, their communities and all the energy transmitting across them.

Let me explain this a little more.

I've described known particles (all atomic & sub-atomic matter with all its known sub-particles) as highly tangible but not very frequently found.

When I talk of frequency or commonness here I am talking in the absolute not the relative sense. In the context of the whole true universe our known particles may be very visible to science but they account for little more than 20% of what we calculate to exist, even in the version of the universe science currently conceives. Something else makes up the other 80%. The small bubble in the top right of the diagram is meant to signify that 20% with the other 2 bubbles containing what's left. They contain particles which are much harder to find but which make up most of our universe. Let's consider these three bubbles a little more closely.

Known particles

Everything we know about, everything we consider to exist is made up of particles. The distinction between energy and matter becomes blurred when we stare down hard enough beyond the physical world that we can experience with our senses. That journey down the microscope starts with microorganisms and continues through chemical compounds into atoms and then sub- atomic particles like neutrons and electrons.

A wonderful animation of this journey is available on the internet in Cary Huang's scale model of the universe <http://htwins.net/scale/>.

As you drag the slider of his viewer to the left you take your journey through atoms, protons, quarks & neutrinos to the very edge of what we call existence. Everything you can see in this animation is inside that 'known particles' bubble in my diagram above and I dare say there will be a few more particles discovered in time.

This is a very vivid depiction of the scarcity of these particles in my terms. As you travel between say the proton and the quark you find a scale zooming in at 1:1,000 or to put another way the proton is 1,000 times larger than a quark. If you imagine a journey into the proton culminating in an encounter with its quarks, along the way you would have encountered vast amounts of 'space'. The trouble is most of the physical universe is like this. Even for very dense elements like lead, once you explore it's particle structure it is mostly consisting of space or more accurately an undefined substance we think of as space.

If there is a physical dimension to the moral universe it must exist in this undefined space and it must have some formal relationship with those known particles because, as we've seen, our moral choices are first captured and encoded there. The trick is to stop thinking about space as if it were nothing or emptiness and start thinking about it as the mysterious substance which binds everything else together or at least connects it in some way. This is the world of the other two bubbles in my diagram.

This space therefore is anything but. It is a complex and highly active domain where ultimately there is only one thing missing: actual space. Everything that seems like space is just a less dense substrate than the ones it 'touches'. This is the 'place' where the other particle classes exist.

But it's not just space that's an illusion. Conceptually even the smallest conceivable particle must break down into smaller structures. We often think of particles conceptually as spheres, ping pong balls filled with air. We get the skin of the balls, made of plastic, itself formed of compounds each formed from structures, bonds and energy. This skin is relatively more dense than the interior of the ball which is filled only with gasses: air.

The physical world is a mix of densities and connections and the particles which comprise them belong to different domains as illustrated in my diagram.

Channel Particles

These particles occur more frequently (smaller & more populous) but are undetectable to our current science. Their purpose would be to provide a means of interacting between the other 2 zones in this diagram. Cheekily, I might compare these to the function of gluons & photons in zone 1 where the forces of strong attraction and electromagnetism use special particles to do their job of holding things together.

In the discussion up till now these interactions could include the creation & development of the brain stream itself as well as potential interactions between zone 3 (the place where our afterlives would exist) and zone 1 (our physical world). If God intervenes in our lives to change things, this would be the physical conduit for this.

Channel particles would exist as a whole family of types with different behaviours and characteristics analogous to the many particle cell forms & mechanisms in physics & biology. Their job is to capture the moral dimension of our thoughts and transmit them to their destination after first transforming them.

Eternity Particles

At the outer reaches of existence would be the eternity zone, whose particles are most populous & least tangible. If our brains are transmitting our moral decisions via the channel, this is where the transmission goes to. Here they would be assembled into a new structure where they would exist 'forever'.

If there is a form of consciousness & identity in our afterlife then this is where it would live.

In this illustration such a domain would be a place where our 'spirits' could observe and interact with everything in space-time including the moral, physical world we live in. Such interventions would be facilitated via the channel particles but for now I will leave this idea as a mere possibility.

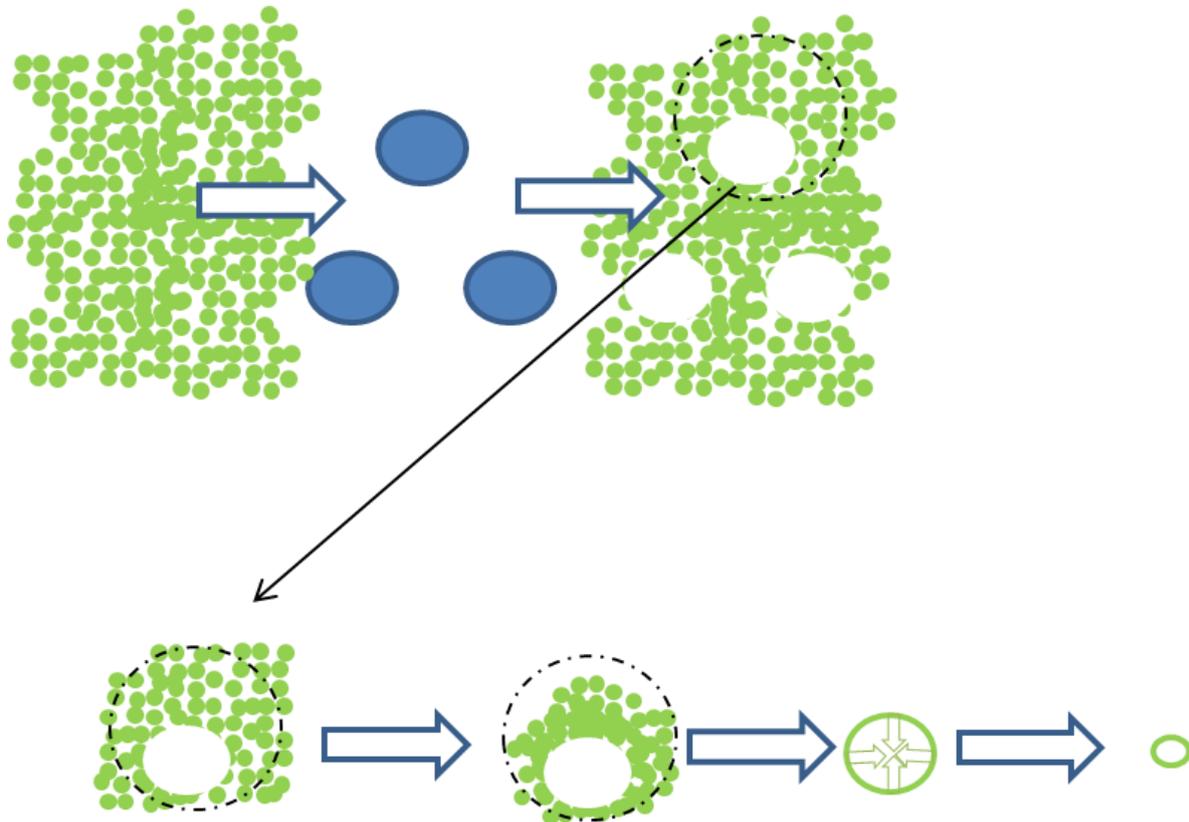
Morality Particles

Not wishing to confuse my illustration of the 3 main particle types above, a morality particle is that superset of all of these particles which are involved in some way in the handling of morally encoded content. By definition, it will include particles from all 3 zones but there will be many other particles not involved in morality processes which perform other tasks in the true universe.

Of course this is a purely conceptual illustration. Reality is likely to be messier than my neat little 3 zone model.

The Journey of a Morality Particle

And so to another diagram.



In this diagram the small dots are examples of one type of channel particle which, for simplicity's sake, exist in uniform fields passing through our world in a continuous sweep. Think of them perhaps as fishing nets with a fine weave narrow enough to catch any of those big particles from our physical world.

As the large particles (from our 'real' world) strike their surface the net tears and allows the particle through leaving a very precise hole. Imagine further that the net was not just a single, thin layer like a fisherman's but a thicker version which, as the particle passes through it, keeps a complete 3 dimensional impression of the particle. What we now have is thick net with a hole inside it the same size and shape as our big particle passing by.

Now that the net has been breached a process of repair is triggered which draws material from the surrounding area encasing the hole like an implosion. The implosion continues until the inner wall of the hole collapses and the material is pushed to its core effectively forming a miniature version of the particle which passed through. The miniature now breaks off from the mesh of the net and begins a new life as a particle in its own right.

This would be one tiny step in the chain of process that would be needed to take a structure of particles from our physical layer of the universe to the eternity zone.

These massively complex and powerful processes would together form the Channel.

In this simplistic example, the field of channel particles (zone 2) has captured a scale image of the original one, perhaps part of a brain neuron (zone 1). This single particle from the biochemical entity in our brain would be one of trillions of coordinated transformations required to take the thought-moment and render it to a form where it, or more accurately a copy of it can be transmitted to a new place.

The cargo carried by these channel particles would be the essence of our morality episodes, that part of the brain stream preserved according to its moral content.

As discussed earlier, these morality episodes would include identity information which would allow streams of such episodes to be assembled into something equivalent to conscious memory albeit one existing outside of any biological body.

If you are now screaming with incredulity I would respectfully point you back again at the bodies of human knowledge in physics & biology where mechanisms far more preposterous than this exist and are proven. I give you DNA replication as one easy example or if you want the ultimate example, try the physiology of human thought & consciousness and test it for incredulity.

Having said all that, the mechanism described above is, of course, a caricature. If a process like this exists it would operate in a hugely complex way, preserving information on identity, moral content and capability.

The Size of Sins & Sains

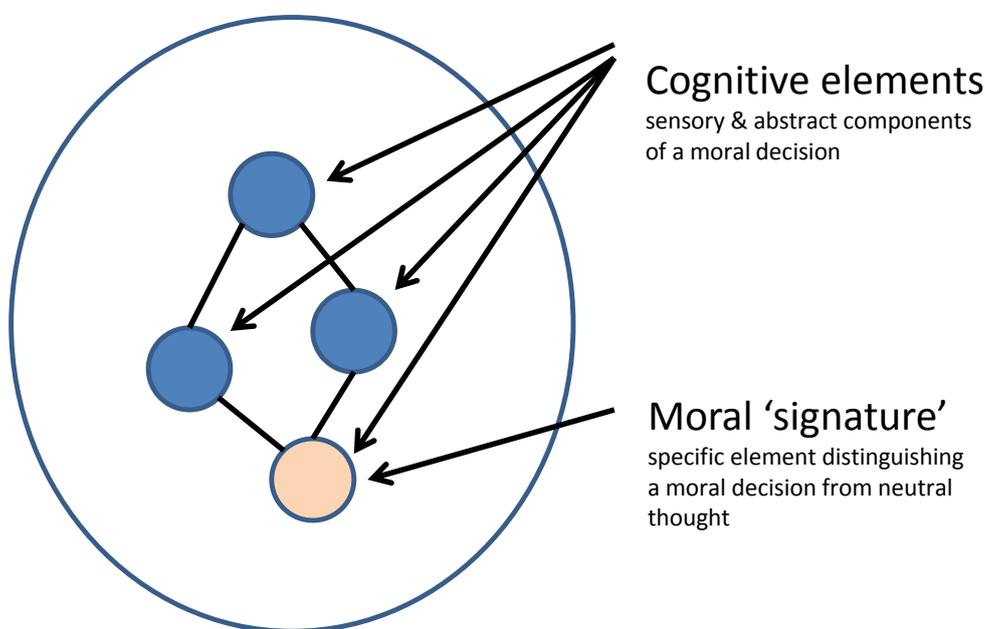
The illustration in particles has so far dealt with the passage of a single particle of 'moral matter' from the world where we live to the eternity zone.

