

Introduction to Neo-Agnosticism: Ontological Reductio ad Absurdum and the Omniscient Drive

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Abstract

The critique of idealism has long centered on its failure to recognize the primacy of practice—that is, the materialist critique. This paper discusses a non-materialist critique of idealism, one that proceeds solely from the internal logic of idealism itself, without invoking the primacy of practice. This critique operates at the level of transcendental logic, and its core method is reductio ad absurdum: it confirms the existence of an unknowable term that can affect “knowable” terms, and thereby demonstrates that reasoning based solely on “knowable” terms is philosophically illegitimate. After carrying out this critique, the method is abstracted to reveal its universal applicability—not only to idealism, but to all current ontologies. All existing systems of thought harbor an illegitimate intermediate state in which they tolerate the non-omniscient while claiming partial knowledge, a state exposed by this reductio. Consequently, all philosophy must arrive at a more radical ontological posture—agnosticism. Because this agnosticism, derived through ontological reductio, differs from traditional agnosticism, it is termed Neo-Agnosticism. Finally, since critique requires an anchor point of “known correctness,” it is shown that Neo-Agnosticism is statically and logically necessarily connected to an Omniscient Drive.

Keywords logic; ontology; idealism; materialism; agnosticism

I Transcendental-Logical Critique of Idealism

1 Idealism as Solipsism

Idealism is an ontology according to which the world is constituted through subjective consciousness, it occupies a middle position between pre-idealism and materialism (in Marx’s sense)². Pre-idealism holds that the world exists independently of consciousness, materialism holds that only consciousness exists—that is, it holds that the world is neither independent of consciousness nor constituted by it, but rather that the initial act of consciousness/cognitive practice is all we can ever ascertain, and that no “constitution” should be presupposed beyond this. What lies beyond cognition, having no primacy, ought to be suspended. Then idealism, in between, acknowledges both the existence of the world and the role of consciousness, is an ontology that holds: “The world does exist, yet it is constituted by consciousness” and affirms both but discusses their priority. In this ontology, the world is idea, a product of consciousness constituted by the subject.

When a theory holds that the world has lower priority than “my own” consciousness, it closely resembles—or indeed is—a form of solipsism. However, recognizing the role of consciousness is only the beginning of idealist thought; actual idealists rarely stop at this point, for the following reasons:

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² Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*.

2 Idealism as Mediation Theory

Although idealists such as Descartes and Berkeley do indeed have solipsistic overtones, they differ considerably from the solipsism of the pre-idealist period. What we usually mean by “solipsism” often refers to pre-idealist content, whereas “idealism” generally denotes some form of subjective idealism, it would feel intuitively odd to equate idealism with solipsism. This is because there remains a difference between idealists and pre-idealist solipsists: even though idealists ontologically hold that all phenomena are cognitively mediated, they also recognize that cognition does nothing more than constitute—it does not otherwise affect the occurrence of phenomena, nor can it determine which phenomena appear and which do not. For example, the world does not need to conform to the subject’s wishes; an apple cannot be made a pear simply by willing it. The world is constituted by consciousness, yet the constituting activity itself seems involuntary. Thus, what appears to be a strongly subjective philosophy is in fact not strongly subjective but weakly so—an objective subjective philosophy that acknowledges the role of consciousness while also recognizing that this does not imply mastery over everything.

Hence, once the existence of objective elements is acknowledged, the idealist, in addition to the highest-priority consciousness and the secondary phenomenal world constituted by it, must also posit a transcendent primordial world to explain why objective elements escape subjective control. The theory must shift from “consciousness constitutes the world” to “consciousness constitutes the phenomenal world using materials from the primordial world.” Consciousness then becomes an intermediary station that inputs primordial content and outputs phenomenal world.

This discovery of objective elements, necessitating reference to a transcendent content, means that idealism—insofar as it is idealism proper rather than solipsism—is always a mediation theory. The part that transcends the self/subject is the mediated side (the source side); the self/subject is the mediation (the cognitive mechanism through which the source side appears as empirical phenomena); and the empirical phenomena they cognize are the post-mediation side—the result of mediating the mediated side (the empirical-phenomenal side). Any idealism that acknowledges objective elements thus takes the structure: Mediated Side X—Mediation M—Post-Mediation Side P (X being the standard letter for the unknown; P for phenomenon, proposition, or simply “Post”), all phenomena are post-mediation, while the self is located at the mediation.

