

The Quest Continues

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Some would have Hamlet a schizophrenic – “To be or not to be...” Schizophrenia is a mental illness caused by a split or bipolar – and sometimes multipolar – personality that has to do with chemical imbalance in the brain. Anyone caught in wonderment about ‘being’ and separation between Man and God – since our souls come from His spirit – are very intelligent and sensitive people. If I too were the contemptuous kind as those ‘knowalls’ so arrogantly sure of themselves, I would venture that those who don’t wonder are actually the unfortunate ones, for they are limited.

God says that after creating Adam, “I blew my spirit into him” – hence the belief that our spirit is part of God’s spirit, the drop that comes from the river and returns to the river in simultaneous consummation and annihilation – “...and then I gave him knowledge.” You see how vital knowledge and its acquisition is, the very purpose of Man’s existence. Man couldn’t survive without it. Today, it is that infinitesimal knowledge that humankind has acquired and is misusing that has put it on the endangered species list.

It is but ‘human’ that when you cannot understand something because you are trapped in seeking ‘proof’ in rigorous scientific experimentation and analysis you often demean it by using pejorative words like ‘schizophrenia’. Or you simply deny it with semantics and sophistry. You go into denial because you don’t understand. You cannot understand that which your eye cannot see, your senses cannot feel, touch or smell. Such people haven’t evolved their “inner eye”, which includes what we call inspiration. Don’t get me wrong. There is nothing wrong with the methodology of science – rigour, repetition and analysis. It is absolutely necessary, but in science. In fact, it is to be celebrated. For example, how can we be sure that the scientists in CERN got it right the first time when they recently ‘discovered’ – by accident, as many discoveries are – that subatomic particles like neutrons travelled faster than the speed of light from Geneva to Italy. Neutrons don’t recognize matter and go through it in a straight line, while light cannot and has to follow the earth’s curvature, which means it has to travel a greater distance. So neutrons may not have travelled faster than the speed of light but simply covered a shorter distance, which could be why they reached Italy ahead of light. Hence they are trying it again, which is absolutely the correct and scientific thing to do. After all, if it were ‘proved’ with certainty that the speed of light can be crossed it would rock the very foundations of our Einstein-deduced relativity-based worldview. So did Galileo’s discovery that the world was round, not flat. Didn’t they once say with great certitude that light travels in a straight line until they discovered that light bends with gravity, so what you see is not precisely where it is, not only in terms of time but space too.

So while the scientific method is correct for the enhancement of

scientific knowledge, don't get trapped in its methodology for everything by making it your god. Recall the Pharaoh who ordered his engineers to build a ladder so high that they could climb it to see whether God exists. These people were no fools; they built the pyramids for God's sake (say I as a pun!).

Best not to apply scientific methodology to that which cannot be measured, like the philosophical and the metaphysical – if one can slot the metaphysical into such a limited niche as 'discipline'. Cooking is an art, not a scientific discipline; reduce it to science, which one can do by writing recipe books, and you lose the art. Every time a great chef cooks he is being creative – nothing is 'exactly so'. It's a matter of touch, feel, mood, smell, sound and colour at the time. A real chef would find it an insult to have a weighing scale in his kitchen, or a measuring jug for that matter. Thus no single dish will taste exactly the same no matter how many times the same chef makes it. Art is creative; great art is genius. Similarly, great scientists are great geniuses too, but they are scientists of another kind, not hostage to scientific methodology. Alfred Einstein had no laboratories. His mind was his lab. So too was Newton's. It was not in a laboratory that he discovered gravity but by sitting under an apple tree...an apple fell on him...the rest is history. The balance in the cosmos led Einstein to proclaim, "God doesn't play dice with the universe". In so saying, he recognized the existence of a Superior Being, a Creator, God, instead of weakly saying that this is all an accident, probability improbable, instead of denying it just because he couldn't scientifically explain it. Great scientists don't go into denial. They try and look for the 'Grand Unified Theory' that they believe will explain everything.

Now Stephen Hawking is saying that since time was encapsulated in the singularity, it is irrelevant to ask, “What was there before the Big Bang” because there was no ‘before’ since there was no time. One is left in another kind of bafflement. Of course time was there, only it was in the singularity and had not yet separate from space. Thus to ask what there was before is absolutely relevant. Just because the answer is not yet within the grasp of science shouldn’t lead an otherwise exceptionally intelligent man (no Einstein he) to make illogical statements. Just because time stops in a Black Hole doesn’t mean that it necessarily ceases to exist, except in human minds of a certain kind. Time is a dimension, as is ‘space-time’. It only means that time stops physically in Black Holes as far as human understanding and human clocks are concerned and the actual process of aging. Where did the singularity come from? What space did it expand into, since space was also in the singularity, not outside it? By calling it ‘nothingness’ you duck the question instead of scientifically answering, “Science doesn’t know, at least not just yet”. ‘Nothingness’ has no space or time and you are everywhere at the same time (one of God’s attributes). This is something! I’m not playing with words, language being limited in such matters in any case.

Transplanting the methodology of one discipline on to another (or to a form of artistic expression) often leads to facetious conclusions. Most certainly genius can use scientific methods to understand, like Michelangelo did by secretly doing autopsies on human cadavers to understand form and movement. But scientific methodology cannot test, measure or recreate the art, much less the genius, of a Michelangelo.

Wondering about separation from the Creator can be seen as a duality that perennially informs our existence. To what extent it does is a direct function of how heightened our awareness is about the conundrum: Man's separation from God. Some would say that this question should be regarded as an ailment rather than a mark of genius. Forsooth. Shakespeare's Hamlet, Ghalib, Iqbal, Aurangabadi, Bullay Shah, Baba Farid, Rumi and all the great Sufi poets were exceptionally intelligent and sensitive people. Those who do not wonder and question are the ones that are actually suffering an illness of the soul.

I can go on like this till I'm blue in the face and you're suicidal and declare that Humayun has gone mad. But I will continue writing at least to increase my own understand. And share it with you if I think that it is worth it.

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