For something as complex as a preserved thought, let alone a thought-episode an immensely complex transformation would be required.

The system for that transformation, the Channel, has to do much more than merely convert forms from one to another & I'll describe this shortly. In the larger view however, we also have to think about how the relationship between the kind of life we have led and the one we might be rewarded with is determined. What are the mechanics of such a determination?

In the earlier discussion I mentioned that the core of these processes are the Morality Keys, formed during our mortal life.

ANATOMY OF A SA/IN



In this conceptual diagram, a bubble represents something I will call a moral episode, that is, a period of time in which one core moral decision or focus dominates the conscious brain. During this episode, a combination of sensory (dark circles) & abstract (lighter circles) content is combined with identity data (represented by the skin of the bubble).

The bubble's formation is complete when the boundary of a moral episode is reached. This is the moment in time when the focus of thought moves to another subject or another facet of the same one. The shift in focus would cause the bubble to pass its contents over to other processes especially the memory. Additional to these M1 proposes that the same content passes out of the brain through the brainstem & into the Afterlife Channel.

The contents of each of these snapshot bubbles represent the tip of a mountain of processes in the entire neurological system.

These include all of the sensory apparatus of consciousness as well as the more abstract actions we associate with philosophical & moral thinking. They also include things which endure or are formed over much longer periods, some of them for a whole lifetime. This would include that all important capacity indicators which distinguish the afflicted from the gifted.

Somewhere in the patterns formed by this gigantic 'machine' are the morality keys fashioned from elements of each part of the thought episode. These are combined with indicators showing the underlying capacity of the brain to think morally together with the original morality key signature, replicated from the one present in the Primordial Entity.

The other function to consider is size. The darker circles in the diagram contain the cognitive content, the lighter ones house indicators of polarity (good v evil) and size (severity).

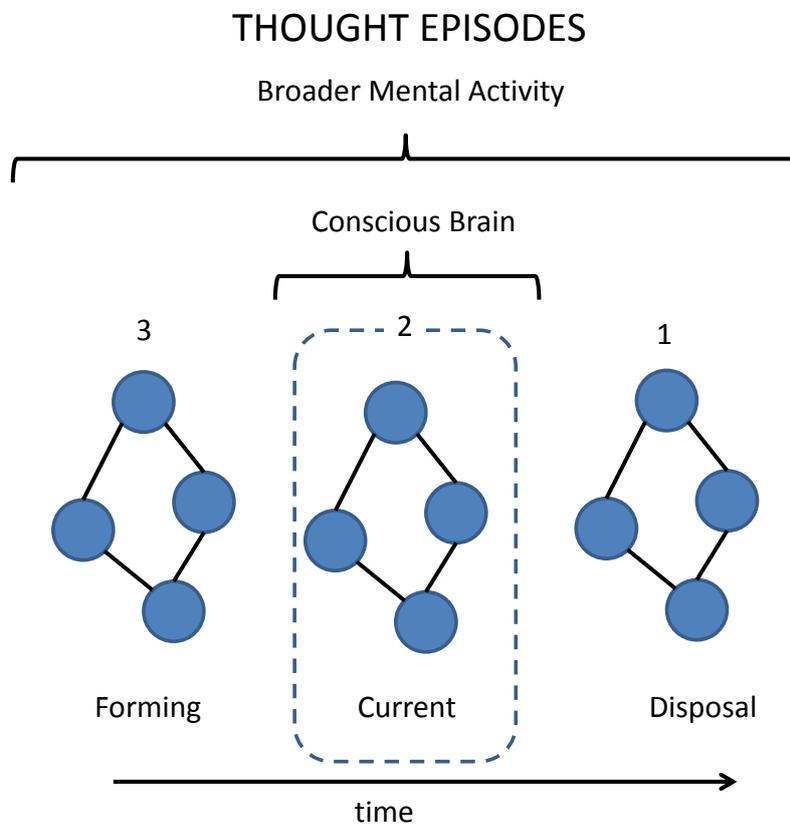
The means by which these indicators are generated is a detail I will omit for now. Suffice to say it will involve mapping patterns generated from the specific thought with ones inherited from the Master key.

The purpose of the bubble is to encapsulate everything needed to determine the reward or otherwise for the exercise of moral choice within the thought as well as passing on memory (content). And so to the Channel.

The Channel & the Bigger Journey

I mentioned above that as a thought episode ends it passes its product in that conceptual bubble containing cognitive & morality information. The brain deals with some of this by committing various parts to memory. The moral output however, is processed outside in the brainstream.

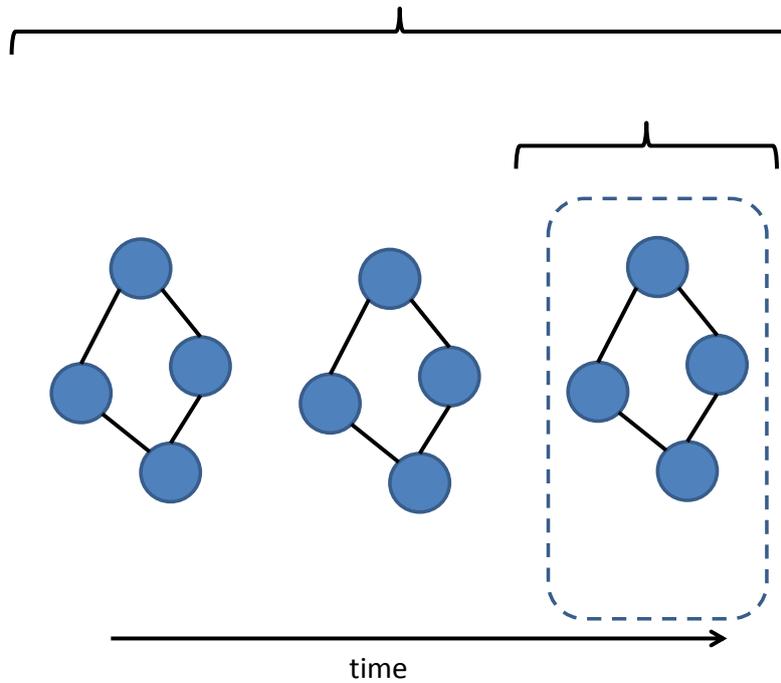
To understand this a little better here is another diagram:



Here, that conscious moment is depicted as a window (the central area within the dotted box), a frame within a time sequence where stimuli from both abstract and sensory inputs come together in the conscious brain for a period in time.

Cluster no1 on the right hand side represents the thought just passed. Cluster no2 in the centre is the one occupying consciousness now. No3 is the forming thought which will replace the current one. No3 is a difficult one to comprehend as it depends partially on things which have not yet happened.

In the next moment, cluster 2 moves to the right where some of it may be committed to memory but much more will be erased to make way for the next thought.



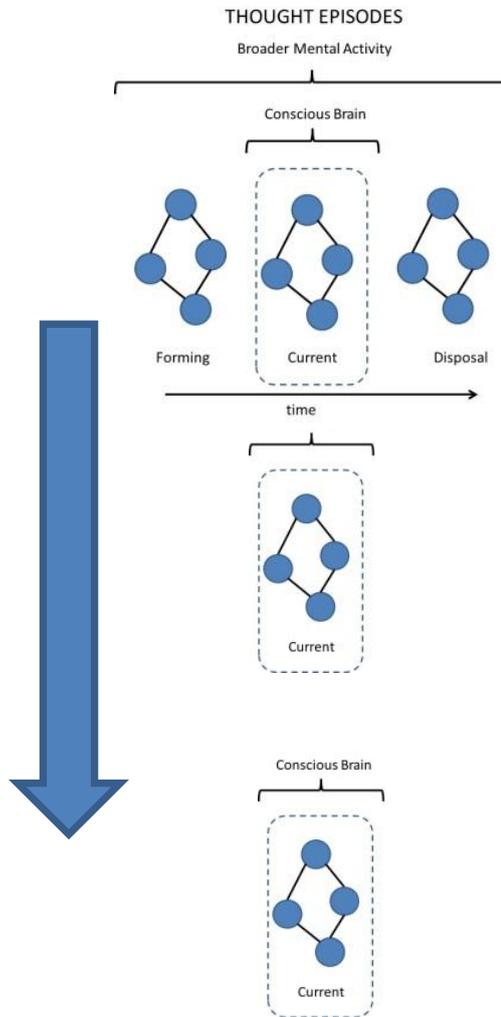
There is, of course, sufficient overlap between one frame and the next to make the experience manageable, with abstract faculties like judgement & emotion reacting more slowly to change.

But with the next 'moment' the forming thought moves from the subconscious into the main window where it begins a new thought episode, and so on.

The mechanics of how all this happens is handled organically by the brain and some of it is understood by current neuroscience.

Moving back to M1, the first action of the Channel is to take a snapshot of that central window so that it can be passed out from the brain for further processing before that brain disposes of it.

Brainstream



A sequence of these snapshots as shown above would be captured by a mechanism, perhaps like the one described above for morality particles. Thus the brainstream is exported into a new space outside of the body where it can be further processed by the channel.

Much like the single frames in an old movie roll, these memories are static, accurate but lifeless until they can be loaded onto a projector and brought back to life by the coordinated exposure of each frame at a speed sufficient to create the illusion of movement.

The brain of course is much more complex than a movie strip. For a start, consciousness relies on a myriad of simultaneous inputs. It achieves its conscious state partly by using these to stimulate various thematic faculties such as the emotion & judgement centres.