Thus, idealism—which originally took “idea” as its highest priority—now becomes a theory in which the mediation structure itself takes the highest priority. The post-mediation side P remains secondary, but the mediated side X and the mediation M itself become theoretically necessary existences on an equal footing. At this point, even the very name “idealism” becomes inaccurate, because our ideas are no longer the highest priority; the mediation structure is—at the very least, the mediated side X and the mediation M together are.

3 The Unknowability of the Mediated Side

It is evident that if we grant the absolute priority of the mediation structure (i.e., acknowledge the existence of objective elements), then everything on the post-mediation side has been mediated—everything cognizable has passed through our cognition—and thus we presuppose a forever unknowable substratum: that mediated side which is invoked precisely to account for objective elements.

The mediated side possesses the properties of unknowability and fundamentality, because it is posited to explain objective elements and must therefore be theoretically endowed with transcendence to support an idealism that has discovered those elements. Without this theoretical substratum, idealism cannot resolve the contradiction between objective elements and the priority of consciousness. If we are honest in acknowledging objective elements, we must presuppose a transcendent primordial world; and if that primordial world transcends us, it is forever unknowable—for what is knowable has already become the post-mediation phenomenal world, while the primordial world is precisely what must remain unknowable. If it were knowable, it would collapse into the post-mediation side, and the mediation theory would lose its theoretical support for the existence of objective elements. The mediated side, as a theoretical substratum for resolving a contradiction, must transcend cognitive mediation. That is, the mediated side must be incognizable; every mediation theory must presuppose an unknowable substratum, or else the system cannot be completed.

Thus, idealism as mediation theory, which tolerates the unknowability of the mediated side, forever contains an unknowable content. This is the idealism we generally encounter, for example:

- Kant presupposes a material source, the thing-in-itself (mediated side, i.e., the unknowable term), which is cognized by the transcendental subject (mediation); the empirical phenomenal world as cognized by the transcendental subject (post-mediation side) is distinct from the thing-in-itself, so the latter remains unknowable: Thing-in-itself X—Transcendental Subject M—Phenomenal World P.³

- Fichte presupposes a non-Ego (mediated side) disclosed by the Ego's (mediation) original act; the resulting world of appearance (post-mediation side) is distinct from the non-Ego, so the non-Ego remains unknowable: Non-Ego X—Ego M—World of Appearance P.⁴

- Schelling presupposes an absolute identity (mediated side) that reveals itself only through intuitive activity (mediation); the result, nature and spirit (post-mediation side), is distinct from absolute identity, so the latter remains unknowable: Absolute Identity X—Intuitive Activity M—Nature and Spirit P.⁵

- Hegel presupposes a “this” outside the system (mediated side), perceived through sense-certainty (mediation); through perceiving this unknowable term, he obtains the universal (post-mediation side) distinct from the “this.” Thus even the Absolute Spirit, which contains everything in its conclusion, depends on an external term for its unfolding, so the theory still employs an unknowable term: “This” X—Sense-Certainty M—Universal P...⁶

We now turn to the consequences of tolerating this unknowable term—it is not a minor contradiction, such as “Hegel tolerates externality and uses an external term to build something that supposedly needs no external term, hence a theoretical disaster.” The problem posed by the unknowable term is far more severe:

4 Reductio: The Flaw in Transcendental Logic

In an idealist system as mediation theory, whether for the sake of handling objective elements or otherwise, as soon as a completely unknowable external substratum appears as the mediated side, we have no a priori or a posteriori ground to rule out that this substratum—whose essence,

³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*.

⁴ Fichte, *Grundlage*.

⁵ Schelling, *System*.

⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

rules, and mode of operation are entirely beyond our cognition—might not affect our mediation and post-mediation side. That is, if we know nothing about the mediated side, then we also do not know whether it distorts, fabricates, or subverts our mediation and its products.