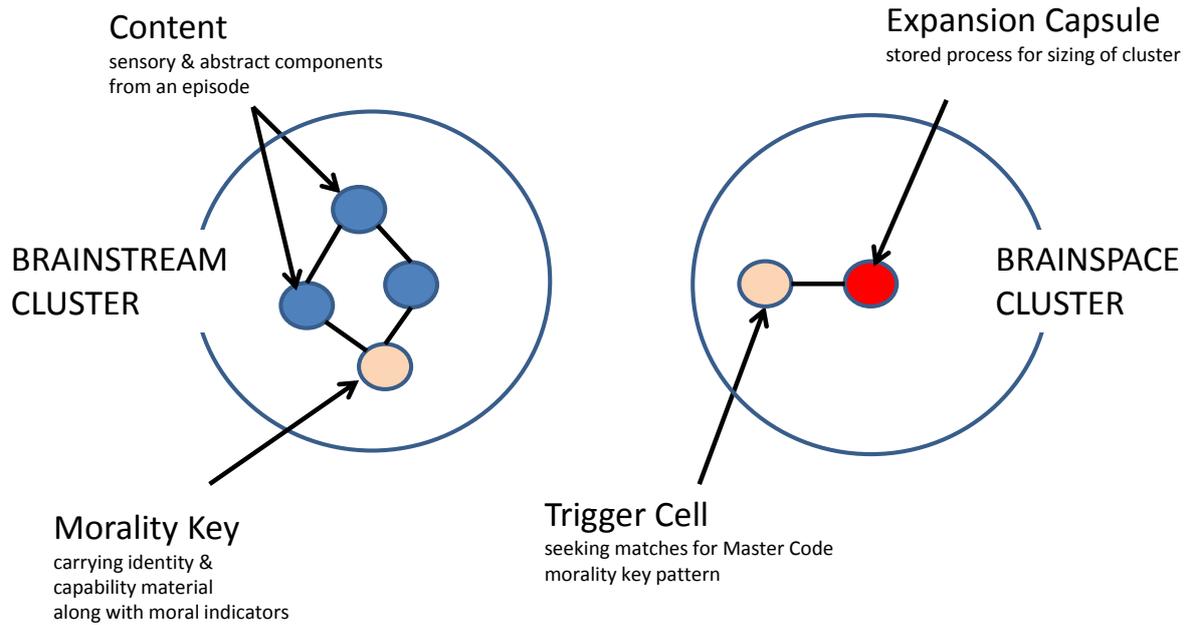
For something equivalent to be re-created outside of the brain we will require a projector, loudspeakers and a screen.

Here M1 proposes the next of the Channel processes: brainspace acquisition. This is my name for the process by which these brainstream frames are assessed and preserved so that they can ultimately be replayed to re-create the original mind or at least, that part permitted by the act of moral judgement.

To facilitate this 2 particle clusters have to connect: the brainstream cluster and the brainspace cluster.

To help, another diagram follows:

BRAINSTREAM CHANNELING



At this point I need to introduce a new entity alongside the brainstream cluster we have already talked about.

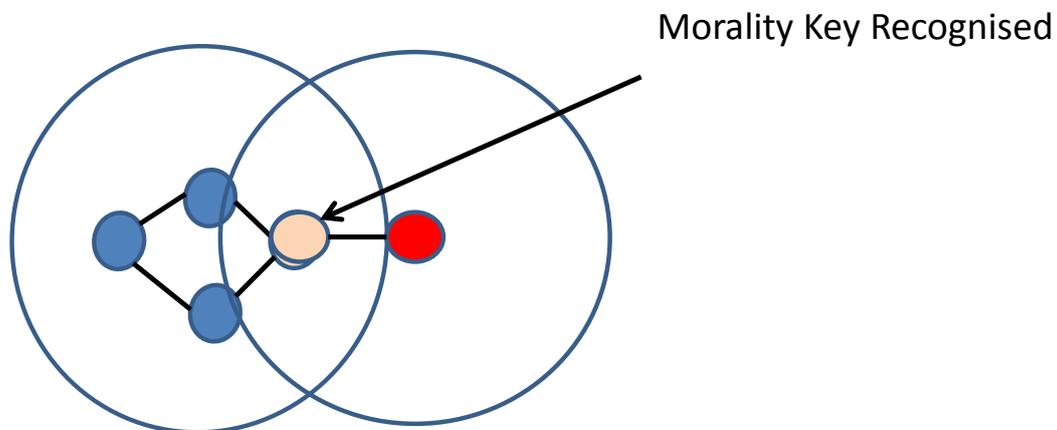
This is the Brainspace cluster, shown here on the right, many of which would exist in a neutral state, probably in the channel zone of my 3 particles classes.

The clue to the purpose of these clusters is in their name. Their function is to provide some of the building blocks for the re-assembly of brainstream content into something equivalent to a brain but existing outside of organic form. I call this entity the Afterbrain.

These Brainspace clusters are free of content initially but contain the means to connect with a brainstream cluster via its Morality key.

Brainspace clusters would exist with one primary aim in mind - to find a brainstream cluster and connect with it. This would be achieved via the trigger cell shown above connecting successfully with a Morality Key from a Brainstream cluster much like receptors work in biology.

KEY MATCH



The purpose of this union is to enable the conversion of the original brainspace cluster into something where it can not only become re-energised when the Afterlife begins but also scaled to reflect the quality of the thought which gave rise to it.

In the diagram below the successful connection has led to recognition of positive content. This in turn has caused the brainspace cluster to expand. A larger area is now available for the original brainstream cluster to occupy. This space is proportional to the value or quality of the linked Morality Key. This enlarged space is available for shared memories and sensations access via other Afterbrains. This is the reward for the innocents who may not have been able to generate much positive memory themselves but are given an enlarged capacity for access to others.

Of course it is a little misleading to refer this reward as a mere allocation of neutral space with which to surround the preserved brainstream cluster.

In fact, this space is a dynamic place containing the components needed for the handling of these stored memories. The 'larger' the space, the more advanced these components will be. Ultimately this will determine the capacity for handling new Afterbrain thinking and consciousness.

To understand where this is going we have to refer back to that conceptual bubble I used to illustrate the capture of a moral episode.

Here I tried to represent human biological consciousness as the tip of an iceberg of highly complex information flows. The full apparatus of consciousness is not fully understood by neuroscience. I'd like to propose that it is the place where certain patterns converge, combining as they do, sensory & abstract information. The capacity of this apparatus is limited by the number of brain cells allocated to it. This limitation gives rise to things like attention span and abstraction boundaries.

When this space is full we have a system to empty it or more accurately refresh it so that we can handle new inputs. These continue for as long as we are alive.

This space manager is of course, our memory. It stores an image of things we have thought about and can recall them when they are needed back in the conscious brain.

This is not a nice luxury, it is an essential part of intelligence and consciousness. The hierarchy of stored memories and the way they signal their availability to our conscious mind is an astonishing faculty and one which has to be replicated in the Afterbrain.

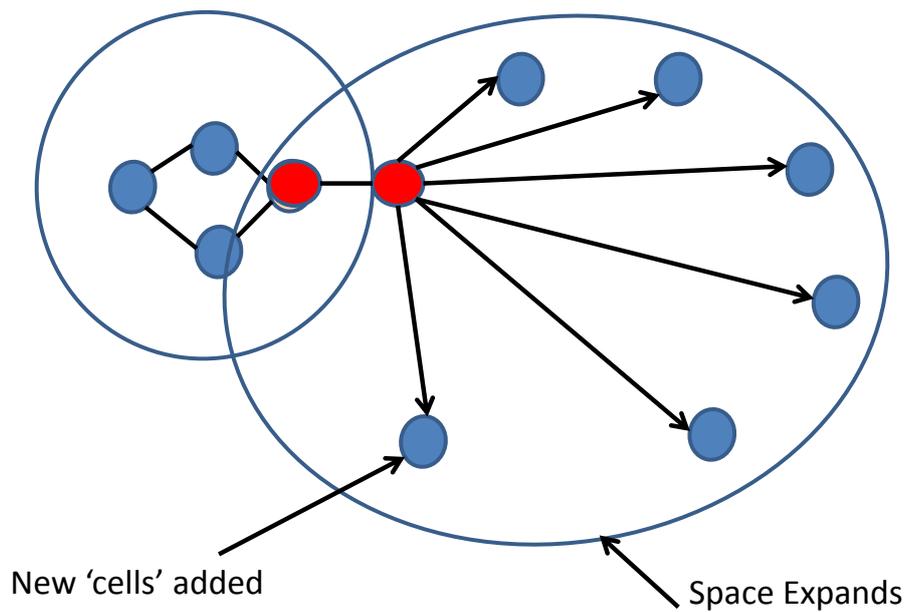
The memory system is much like what IT folk call backing store in a computer. The brain chip (CPU) where all the magic happens is similarly limited in how much information it can hold & work on. To be useful it is connected via wires to other devices storing vast amounts of data which can be ferried back and forth to the brain for use. It is only where the two things are working together when anything useful happens and the system can be said to be live.

Of course it takes much more than a wire to allow these transfers to happen. The information has to be stored in a particular way and indexed so it is easy to find when it is needed.

Once a piece of data, a memory, is required a series of slave processes carry out the chore of finding it and pumping it down the wires into the brain (chip). The amount of data transferred (its size) is determined by the design of the filing system. It cannot send more information than the brain has capacity for. In computers this size is relatively fixed but in the Afterbrain it is flexible until all moral content has been evaluated.

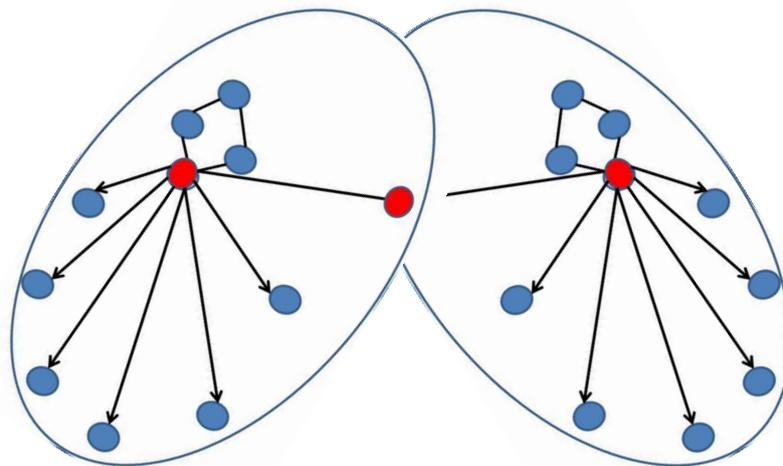
So coming back to the Brainspace cluster, the process triggered when a cell recognises a Morality Key is the one which allocates the connectors through which this memory can later be accessed via the Afterbrain. The size of the expansion is determined by the content of the Morality Key and the higher its value the greater the capacity of the space created.

TRIGGER CLUSTER IGNITION



This process makes a little more sense when considered in the context of the overall building project. For a fully functioning afterbrain to exist a structure equivalent to our living brains is needed. This would include that same iceberg of systems and flows connecting both stimuli and memory data in a pinnacle space where the magic of consciousness happens.

To form such a structure, each of the 'bubbles' from the moral episodes are processed in turn until the structure has captured every qualifying thought.



And so the Afterbrain forms its organised memory in readiness for its 'switch-on'.

Many other process are required, of course, to render the Afterbrain ready to function like a thinking organ.

Most important of these is the pinnacle cluster where the new consciousness would reside. All of the subsystems to connect this pinnacle with the handlers for memory and stimuli in the entire Afterbrain structure would need to be in place before it could be considered functional.

Stimuli handlers are of course, those subsystems which handle things like taste, touch, sound etc in our living state. In the Afterbrain their function would be different because there is no physical body to connect with.

Instead, the Afterbrain would connect with others accessing their memories and assimilating them into their own consciousness.

So how does this intricately formed but disembodied brain become active? At the moment the biological brain dies or sometime before or after?

It makes most sense to me that our mental life essence, that energy which flows through the passageways in our brain is transferred in some way at the moment of brain death.

As we know from countless news stories this can occur quite some time after a body has ceased functioning.

It is not always easy for doctors to say exactly when brain death has occurred. Very long periods of coma with little detectable electrical activity in the brain is sometimes followed by complete recovery.

That said, whatever problems we have in identifying the moment, it does eventually come as a final and absolute event. I submit that the Afterbrain 'switch-on' can only occur after or perhaps during this event.

As the Afterbrain becomes active it begins to draw data from the preserved memories. As to which order these memories are retrieved in I can only speculate. Much like in our dream state, the brain, free of conscious stimuli sifts through areas of memory which percolate up into the pinnacle where consciousness resides.

Just like in our living dream state what then occurs is a simulation of the real world. Memories or variations taken from them are processed like stimuli to form pseudo experiences.

So the first phase of the afterlife is just like a normal dream and likely to be largely about those positive experiences preserved via those Morality Keys.

As time passes however the stimuli handlers elsewhere in the Afterbrain begin to make connections outside of itself. Connections to other Afterbrains are the most obvious and likely of these.

As they occur, a form of communication via shared memories becomes possible and beyond those almost certainly a fusing of conscious thought.

Just as in a new born baby, these functions would be learned, developed and enjoyed as the Afterbrain becomes mature.

Included in this Afterbrain domain would be systems to make this development easier and more pleasurable. These would include devices to draw Afterbrains with overlapping memories together. Here we meet our lost friends and relatives. Later on, other patterns in our memories representing interests or passions might lead to other absorbing connections.

The number of connections each afterbrain can make is limited only by the capacity allocated to it during the processing of those Morality Keys. This is where our reward for the life we led becomes real.

A feeble moral life would give us modest scope for a handful of connections and limited interest. A life of great contribution or endurance would result in a much more handsome pay-off.

Over time, our mortal life identity would likely become less distinctive as we spend more time with kindred spirits and eventually perhaps merge with them.

Perhaps this eternal dream can seem as frightening to consider as that black curtain we've been saved from?

But when we dream we don't consider ourselves to be in an inferior place. We do not yearn to wake up unless we are experiencing a nightmare. Nightmares, of course, come from negative thought: amoral or immoral content and this of course is absent from the Afterlife.

If not frightening then perhaps boring. No scope for vice or indulgence of any kind?

Here I will remind you that pleasure is only sinful if it is at the expense of the wellbeing of others. This leaves an awfully big scope. If you want an orgy in the Afterlife there would be nothing to stop you but your imagination! And you can eat the finest food for the rest of time!

So where do we meet God?

This I believe would be a further journey. Our existence in the eternity zone assures our survival and in that sense we have already met the creator. The longer we spend in the Afterlife the further away we move from the trivialities and preoccupations of our previous mortal lives.

If we have left those things behind what replaces them is true nature of God itself. God's mission, endurance and ultimately, it's love.

This illustration has sought to show how a moral universe might work as a series of practical mechanisms.

These require the existence of forms and functions well beyond anything yet proposed or conceived of in science. That said I hope that the creative extrapolation of contemporary science conducted here demonstrates that it is possible to imagine a universe where the things we know to be true from science and the things we may sense to be true from religion can be reconciled.

THE OLD RELIGIONS REVISITED

Emerging from this illustration I am drawn to ask if this simpler, cleaner, model of the moral universe is credible and viable, do we still need the older, more elaborate systems of belief and practice? Given all the confusion and conflict which flows from these, could we not do better?

I should say at the outset that I'm looking at the religions here, not the churches. What I mean is the body of beliefs and behaviours that surround them as distinct from the institutions who govern or represent them. By the term old I just mean established, hence my inclusion here of Intelligent Design.

I suppose the crucial thing is what is meant by *need* in this context. Taken as read that this question applies only to those of us who are not confirmed atheists, it presents a theoretical choice between an established religion, perhaps an ancient one and this new, sketchily imagined, minimalist one.

I think the need in question is the requirement for a different balance of the rational and the mystical. As I said earlier, I don't reject mysticism at all but I feel very uncomfortable with a system of belief & explanation which are 100% mystique & 0% science.

If I were forced to express the mix acceptable to me in numerical form I would probably say 80-20. That is 80% science & 20% mysticism.

But numbers could be misleading here. Does the 20% represent a level of reliance or some proportion of the overall theory that I would assign to a permanently unscientific world? For me, the 20% is expressing several things: firstly, my illustration is just that, an example of how things could be not a full blown assertion of how things are. Secondly, even with my illustration in play, there are things beyond the boundary which I cannot understand, explain or even speculate usefully about. All this lives in the 20%.

So where does that leave the old religions? For me, they are largely redundant. I use that word advisedly.

Some very important ideas from these religions stand up well to examination here. This is also true of some of the events recounted from history in the documents of those religions. What is redundant is not the core beliefs of those religions but the extensive web of ritual and behaviour which has been spun by men to surround them. Sadly it is often these rituals, the trappings of religion which have led to such horrific conflict in our world.

That said, I am mindful that M1's second commandment *You Should Respect* requires me to adopt a tolerant, even generous posture towards these faiths and more especially those who believe in them and practice their required behaviours.

So I suppose this enquiry is more about placing these religions in the context of that respectful appreciation than any serious attempt to reconcile them with M1.

A faith adhering simply to the core behaviours of the 3 commandments in M1 is of course free from all the required rituals, rules and practices which centre on the religion itself rather than the underlying beliefs.

Such a faith is what I call 'The Rational Faith'.

Christianity

I'm no theologian, but I have been a reasonably diligent practicing Catholic for most of my adult life and so the easiest way for me to start looking at this is to take a fresh look at my 'old' faith from this crisper, rationalised viewpoint.

But where to start?

The Holy Trinity

This is the central construct of the Roman Catholic religion, as it is for most Christian faiths. Since it is used to answer that core question I posed at the start of this text (What is God?) I thought it a reasonable place to begin.

The Trinity refers to the three distinct yet co-existing manifestations of God: the Father; the Son & the Holy Spirit. It exists primarily to explain how Jesus Christ could have been human & God at one and the same time. Yet trying to find the origins of this construct is, like many such fundamental elements of the old religions, problematic. I'm no historian either, so as there are many respectable accounts of its potential origin at least as an idea, I'll restrict myself to looking at how it could be valid in the world of the Rational Faith.

Taking the simpler version of the Big Bang (the singular one⁸), the source of the Primordial Entity would be God the Father. Father, that is, of the Master Code and what it brings. Job done. I'm serious - in this line of logic, it may be that the only use for God the Father is to create the code and launch it via the Big Bang. If we extend beyond the singular model to the oscillating version of the Big Bang⁹ then God the Father resumes its role at the point of the next singularity when everything in the universe condenses back to a single point.

The Holy Spirit is the next dimension of the Trinity. In this explanation I will suggest this is the term for the entity which Afterbrains existing in the Eternity Zone can eventually bond with.

God the Son, aka Jesus Christ in the Christian religions, is the most explicit intervention God, an actual incarnation; a human life created for the purpose of influencing our species away from evil. Delivered via a life of teaching & exemplification followed by suffering and unjust death. Perhaps most importantly, the life of Christ exists to show that death is not the end of everything and that an afterlife is available to all.

In M1, if God deems that the mission to enlarge goodness at least in the human universe was likely to fail, perhaps because Extreme Diversity on its own was too destructive then the creation of a human leader would be a valid counterbalance.

Thinking about Heaven, Purgatory & Hell we can surely see these in the operation of the Morality Key, the Channel and the Afterlife journey.

As you can see, the Holy Trinity and the Christian version of the Afterlife can be made to work within the universe of the Rational Faith, though many questions are posed especially about the creation of Jesus and the nature of God's interventions elsewhere in the universe.

Jesus & the Old Testament Prophets

So the foremost question about Jesus has to be why send him at all? And beyond that question, why at that time in human history and further why just here, on Earth, for us humans?

At first glance, the sending of Jesus into our world violates that *prime directive*, it interferes and changes the direction of many lives by the power of its influence. At the very least, it suggests that the 'rules' do, in fact, allow interventions but perhaps only as long as they do not *remove* the core freedom of choice & action. The example of Jesus' life is a powerful model, but we still have the option of ignoring it or even ridiculing it.

But for such an intervention to occur the need must have been deemed to be great, critical in fact.

Looking through the lens of human history at the eras of paganism & idolatry against the back-drop of bloody empires it is obvious how difficult it must have been for any free thinking individual to see a moral path. Difficult, indeed to see how many free thinkers could exist at all except perhaps in the most elite circles of state, family & church.

Over time, the Old Testament Prophets would introduce the idea of salvation through the arrival of the chosen one as well as the eventual apocalypse itself. A mixture of fear and encouragement - to influence if not to control.

We have to pause here because the questions proliferate. Reading this back the biggest question that poses for me relates to the timeline. It is almost as if God first tried to provide subtle influence for good through the prophets and when this failed to stem the tide of evil it sent in Jesus to provide a much more profound and vivid steer. This doesn't work for me. God tried and failed so tried again?

A fallible God would be an interesting topic to explore perhaps but I will take it as read for now that this is not the explanation.

For the sending of the Prophets & Jesus to work methodologically there has to be a more sophisticated design at work. Firstly, the interventions themselves had very little impact in their own time. They were more cumulative in nature. In times of mostly feudal societies, survival itself was the main preoccupation & the opportunity to create (as envisaged in the 3 commandments from above) was minimal. Minimal but not non-

existent. This harps back to those questions I posed at the beginning of this text about inequality & injustice. Clearly, as the generations of humans came & went, the opportunity to create (morally) has increased steadily to the point today where perhaps the majority of humans have significant chances.

More importantly, I've suggested that the sizing of sins & sains is a *relative* not *absolute* process and that sizing is mapped to the capability & opportunity of the originator. More simply, in primitive times where a lowly slave battles each day just to eat & live, the tiniest acts of kindness or love would score as substantial sains thereby winning large credit for that slave in the afterlife. I might go further and suggest that although the slave had little or no philosophical or intellectual capability in his/her short life, no such constraints would be present for them after death. In other words, their rewards would be as great as ours and their wonder, all the greater.

The arrival of Jesus was a quantum leap in terms of intervention as seen today because of its implications for human immortality and the idea of unity with God. But at the time it is said to have occurred, whilst miraculous & sensational, it was merely a continuation of the 'magic' prophets and their message.

I don't explore the true nature of Jesus, the Son of God any further here though clearly, there is much to discuss about the coexistence of Jesus the man & Jesus the God.

Jesus x n

One of the other questions I posed above was why would Jesus have only been sent to us humans here on earth if He is so core to the very existence of God?

The answer of course is he wasn't. If Jesus was sent as part of the cumulative intervention to help & influence morally capable beings to do good then He will appear in other places and other times. At the very least, one per species but perhaps even one per species in multiple personifications.