All our cognition, action, intuition, perception—and their corresponding phenomena, appearances, nature and spirit, universals—may be forgeries produced by an unknown mechanism. In an even more radical scenario, no mediation has ever occurred at all. Even our present sensation could be the case that there is actually no sensation at all, nobody can be certain that the law of non-contradiction holds, even now it is entirely possible that an unknown mechanism makes us believe we have sensations, while in fact no mediation ever occurred, the mediated side never existed, let alone their interaction product—the post-mediation side, a mere phantom. For instance:

- Kant presupposes an unknowable thing-in-itself; hence we cannot know whether this thing-in-itself has interfered with the subject and the phenomenal world. If we claim to know anything about it, including whether it has interfered, then that “thing-in-itself” is already a post-mediation phenomenon. The transcendent content disappears, and the handling of objective elements is deficient.

- Fichte presupposes an unknowable non-Ego; hence we cannot know whether this non-Ego has processed the Ego and the world of appearance. If we claim to know that it has not, then the non-Ego becomes an appearance; transcendence vanishes, and objective elements lack support.

- Schelling presupposes an unknowable absolute identity; hence we cannot know whether this absolute identity has altered its own manifestation. If we claim to know that it has not, then absolute identity is just the nature and spirit it manifests; transcendence vanishes, and objective elements lack support.

- Hegel presupposes an unknowable “this”; hence we cannot know whether this “this” has affected sense-certainty and the universal. If we claim to know that it has not, then the “this” becomes just the universal we speak of; transcendence vanishes, and objective elements lack support...

If Kant cannot prove that the thing-in-itself has not interfered with subject and phenomenon, he should stop before asserting its existence, for there is no reliable theoretical material. If Fichte cannot prove that the non-Ego has not processed the Ego and appearances, he should stop before positing the non-Ego, for we cannot even be sure that the theory needs to occur. If Schelling cannot prove that absolute identity has not altered intuitive activity itself and nature/spirit, he should stop before defining absolute identity, for “definition” might not exist. If Hegel cannot prove that the “this” has not affected sense-certainty and universals, the first thing sense-certainty determines should be that nothing can be determined. If they retreat and cancel the mediated side, then the transcendent part is missing, and the phenomenon of objective elements has no substratum—so the mediated side, which absolutely cannot exist, is nevertheless absolutely necessary. The logical formulation is:

- (1) Suppose there is a completely unknowable X used to explain the objectivity/non-arbitrariness of experience.

- (2) If X is completely unknowable, we cannot rule out that X has the capacity to interfere with, forge, or subvert M or P.

- (3) If such interference cannot be ruled out, then the truth-values of any M and P cannot be determined, and any reasoning starting from M and P loses its legitimacy.

(4) Therefore, any mediation-theory system that presupposes X cannot legitimately utter even its first sentence.

(5) But if X is cancelled, the mediation theory cannot explain objectivity.

Conclusion: Idealism as mediation theory either self-destructs or cannot get started—no exception.

As long as there is a mediated side, theoretical construction cannot begin. It is not only interference with both M and P that collapses the theory [the “or” in (2)]: interference with either one suffices. If M can be interfered with, then its outputs are untrustworthy; if P can be interfered with, then M has not actually served as qualified mediation. Nor does X need to have actually interfered—it is enough that we cannot know whether it might. Even if in fact it has never interfered, as long as we cannot prove that it has not, the theory is undermined. It does not require that X has actually interfered—it is enough that we cannot prove it has not. Every mediation theory that posits an unknowable other shore is logically self-defeating; so every idealism as mediation theory can only say “I do not know” from the very start, and should not—cannot—produce volumes of writings. No matter how brilliant or plausible those discourses may be, as long as they permit an unknowable term, it is as if they appended at the end of the story: “All of the above might be false; it might all be my dream.”