What I'm saying here is that Jesus may have come once or many times in the timeline of our human species. There may be a Jesus amongst us today or one coming very soon.

I prefer to leave this speculation for now but just to reflect on the fact that a model such as this does indeed allow for a version of the Holy Trinity & the life of Christ to be valid, true and relevant.

What if Jesus turns out to be fiction?

Despite all that I just said, it is absolutely necessary to look at the possibility that one day it will be shown beyond dispute that Jesus either did not exist or that he was a mere person with a different life than the one portrayed. This would clearly threaten the idea of the Holy Trinity but would it destroy the case for God itself? I would argue not one jot.

Do I still believe in Jesus then? On balance, yes. I also believe that he would approve of the rational faith.

Judaism

The first question to consider I think is how does the core principle of God's exclusive relationship with one people (the Jews) and one nation (Israel) sit with those of the Rational Faith.

The fundamentalist version of Judaism is incompatible with the Rational Faith which requires that people of all faiths and indeed no faiths share the same relationship with God: the opportunity to create and obtain access to a spiritual afterlife. Judaism's literal singling out of one race, creed or nation at the expense or exclusion of others cannot be reconciled with God's purpose for all creation.

That said, more liberal interpretations of the ancient principles might sit more happily. The 13 principles of Maimonides for example are compatible with the Rational Faith if viewed standalone. If the kingdom of Israel is actually the kingdom of heaven it can be thought of as interchangeable with the eternity zone of the true universe as illustrated in this text just as long as it is not an exclusive destination for only one strand of belief and practice.

Because Judaism is a much older religion it also has many variations on these beliefs and practice so it is difficult to make blanket statements about the entire faith.

One big question worth considering is the compatibility of Christianity & Judaism. Can both faiths be valid? If Jesus was indeed the son of God what is the status of the Jewish faith? If Jesus was not the son of God does Christianity melt back into Judaism?

Another way to look at Judaism in this context is as a faith of great density, that is to say, there is a vast amount of textual context & history together with much emphasis on reverence which tend to work against the drive to a purer, simpler set of fundamental truths.

Talking purely personally I see Judaism as a scholar's religion, not a science scholar mind, but an historian's.

Hinduism

Older still and more complex even is the vast collective of Hindu religions. At first glance, those personal gods and multiple deities cause problems when trying to reconcile with a single God force and unified destiny.

That said, it is of course possible to see these multiple Gods as manifestations of the same one: the true God. Hindu's wouldn't put it like that of course, but many of the ideas of Hinduism such as re-incarnation are easily reconcilable to what I've been depicting here.

Islam

Most modern of the ancient religions, Islam has the purpose of human life to worship God. The Islamic God is, in the eyes of the religion, the same God as Christians & Jews worship - the one true God.

Muslims acknowledge Abraham & Jesus as prophets but hold that, for example, the Christian religion is a mis-interpretation of God's intentions.

To Muslims, worship has to take the form of the prescribed rituals otherwise there is sin. The religion holds that the holy book, the Koran is the literal word of God and has to be followed to the letter. The Koran is the written down recollections of the final prophet, Muhammad, who experienced visions, sent by God to define how humanity should live.

In common with the other ancient religions, Islam has a very formally defined structure of behaviour & belief which imposes substantial obligations on its followers. Interpretations of these obligations have included the justification for holy war which is the source of much of the modern conflict between Christians (who of course conducted their own holy war in the middle ages) and Muslims.

Perhaps the most interesting facet of Islam is the medium of dreams for intervention. God speaks to the Prophet in his dreams. Dreams are a foretaste of the afterlife. Manipulation of dreams would be the most subtle and likely form of intervention by God.

The Prophet might either be the single conduit for intervention for humanity or perhaps one of many including Jesus?

Intelligent Design

Of course this is not an ancient religion but I think it worthy of inclusion here because there are some parallels between its arguments and mine, especially the core one, that a Master Code exists behind everything.

So where do I part company with Intelligent Design as a framework of explanation?

The idea of a design originating from somewhere other than ourselves as an explanation for the way things are in our universe is of course fully compatible with M1 & the rational faith. The differences lie partly in what is missing from intelligent design as well as its reliance on the idea of repeated or continuous intervention.

The Moral Universe does not exist in intelligent design as far as I can determine. Nor is there any attempt to suggest mechanisms for moral creation or the afterlife. Instead it argues against the purely evolutionist line of explanation but without offering anything particularly convincing in its place.

Personally, I do not accept its *irreducible complexity* argument either but I acknowledge it could be valid.

Other arguments ranged against intelligent design use the imperfections of our world as evidence of flawed or non-existent design and perhaps the biggest issue circles around continuous intervention.

In the Rational Faith, God's intervention is primarily at the birth of everything, the creation of the Primordial Entity. Though I accept the possibility of Christ and/or Muhammad's existence as direct interventions by God I do not believe that God is continually correcting its design code as the universe evolves.

The correction, if one is needed, comes from the Master Code itself.

Rules, Rituals & Holy Wars

We know of course how much evil is done in the name of religions. We also know that organised churches do evil. This doesn't of course mean that the underlying structure of belief or the rules and traditions developed to honour them are evil or wrong. But could we make the world less conflicted if we removed the religious differences and condensed them into a single form like the Rational Faith?

Before trying to answer this we have to consider why religions become tribal and corrupted in the first place.

How, for example, could the Christian crusaders ever think their bloody rampage of destruction could ever be justifiable according to the Christian faith?

The answer, of course comes from the argument of the greater good, the bigger ends justifying the smaller means. If we have to kill non-believers to make the world a (Christian) believer's domain then the end product is worth the suffering.

But where in the Gospel did the exemption from the 5th commandments come from? Of course it does not exist. Nor is there any call to convert others to the Christian faith.

The crusaders if they were here might argue self-defence: "If we do not take the war to them then they will bring it to us" meaning that there was a perceived threat from the Islamic world, which, if unchallenged would eventually lead to a reverse crusade, a holy war of conversion aimed at Christians by Muslims. Better to go to the heart of their world and eliminate the threat long before it has grown to the level where the threat is real.

Sadly, this kind of logic appears repeatedly throughout history, sometimes with religious justification and sometimes political. Always, there is an extrapolation of current threat to some future one in which the risk is deemed so great it made to justify extreme remedy.

In reality the jump from a measured and proportionate response in the face of real & present danger to pre-emptive and disproportionate action is most often justified by supremacists. These are people who believe that their model should prevail over the other completely, to the extent where alternatives must disappear altogether. They use whatever levers on power are available to convert their view into action. Often in history the most powerful lever on power politics was religious belief so this is what they chose.

Religious beliefs here though was not really a spiritual dimension. I used the word tribal before with good reason. Religious belief is most often reinforced with rituals, ceremonies, rules which govern not just what we believe but also how we behave as a reflection or reinforcement of those beliefs.

By doing this, our lifestyle becomes fused with the religion which sourced the original rituals and the two things become emotionally intertwined. Our religion becomes part of our identity, visceral even animal. Worthy of defence by force. Communities who live a different way are alien, strange. As we know, a common human response to the unknown is fear. Fear can so easily lead to instinctive and violent behaviour. We destroy what we fear to take the fear away.

It is easy to see how religious belief became corrupted into tribal cults and by implication how difficult it is to untangle once this has happened.

Do followers of organised religions really know what their rituals, rules and ceremonies are for?

To take my own legacy religion - Roman Catholicism, in the ritual of the Mass we re-enact the last supper of Christ. Jesus and his disciples enjoy a meal together and during that meal he announced that where his followers eat bread & drink wine in his name it will become his actual body & blood.

The ritual of the Mass is born. Millions of Catholics throughout the centuries that followed attend Mass where the priest blesses wafers of bread and a chalice of wine proclaiming them to be the actual body & blood of Christ. By consuming this, the congregations become blessed with God's holiness.

Around the Mass a whole ritual of actions designed to demonstrate and reinforce belief and respect was developed. Churches became the place where Mass was held and in those churches rules of respect were

developed. Women must cover their heads. Normal conversation is forbidden. A special cupboard, the tabernacle is placed on a raised table (the altar) where wafers left over from previous Masses is locked away for future use.

Beyond the church buildings other rules of prayer and behaviour are developed. The eating of meat on Fridays is forbidden, a regular act of confession is required to purge guilt from sin. Schools are required to teach the catechism, a formal statement of beliefs etc etc.

Communities brought up this way feel united in belief and they readily recognise each other from church, school and other gatherings. Conversely, those outside are different, inferior perhaps, potentially hostile.

I'm not for one moment suggesting that religiously rooted rules & rituals are inherently corrupt, evil or even invalid, merely that we have lost clarity in our understanding of what they are in relation to core belief. In so doing we have become open to that dangerous tribalisation which threatens to destroy our entire species.

Religious wars often mask more significant socio-political forces. The war in Northern Ireland was not about Catholic versus Protestant religions. It was about the sense of alienation in the minority community playing off against the desire of the majority to defend their model against a perceived threat.

The minority Catholic community more readily identified with the Republic in the south whereas the Protestant majority identified with the British monarchy as 'defender of the faith', descended all the way from Henry 8th and his split from Rome.

Both religions believe in the same God. Many of their rituals are similar. What differed was the fate of the two tribes, at least in their own minds.

In this case, if the original dispute between Pope & King had not occurred or had been dealt with differently the tribal divisions in Ireland would not have occurred the way they did. They may well have still existed as a purely political divide between republic & kingdom. That divide may well have led to the same inequality of power and the alienation which goes with it but it would not have been in the name of God.

It follows that the separation of core belief from ritual and perhaps the downgrading of ritual in religion will not of itself eliminate human conflict.

It might however, introduce an opportunity for unity, cooperation and ultimately love. Love to conquer the forces lined up against it: fear, prejudice, corruption, hate.

The challenge laid down by the Rational Faith is to define and live by that simple creed of 3 commandments and understand the role of everything else religious as subordinate to them.

Obey the 3 commandments first, follow the rituals of your religion if you like but only where they are compatible and primarily as a cultural rather than religious act.

Though it is not intended to be taken literally, M1 does at least show how our Universe might have been designed as a Morally centred entity. It cannot however explain the time before the Big Bang or the existence of God before it created the Primordial Entity. These remain buried in the infinity paradox.

In the end, the assertion that there is no designer is as arbitrary as the contrary one in philosophical terms. In pure science of course, Dawkins wins. But pure science as I've said before is no more adequate in this context than pure mysticism.

LIVING BY THE RATIONAL FAITH

Given the foregoing chapter the challenge for those who might wish to adopt the Rational Faith is how to translate the 3 commandments I suggested earlier into everyday life.

The repeating theme here is our thought process and its relationship with the moral credits (sains) we earn by what we think and its bearing on what we subsequently do.

The 3 Commandments

M1 suggests that the purpose of our lives is to give us the opportunity to escape death, at least in the mind, through morally positive creation. Access to this extended life is gained through the choices we make every day. Some of these are trivial, others complex and stressful. Some of us have the luxury of many choices while others stricken perhaps by disease, war or oppression have many fewer to make.

Given the complexity & diversity of human life and the choices thrown up it would surely be beneficial to have a simple code to guide us?

The 3 guidances or commandments I introduced earlier in this text are designed to help:

1. You should create
(you should not destroy)
2. You should respect
(you should not abuse)
3. You should be true
(You should not lie or deceive)

And even simpler in the slogan form: 'Create, Respect & be True'.

Even though these commandments first appear simple they require further explanation.

The first commandment is hopefully obvious given the central idea in M1. The second and third are added to reflect the constraints of morality on the core purpose of creation. The focus on respect is to ensure that we follow the purpose fully aware of the rights of other life forms and the resources we all share. The third commandment is added to provide a means of resolving complexity in moral decisions. Since we have been gifted an advanced intelligence we must use it to pursue & honour the truth at all times. It is also, in case you were wondering, the place where worship & respect for God is 'hiding'. I don't believe that the force which created our universe requires acts of subjugation or even formal devotion. These have been added by humans to encourage humility and appreciation for the great gifts we have been given. By obeying the 3 commandments above I believe we are through our actions honouring and respecting our God.

These commandments also carry with them an implicit 'thou shalt not' clause for their antonyms as shown above.

None of these commandments are absolute which is why they say 'should' instead of the more traditional 'must'. Applying them to moral decisions will always involve judgement and trade-offs. For example, 'Thou shalt not Kill' from the original 10 commandments falls into the first of these 3 commandments. Killing is wrong because it is the opposite of creation in the most extreme form. But killing a suffering animal because it is ending the certainty of suffering? Is this not respectful of the animal in the absence of any ability itself to decide that course?

Killing a suffering human is a much tougher call. Firstly, humans are the only known 'moral' species. Taking the life of one is a much more heavily loaded judgement. The burden of proof to show there are no alternatives and that there is full and true consent are much higher. There is also the impact on the general social climate of ending a life in this way. Accordingly, our society's current prohibition of euthanasia seems morally sound.

As for abortion, in some ways the same arguments apply but with the added complication of defining when the moral life is created. Is this at the moment of conception or at some later stage of the development of the foetus?

Some campaigners skew this complex decision in favour of the mother in order to eliminate the moral component - the destruction of a new life. Most religions forbid the act altogether in all circumstances. In the rational faith, a balance between the suffering & viability of both mother & baby and the social impact of the

chosen action (i.e. the influence on the climate of relevant thought & behaviour) would determine the moral weight.

Killing in warfare? A further extension of the same arguments. To be avoided at almost all costs but in the exceptional circumstances where an unavoidable & irreconcilable moral conflict is in progress, might be justified as the lesser of evils. The moral weight on those who can avoid, minimise or stop such conflicts would be much greater than those who follow their lead.

So, more specifically, what do these 3 commandments mean?

You Should Create:

This commandment is about planning and doing things which enhance our world. From the obvious creation of life, art, joy and peace to the more difficult serene endurance of suffering by the innocent. Creation encompasses everything one might do with the capabilities and resources available.

Between this and destruction - the explicit wastage of anything through the application of force or malice lies consumption, the grey area.

Consumption without replenishment is closer to destruction while what we often call sustainable use is a form of modest creation.

Different again is the state of idleness, the absence of creation. A mild form of neglect which nonetheless offends against the creation obligation especially where there is a high capacity or capability unused.

You Should Respect:

This commandment is about humility and self-awareness. It is required to ensure our creative drive is tempered. We have to remind ourselves that we are not the centre of the world or any part of it. Rather we are peers who need to be mindful of the relative achievements and statuses of others (human & otherwise). Respect is expressed through many forms of thought & behaviour, success is witnessed through harmony and goodwill in our community, failure as violence and abuse.

But is respect purely about restraint? The absence of abuse?

Ideally, respect should drive behaviours which lead us not just to be aware of the ideas and beliefs of others but perhaps to study and understand them so we can make our own behaviour more harmonious.

Further, where we encounter evil in others, the drive for respect should help us try and see through the obvious and look for causes and sources. It is the source of mercy and understanding.

If we are forced to act with aggression it is with heavy heart and a conviction that all other options have been exhausted. It should also provide a continuing challenge to ourselves as we use necessary aggression so that we always switch away from it to reconciliation at the earliest possible opportunity.

You Should Be True:

The most difficult & subtle of the 3 commandments. Truth & lies are at the tip of an iceberg of ideas and motivations. White lies, greater truths etc always come into play when considering truth & fidelity.

If creation is the core purpose and moral decisions are the means to achieve it, truth is a tool for finding our way to the right decisions, the better path when the choice is confusing or challenging.

Nevertheless finding the real truth is often difficult. I believe that the obligation to be true can be subordinated to higher truths but only if there is an overwhelming contrary justification of the impact on others over time. There is a risk that this principle leads to the ends justifying the means. This is a highly corrosive tendency which undermines the challenges of truthfulness. The habit of excusing untruthfulness may in the end be worse than avoiding the higher truth.

Of course the truth isn't always about disclosure of something. It is often about differentiating between competing versions of belief. As long as we honestly and diligently employ all our given powers and talents to find and honour that truth I believe we are complying with the third commandment.

Another way of looking at the Rational Faith is via visitation of some of the moral questions of our age, particularly those that reflect on how we live.

So here are some of my reflections on a few of those subjects.

Endurance & Sacrifice

Earlier in this text I mentioned endurance as a form of creation. This idea is based on the central premise of M1 that our moral creation is measured by the ratio of capacity over action. That is, how much of what we could have done (or achieved) did we?

It follows that someone grappling with adversity either in their own physical or mental condition or from the environment where they live has far less scope for achievement outside of pure existence & survival.

So how can someone unfortunate enough to be in this position for some or all of their life be judged as creatively capable at all?

Here we have to remind ourselves that what counts is the quality of the thoughts, intentions and decisions we make not the physical outputs.

In this context the value of the merest kind thought for others, the tiniest deed of support or assistance, the longest hour of silent pain or sadness endured without complaint or protest is magnified immensely.

In that ratio I mentioned above the value of C (capacity) is tiny so the value of A (achievement) is much more significant.

It is not the suffering or sadness itself which carries the credit it is how we face it especially in the way that endurance is seen by and impacts on others.

In Search of Joy

On the flip side of the endurance coin is the subject of Joy. The pursuit of happiness is seen by most as a noble cause and indeed it is enshrined in the United States declaration of independence.

Can the pursuit of happiness, the attainment of joy really be a noble cause? The answer probably depends on what we really mean by that phrase. If the target, that happiness is defined as a state of fulfilment and satisfaction attained with due diligence to the 3 commandments then it is plainly not sinful.

You may be the kind of person who has an explicit life-plan. That plan is likely to have some goals stated such as financial security for yourself and your family, a comfortable retirement, spare money for holidays and pleasant living conditions. How does the Rational Faith view such aspirations?

The first thing is to view such a plan through the lens of the 3 commandments. Is my life plan aiming to create something of value for others as well as myself? Does it aim to achieve its goals without harming or infringing on the rights and opportunities of others?

This line of self-examination makes it relatively easy to avoid sin and this is worthwhile in itself. Ideally though, we are surely looking to achieve more. For this to happen our life plans needs to have more than the avoidance of harm to others and a path of honesty. It needs to actively support and promote the wellbeing of others as well as ourselves. This would most likely include assigning more effort to increasing our capacity to do more. In other words, it's no excuse to say 'I'm not confident enough to do this or that' because we are capable of training ourselves to gain that extra confidence. Bettering ourselves to contribute more is an essential part of a fully active morally positive life.

At the very least, we need to make sure our last will and testament benefits others, preferably the most deserving. Better though, is to explicitly devote a proportion of our life energies and resources to others, family and friends certainly but ideally more broadly to strangers in need, however we define that.

On the other hand, you might not be a planner. You may be one of those folk who live in the moment and think on your feet. Here we need a different approach. I would argue that your awareness of the moral dimension of minute by minute decisions needs to be sharper and deeper than for the planners. This is because the long term cumulative moral value of what you think and do may not be nearly so obvious as for someone who as 'thought things through to their conclusions'.

As we are still talking about the pursuit of happiness here this means that we have to temper our thinking with quite a lot more deliberation if we are to maximise our gains and the reward that goes with them. What price carefree then?

Ironically, it might be easier to achieve something akin to a carefree state through planning and work than by emptying the mind and living purely on the senses.

Striving for Excellence

At the other extreme from endurance as a form of creation is the dedication of the self to excel. If the motivation is to develop a skill or capacity from our inherited state to some higher value then the moral quality of such an aspiration is determined by its motivation. Is the reward we seek fame & finance? Will achieving this goal inspire others, distract them away from negative pursuits?

There is a great deal of emphasis in our world on being the best, the fastest, the richest, the strongest. All this as a route to fame and fortune. Materialism is discussed later as a separate subject but as hinted above there can be value in striving for excellence by providing inspiration to others.

In life generally, the quest for the best qualifications for example, as a route to a better job with more opportunities is inherently worthwhile. This is because it is an explicit attempt to improve that ratio (Achievement/Capacity). The achievement here is the development of new capacity (knowledge & skill). Ironically though, this immediately increases the size of the effort needed for further achievement since we now have increased capacity. The more we *can* do the more we *should* do.

Family & Social Service

Rather than the seeking of material reward or recognition, another path of creation is the dedication of self to family or community. This is the ultimate form of respect for others of course as we commit our time and efforts to improving the wellbeing of others.

The creation here is not just that enhanced wellbeing but the motivation and effort involved in the attempt to give it. Even if we fail we tried. It is the trying that gains the most credits and if we fail due to lack of capacity then it is no failure at all.

Of course even here there are trade-offs between say family and community. What if a member of our family is a criminal, perhaps a violent one? If s/he were to injure or kill someone? Do we not then have a higher duty to society to turn them in to the authorities so they can face the consequences?

At every step of the way we are balancing outcomes for our child against those for society at large. As we do this our awareness (of the consequences) and motivation are key in determining the moral value of what we decide.

Art & Entertainment

For our purposes, Art can be the creation of anything intended to stimulate others in an original way by expressing some form or idea or emotion. Entertainment differs from Art only in that there is less focus on originality and perhaps more on providing escape and pleasure to the audience.

Of course entertainment can be art and vice versa. Here again though what matters in determining moral value is the motivation behind the act of creation and the quality of what is produced, relative to our capacity.

This means that someone regarded and rewarded by society as a great artist may not necessarily be earning great moral credits by their work. If its creation is achieved lazily or dishonestly then it may have no moral value at all. It may even be sinful.

By and large though, art & entertainment does more to improve the wellbeing of individuals and communities than almost anything else. Awareness of this as part of the motivation to create it is therefore morally positive.

Materialism

One of the biggest moral challenges of our age is posed by the immense power of capitalism and its 'gravitational' pull. Since pure capitalism is the placing of prime value on things (money & things money can buy) over deeds (good works) it is morally indefensible.