II Unknowable

1 Generalizing the Reductio

A The Universality of the Unknowable

Abstracting from the above transcendental-logical flaw in mediation theories yields its general form: “System S presupposes the existence of a completely unknowable entity X.” Mediation theories are only one instance of this (in mediation theory, X generally refers to the mediated side, which differs from the generalized X in that it has fundamentality; outside philosophy, X is not posited to resolve objective-element contradictions but is a more mundane “unknown,” such as a password we do not know). In fact, any theory that presupposes an unknowable term should cease to reason. As long as an unknowable thing-in-itself is presupposed, we cannot rule out the falsification of cognition or its results; and if we cannot rule out such falsification, no determinate knowledge is possible. So long as we retain even a trace of an “unknowable externality,” we are never entitled to assert any determinate cognition. That is, because X is completely unknowable, we cannot rule out that X possesses the capacity to “interfere with or falsify our known contents”; hence we cannot confirm the truth of any “known content,” and even “I do not know the truth of anything” can only be a “relatively” reliable assertion.

That is: if there exists an absolutely unknowable X, we can never prove that all our cognitions are not falsely constructed, falsified, or obscured by X. Under this premise, the validity of all phenomena, rational laws, logical principles, and self-consciousness lacks absolute certainty. Therefore, the system can only suspend all judgments logically and halt at a thorough agnostic epoché; it cannot legitimately establish any knowledge. The only legitimate starting point for knowledge is either thorough suspension or the complete dissolution of the unknowable other shore—no middle state is permissible. Non-omniscience equals ignorance. That is: positing an entity X whose essence/all attributes are in principle unknowable to the cognitive subject; since

we know nothing of X's essence, we cannot determine whether X has the capacity to interfere with "known contents" P (phenomena, ideas, logical categories, etc.), and we can never rule out that possibility; therefore, we cannot be certain that any P is true. The very existence of X undermines the foundation of knowledge. The only logically self-consistent positions are either to abandon the presupposition of X (which means omniscience) or to accept a thorough, comprehensive agnosticism (including skepticism toward P). Logical formulation:

- (1) Let system S posit the existence of an unknowable X.
- (2) From within S, it cannot be proven that X lacks the capacity to interfere with any P.
- (3) Therefore, for any P, S cannot assert that P is true.
- (4) Hence the only relatively true assertion of S is: "For any P, S does not know P."
- (5) Therefore, S falls into a situation where it must assert that it knows nothing.

Any such system cannot utter its first sentence without self-destruction.

If we set aside mediation theory for a moment and turn instead to idealists who lean more toward solipsism (I.1)—such as Descartes and Berkeley—they too fall under this critique:

- Descartes need not presuppose a mediation mechanism to trigger the unknowable; the very act of doubting already illegitimately affirms that his doubt is real.⁷ In fact, when faced with uncertainty, one should not doubt but simply say "I do not know" (suspend judgment).

- Berkeley, who does not presuppose a mediated side, holds that the color, shape, taste, etc., of an apple are the apple in its entirety,⁸ but as long as Berkeley has not seen all apples—cannot claim to have seen all apples—there remains an unknown apple X. As long as apple X has unknown properties, we cannot rule out that it has the capacity to change other apples.

- Or step outside philosophy into everyday life: we believe we ordered takeout, but until we see it arrive at our door, we cannot rule out that the takeout en route has the capacity to fabricate our memory of ordering it—so we might not have ordered it at all. Absurd, but unfalsifiable.

Thus it is not only the mediated side as an unknowable term, but even the most mundane unknown term in empirical phenomena, that can undermine all knowledge—thought is that fragile.

We are accustomed to thinking it natural and normal that there are both things we know and things we do not know. In truth, as long as there is one thing we do not know, we know nothing; there is no intermediate state of "knowing some things and not others." If there is any content unknown to us, we do not know how powerful it is or whether it has the capacity to turn our so-called "known" into actually unknown; the credibility of all "known contents" is corroded at the root.

B The n -Order Nature of the Unknowable

System S's presupposition of an unknowable X entails that from within S we cannot prove that X lacks the capacity to interfere with any known proposition P, so for any P, S cannot assert P as true. However, the assertion "For any P, S does not know P" is itself a P (a proposition about a state of knowledge). That is, in the logical formulation above, assertion (4) is itself a P; hence, continuing from (4):

- (5) [revising the previous (5)] "For any P, S does not know P" (4) is itself a P.
- (6) By (4), S likewise does not know that this assertion is true.
- (7) Hence this unknowable is n -order, because we likewise do not know that we do not know that this assertion is true... ad infinitum.