Despite the political revolutions of the past few centuries the capitalist engine remains securely in place as the primary driver for human activity.

All things can & should be monetised. All things should be traded in markets. The strong should survive, the weak will perish or at very least be marginalised. That Selfish Gene again.

Of course no society or political system expresses itself like this. There are mechanisms in place to modify & constrain the markets and their consequences even in those countries which pride themselves as market driven such as the USA. Yet communism failed, left its populations in ruinous chains. In the west, the wealthiest 1% own 50% of the wealth. In China, communism has morphed into something of a new a kind of consumerized totalitarianism. It uses the acquisitive drivers of capitalism to create an economic expansion which renders the state ever more powerful.

In India, the markets are finally lifting millions out of poverty as it has in China but at huge cost.

On the one hand, mass populations of middle classes enjoy a tiny proportion of the material rewards from the profits of corporations. That reward is however, enough to give them a life where there is time to think about moral choices. This instead of the enslavement of primitive societies where the daily grind to feed & survive uses up every waking hour.

Perversely, the enhanced opportunities presented by economic enrichment pose greater obligations on its beneficiaries to create in the moral sense. We have the luxury to seize this opportunity or ignore it.

Materialism is the most obvious consequence of rampant capitalism.

Once we start down the material road it is hard to lessen or eliminate our desire for more things, better things, newer things. Marketing & advertising has become extremely successful and sophisticated yet we can't really blame them. It is, after all, our greed which they play on (mostly).

We don't really need 3D TVs when half the world is starving do we? Could we cure cancer if we re-directed all the scientific resources devoted to developing new cosmetics?

But most of us love gadgets. We marvel at the information age: things like Google & Wikipedia. They and much else besides are great forces for good and definitely in the spirit of at least the first of the 3 commandments.

If the drive of the markets has brought education and fulfilment to the billions then isn't it a good thing?

Applying the core challenge of the Rational Faith helps us to answer these questions I think. What is the intention & consequence of our choices as they relate to consumerism & materialism?

It may be Ok to buy a new TV to enhance our recreation (this is a modest form of creation especially if shared) but only if we balance this with other more contributory actions such as charitable or community service of some kind. Furthermore, none of us are exempt from playing a role in the evolution of our society. The balance of resources created and expended has to change. Its current skew towards consumption by the privileged few needs to swing back to all of humanity. At the very least, equality of opportunity and I would argue, equality of reward for equal and equivalent effort.

But what of those Lamborghinis & Faberge's?

It would be a sad world without spectacular objects of our species' creativity. If there were no rich people to buy those sports cars then they would never be made. Even though we know we'll never be able to own or drive one is the fantasy of doing so worth tolerating?

I would argue that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with coveting or owning a Lamborghini. Building one is certainly a creative act. If that coveting is at the expense of our behaviour towards our fellows however it is a different story. If that desire drives us to follow a path to get one which disobeys any or all of the 3 commandments then we are clearly at fault.

But should society ban the creation of such objects until starvation & disease have been eliminated and equality of opportunity is universal?

The answer would likely be yes if we were ever capable of devising a socio-economic system capable of delivering such a world. In an ideal world then. In the meantime these objects of wealth and what lies behind them remain anomalous, by-products of Extreme Diversity working via human capitalism.

Pleasures of the Flesh

It's a very broad subject so before I get into specifics I think it useful to re-iterate the core logic of sins & sains in the Rational Faith. That is, obeying the primary commandment to create whilst observing the constraints of respect & truth. The central challenge is therefore to test for manifestations of creation outside of the obvious ones of good thoughts & deeds.

Many faiths preach ideas such as respect for the body as the temple of the soul and forbid acts of pleasure involving the body from gluttony to fornication. This line of thought creates restrictions on behaviour based on the idea that the soul, a holy essence, is physically present in the body and that anything relating to base carnal desires disrespects it and therefore God.

This is where the prudery around for example, nudism comes from and is also the source of much of that Catholic guilt I am so familiar with.

I don't believe this kind of thinking sits very well with the Rational Faith. There is nothing inherently sinful in the human body or human sexuality. Obtaining pleasure from the body is one of the great joys of being human, gifted by God.

For me the clue is in the word recreation. To re-create is to rebuild the fully capable human after work, illness or suffering. It is our reward. Recreation is good, it is creative and positive. This is the spirit in which one should approach any form of pleasure.

The good news is this gives us huge scope for guilt free enjoyment. The constraints are the well-known ones spoken of many times in this text: it is the intention behind the act, not the act itself that matters. Observing the 3 commandments and maintaining positive motivation at all times is all that is needed to guide us along the right path.

Below I consider some areas of human vice in this context but I didn't want to go there without first asserting the necessity, desirability and importance of pleasure for our wellbeing.

So eat well, drink well, make love as much as you can and indulge your fetishes or fantasies within the spirit of these constraints and, providing you do so alongside a productive life, all will be well in the afterlife.

And so to the dark side..

Adultery

In literal terms, the idea of adultery is perhaps a legalistic one. The physical act of copulation between two people one or both of which are married to a third party.

Those who commit adultery often seek to be excused on the grounds that if the wronged partner isn't aware of the transgression then the lie is preferable to the hurt of the truth. Deceit becomes the higher truth.

Instead of course, the original infidelity could be avoided or stopped, removing the need to lie. Justifying the deceit leads to ever more deceit and potentially even greater hurt in time.

Whilst on the subject of fidelity, I believe it is the betrayal of truth which is the 'sin' not the physical act itself. If both parties explicitly agree there is no exclusive hold in the relationship nor the need for disclosure such as in open marriages then there is no infidelity in the act. Disclosure of the act without consent moves the sin away from violating the truth to disrespect for the feelings and rights of the other party.

Does this mean that adultery is always ok if all the parties concerned are fully aware and consent? Maybe, but with heavy caveats. On both counts, awareness and consent, we may have arrived at this point eventually but got there via a period of deception and perhaps some coercion.

Let's take the classic scenario of a wife loses interest in sex. Husband meets someone else who is highly sexed and wants a sexual relationship. If the husband talks this over with the wife and she willingly consents to releasing her husband from his exclusive sexual commitment the first step towards a sin free adultery is satisfied. Next, the husband has to ensure his new sexual partner understands he is still emotionally committed to his wife and the boundaries of what's on offer. She (the husband's new sex partner) also has to ensure that anyone involved in a relationship with her also understands and consents.

Even when all these conditions are satisfied there is still the question of how the husband first came into contact with the new friend and how he became aware of her desire for sex. It is likely that at the very least there was some mild deception so although the outcome may not be sinful there may be a minor tab to pay for the journey.

Ok, so far so good. Now the act takes place. Is the sexual act itself morally relevant in these circumstances?

I would argue that the giving of pleasure in this way is a mild act of creation and provided again that there is nothing disrespectful or deceptive in the acts, it can be argued as mildly positive.

I say mildly because there are only 2 people involved and there is only personal pleasure on offer.

Fetishism

Beyond adultery, what if we indulge in unusual activity such as group sex or sadomasochism in or outside of a committed relationship?

Again, I don't believe there is anything inherently sinful in unusual sexual practices per se but there is a heavy burden on all parties to ensure full and true consent as well as the absence of abusive intent. Inflicting pain for pleasure is not abuse in itself unless it is done in a way which causes harm of some kind or given without consent.

A note of caution here though. It is tremendously difficult to determine consent with absolute confidence in unusual or experimental behaviour. Though both parties may agree in principle to endure pain, discomfort or anxiety as a by-product or even a learning token on the way to a higher pleasure once in practice the reality may stray outside of the original consent. It is all too easy to lose consent in the passion of the moment. Those who embark on such journeys have to do much more by way of safeguards to protect and respect the each-other.

Given this, does anything go between consenting adults? I think not. Over time, despite these safeguards, habits & practices can form into exploitative & degrading relationships. This can happen in a very subtle way, without prior intention. That said, I would controversially say that there is very wide scope for human pleasure to be delivered without sin in these circumstances, particularly as one-offs or occasional 'treats'.

Pornography

Whilst still on the subject of pleasures of the flesh we should perhaps consider this extremely widespread practice of making & viewing depictions of sexual activity, particularly on the internet.

In absolute terms, images of adults having consensual sex are morally neutral but of course the circumstances in which they were made and viewed can add positive or negative moral colour.

The most obvious issue is that of exploitation of those depicted. The 'models' who perform in front of the camera may be paid prostitutes or perhaps more often folk, usually women who feel forced into pornography as a means to provide for their family. For the viewer, payment of any kind whether directly to the presenter or indirectly to advertiser or others who are in any way associated with the presentation are equally guilty of exploitation. Exploitation of this kind would break all 3 commandments:

1. Exploitation is a form of destruction, taking away freedom & innocence
2. Performers, viewers and the middlemen are all guilty of disrespect for the right of the individual to be free from abuse & exploitation
3. There is misrepresentation in the portrayal of pleasure

Suppose I watch free pornography on the internet. I stay away from anything illegal or extreme (a matter of taste of course). I make sure my computer can't be used by children in my house for this purpose. Am I sinning in the eyes of the Rational Faith?

I would say probably yes, but there are a number of things to weigh up. Firstly, even though you are not purchasing material your presence on the web site is recorded as an anonymous visitor. This will increase the advertising revenues of those who manage the website as they are rewarded via a system known as pay per click. You are therefore indirectly participating in a financial structure which exploits some of those performing.

Of course if you actually pay for access, your sin is greater because you are directly sponsoring.

The only sin free form of pornography is that where everyone involved can be absolutely certain there is no coercion or exploitation. In practice, this is probably only possible for couples or groups of friends making and sharing their own material privately. Everything else carries with it the risk of indirect exploitation.

The important thing to stress here is that it is not what is being shown it is the circumstances in which it is made that matters and the level of participation of the viewer.

Those making or sharing pornography have also to be very careful to protect children and other citizens from accidental exposure, failure here is a serious sin, I think.

So having said all that, if I am watching a video I made with my girlfriend of various sexual activities, am I still sinning? Probably not. If I gave pleasure to her when we made it and if we both still derive pleasure from it then this is a mild form of creation (happiness).

If I show it to my friends I can only do so with the full consent of my girlfriend and I must also be sure that none of the folks who will see it will be offended or corrupted by seeing it. Only then am I free from sin.

Prostitution

Having come this far we have to deal with the ultimate form of exploitation; that of sexual slavery.

Clearly this is a serious sin but what of women or men who choose to make a living by selling their bodies and what of their clients?

Obviously the same burdens of care & caution described above apply to both sides of transaction. But if there is consent and the absence of deception is the exchange of money for such transactions sinful?

The problem with this proposition is the degree of difficulty in achieving the required level of care. How can the prostitute know that her client is not deceiving his wife? Is it enough to take his word for it? And how can the client really know that his servicer is completely willing and happy to provide the service? Can he take her word for it?

In truth, though I know there is often mitigation for those who take part, it is extremely difficult to argue that, in these circumstances, it can be free from sin.

Perhaps controversially, I would argue that if paying for sex was offered as a public service for those who have legitimate need of it, and such as service was fully regulated and assured, there could be a case to be made for exoneration from sin.

Paying for sex or taking money for it is not the sin of course, it is the exploitation and abuse associated where the problem arises.

Theft

Moving away from the flesh, another area for consideration is the abuse of property. Property here is anything which is owned by a person or organisation by virtue of proper purchase or creation. Of course the word proper conceals a huge area of philosophical discussion but I will leave that aside for these purposes.

Let's just say the maker of the thing has rights to it by virtue of their energy expended in creation. An owner has these rights by acquisition in exchange for money or some other form of fair tender passed to the creator.

Anyone who steals property is abusing the rightful owner (breaking the second commandment) and also misrepresenting ownership (breaking the third).

Shades of grey come in of course when some aspect of the creation of the object or its sale is in dispute. If I am a writer and someone imitates my style or copies one of my ideas they have undoubtedly stolen from me, the question is not whether this is sin but one of degree. What degree of rights do I hold over my writing?

At the simple level of intention & consequence the obtaining of anything over which others hold claim can only be justified if their claim is morally unsound. There is a very substantial obligation on the taker to prove not only the unsound claim of the current owner but also the nature of their own alternative claim and this achieved and asserted without offending against the commandments. Rather like the suicide bombers, hard though not entirely impossible to justify the act.

Things get more complicated when weighing up these actions and choices in the context of larger social issues. For example, someone disagrees with the profits their rail company is making so avoids buying a ticket for every other journey made. This is their way of re-cooping the unjustified profits.

I would argue that although this is less of a sin than avoiding paying all the time because it is at least backed up with a moral logic of sorts, it is still sinful in that there are more socially responsible paths available via indirect political action. Direct action of this kind harms and disrespects other law abiding, voting citizens and delivers benefits only to the perpetrator rather than society as a whole.

At a broader level, this section began with a discussion about materialism & capitalism and there is, of course, further discussion possible about the proposition that the wealthy habitually steal from the poor by rewarding the makers of wealth with a tiny proportion of its proceeds.

Alienation

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing the civilized world is the fragmentation of society leading to ever increasing numbers of people who feel outside of the communities they live among. In its extreme form this alienation can lead to political or religious extremism. As we know, this often takes the form of violence, often indiscriminate & extreme.

Alienated individuals are, of course, easy prey to groups who seek to destroy the established order and those groups clearly violate the commandments.

More difficult is how to view the individuals who become so desolate and isolated in the first place and how the rest of society (that's us) deal with them.

The scale of alienation is much greater than most politicians would acknowledge. For every 1 radicalised islamist there are probably 100,000 disillusioned souls, struggling to make a living with little or no prospect of dragging themselves or their families out of a mere subsistence. I do not mean here to single out Muslims, this kind of disillusionment applies to millions of ordinary citizens from many countries, faiths & beliefs.

Leaving aside the path of endurance I spoke of above, there are other things to think about for the alienated themselves and for others in society who live alongside them.

For those feeling alienated there remains the duty to seek and take a path of creation. Despite perhaps living in poverty and helplessness a switch of focus away from the materialistic lens and towards family or social effort offers one path. For those with a passion to change things there is the slow, patient path of democratic persuasion albeit perhaps supported with non-violent direct action.

To wilfully and knowingly turn one's back on these options and select instead a path of hatred & destruction offends against all three commandments. Those taking this route, no matter what their justification, face oblivion in the afterlife.

As for the more affluent & privileged citizens there is of course a similar need to create but amplified by the increased capacity of such individuals represented by their advantages whether earned or inherited. Moreover, of course, these citizens need to be aware of those who are less able and/or privileged than themselves to observe the second commandment (respect). This awareness should ideally lead to action in support of such souls. To give something in aid of their struggle to thrive and be wanted.

If the alienated challenged their energies in the way envisaged above and the privileged acted more supportively towards them then society at large would become less fractured and all citizens would enjoy rewards in the afterlife.

Selfish Do-Gooding?

Something I have often encountered when discussing these issues with friends & acquaintances is the idea that doing good is in some sense selfish because it indulges a desire to feel good by so doing.

If we distil the arguments down we come to the proposition that atheists of all flavours who do good and selfless deeds are morally superior. Believers who do the same are not motivated by the reward, the bribe if you like of eternal reward.

It's an interesting argument but not one that I buy. The reason is simple. Though atheists may not be motivated by the incentive of a reward of afterlife they are nonetheless driven by a sense of moral duty and

derive satisfaction from discharging that duty. At the very least intellectually satisfying and more likely downright warming to the heart.

It is a strange kind of selfishness, one that benefits others. There is creation, nothing is destroyed or used up, there is respect for others and an absence of abuse so the first two commandments are nicely answered.

But what of the third, to be true? Are we honest about our motivation? If we are, and admit there is self-interest at work then I think we've done as well as our nature permits, atheist or believer, both equally reconciled.

The selfish gene, the selfish nature? Yes, but in a good cause and for that I believe we will be forgiven.

CONCLUSIONS

I'll admit I found it hard to think of a conclusion for this experiment since it can never really be finished. Every time I think I've answered a question another one poses. Every time I re-read what I've written I see all the flawed assumption that I still need to justify; often of course, I can't.

But end I must and the best way I can think of is to ask whether this text has achieved the purpose I put forward in the opening paragraphs covering 'Why Did I Write This?'

Did I clarify my own beliefs? Undoubtedly. I've moved my faith away from the mystical and towards the scientific or rational as I would prefer to put it. That's not to say that there isn't still a foundation of mysticism beneath the hypothetical ideas I've used to explore the subject.

Can I explain my beliefs to others now? Maybe. But not in casual conversation. I still hear that most often expressed objection 'how could a God allow such a thing?' almost every day and to get into the ideas of Extreme Diversity and moral choice requires a much longer, deeper conversation - seldom possible or appropriate at times of distress. I can therefore only claim partial success for that criteria.

Of course I can always point folk at this text but that seems rather arrogant given its length & complexity.

Is sharing this text at all not a piece of self-indulgence then?

Well perhaps not entirely. I say this because of the driving equation I stumbled upon while writing this. That is:

$$O = \frac{A}{C}$$

Where O is for the opportunity (for reward in the afterlife)

A is for (moral) achievements and

C is for capacity (or ability if you prefer)

Moral achievements being those obeying or adhering to the 3 commandments.

The larger our capacity the harder we have to work to maximise our opportunity for reward.

Using this equation as a guide I realised that if I have to opportunity to influence others for good I have to take that opportunity. It is all very well working hard for family & friends but if we do have the opportunity to reach further and wider then we have a duty to pursue it.

Judging that opportunity of course is a matter of perception. It may even be delusional. I may think others are grappling with the same issues as me but I could be wrong. I may think others would benefit from these ideas but again, I could be wrong. What matters, however is my perception and the motivation which accompanies it because that is what I am judged on.

Given that, I was steered in the direction of sharing these ideas because of the possibility that they might benefit like-minded folk or those grappling with the same dilemma.

We are still left with a sense of selfishness though. Let's assume that someone reading this changes their thinking and behaviour in a morally positive way as a result. Credit is earned, one of those sains I spoke about earlier is committed. But isn't the earning of these credits to 'pay' for a bigger, better afterlife in itself a selfish motivation. Does that not diminish their value?

I've thought about this a lot and come to the conclusion that, in the end, we cannot escape entirely from selfishness. To that extent, Dawkins is right. But doing good for others as a means to improve our own condition is I think a permissible selfishness. It is a part of taking responsibility for our own moral destiny. We have to be motivated by something. Even those who offer themselves in self-sacrifice so that others need not

suffer have to look deep down to see where the motivation really comes from. Can we ever be entirely altruistic?

Fortunately I don't think we need to struggle too hard with this one. If we go back to those 3 commandments and adhere to them in all that we think & do. I don't believe God will judge us harshly for having that opportunity, that promise of reward as our root motive.

So what now?

For me, the challenge is to understand what capacity I really have for doing good beyond the easy wins of family & friends. Part of that challenge is finding out not just what I can do now but what I could do if I stretch myself.

Excitement & fear lie ahead in equal measure. But I have to remind myself that the very fact I am here is a reflection of great fortune for which I am eternally thankful.

Beyond me, looking at you, my hypothetic reader, just imagine the impact of large numbers of folk adopting the 3 commandments as their primary driver. Imagine a world in which the Rational Faith has supplanted the more traditional ones, where ancient religions are understood and respected as cultural rather than religious phenomena. No more religious war, no more oppression or exploitation in the name of this or that creed.

Simplified beliefs about God and the moral universe might pave the way for many things - a simpler, sounder socio-political system for mankind for a start. For, with the rise of science and the near infinite energy of human imagination it is only bad politics that stand in the way of our species achieving truly great things on the way to the afterlife.

Notes & References

1. *The God Delusion* - refers to Richard Dawkins' 2006 book in which he makes the case for Religions as mass delusions and God as a construct to support that delusion.

2. *The Selfish Gene* - refers to Richard Dawkins's 1976 book on evolution and the related theories on gene-centric evolution. Whether you subscribe to this view (that organisms similar at the genetic level are selfless towards each other) or other evolutionary constructs (such as the social or group theory) there is still a question hanging in the air as to why such mechanisms(s) exist and how they came about.

In some ways, *The Selfish Gene* makes the case for a God force, since, if there is a strong, recognisable pattern of organisation at the genetic level, it has to originate from somewhere. Dawkins might say 'yes, but not from God'

3. *Creationists* - an American branch of Christian fundamentalism which believes that the account in the Bible of the earth and all creation being built in 7 days to be literally correct and not merely symbolic.

4. *The True Universe* - refers to the domain of everything as distinct from a super large unit of the domain of everything. The distinction is made because of some emerging theories of a multi-verse (a universe of universes) and also of a cyclic universe (oscillating big bangs). The True Universe encompasses all dimensions: these and others not yet imagined. It might be more appropriate to use the term Monoverse instead of Universe when referring to the ideas that scientists & mathematicians currently play with in this respect especially when talking about the concept of infinity.

5. *The Big Bang* - refers to the theory that everything in our universe originated from a single point in space & time which 'exploded' to release all of the energy & matter which now exists in the universe and which accounts for the motion of the constellations & galaxies away from a notional centre.

6. *The Moral Substrate* - the stuff from which the spiritual universe is made. Not physical matter or conventional energy but those dimensions of existence are as near as we can get to describe this counterpart which is the pool from which our moral 'embryo' comes and to which our moral creation (morally positive choices) is added and joined to.

7. *The Prime Directive* - from the TV series Star Trek, a reference to the absolute policy held by the United Federation of Planets (of which Earth is a leading member) which forbids interference in the evolution of other species even if this standoff is at the expense of life & safety

8. *Singular Version* - a standalone version of the Big Bang theory which does not worry about a time before the beginning or the possibility of an end to expansion and the subsequent reversal

9. *Oscillating Version* - as above but proposing the Big Bang is a repeating event