⁷ Descartes, *Meditations*.

⁸ Berkeley, *Principles*.

Thus, S not only falls into the situation of having to assert that it knows nothing, but also into having to continuously assert that it knows nothing—including that very assertion, and that it does not know that assertion, and that it does not know that it does not know that assertion...

C The Illegitimacy of Thinking

a The Illegitimacy of Thinking In addition, the unknowable term X can also affect P without affecting P. It does not directly affect the proposition P; it directly affects cognition M, and P is always given by M, such that we cannot actually give any proposition P through cognition M. This means that a system that does not declare omniscience from the outset can only end—because there is no grounded known content available as material for thought. Thinking is not permitted; wisdom does not exist; we can only barely say “I do not know” (“barely” considering that we do not even know that we do not know). The final ontology is an emptiness after suspension.

b Conclusion: Critique of Non-Initial “Omniscience” Clarifying the correct posture of the “unknowable” conclusion:

Above, “*n*-orderness” ultimately boils down to a critique of the the proposition P, this agnosticism might seem to say that an unknowable term X cancels all our “conclusions (P)” via “one unknown makes all unknown,” but that is a misunderstanding. According to the illegitimacy of thinking, the more fundamental effect of X is on mediation M, not on the post-mediation side P. Even if we allow that one X renders both M and P unknown, the effects are not on the same level: M is more fundamentally affected, and because M is groundless, the P that must be given through M is affected secondarily. That is, the most powerful thrust of this agnosticism is not against our conclusions but against our cognition itself; conclusions are only secondarily criticized.

Thus, the conclusion of this reductio is really that “the unknowable term X makes cognition M impossible.” “Conclusion P cannot be determined” is a secondary effect of “M is impossible.” This means that even if a system can derive “omniscience” and claim to “escape X,” that is insufficient—because the very “derivation” is itself illegitimate (using ungrounded materials is one reason; even if the materials were grounded, cognition itself has not been proven free from interference), even if it achieves “‘no more unknowns’ for itself” at the level of conclusions (i.e., “omniscience”), it has only solved the P-problem, not the M-problem; it remains groundless.

Only a system that is omniscient at the very first step—an initially omniscient system—can solve the M-problem and thereby also solve the P-problem. If the first step is not omniscient, if an unknowable X exists, then the second step has no trustworthy material to build upon. That is, “‘omniscience’ achieved through thinking” is groundless; we must demand a non-inferential, absolutely fissureless omniscience existing from the very beginning as the determinative starting point. So this agnosticism actually criticizes all non-initially-“omniscient” systems—failure to satisfy “omniscience” and failure to satisfy initial omniscience are both targets of critique.

It is inaccurate to say that this agnosticism merely concludes “conclusions cannot be determined,” because that would suggest that as long as we can “derive” an omniscient system, we can avoid the reductio. In fact, as long as our “omniscience” is “derived”—inferential “omniscience”—rather than initial omniscience, it is invalid. Thus, other schools of thought criticize only those thoughts that are insufficiently thorough, whereas this mode of thought criticizes thought as such—that is, “thought” can never be thorough in the first place, thinking is illegal. This is a kind of anti-intellectualism, but it is irrefutable.

Since non-initial “omniscience” is not regarded as genuine omniscience, no distinction needs to be made. Henceforth, “omniscience” will refer specifically to initial omniscience, and the qualifier “initial” will be omitted.

D “Neo-Agnosticism”

There has historically been another kind of agnosticism, so the term “agnostic” is prone to confusion. This agnosticism, derived from the *reductio* applied to any logic, ontology, or system of thought that fails to be initially omniscient, and from its illegitimacy of thinking, is a new agnosticism, different from traditional agnosticism based on naive skepticism (which is closer to pre-idealist thought). Its core is not doubt but suspension (*epoché*), even if the two may overlap. “Doubt” more often involves judging some things as “good” and, upon realizing that other things threaten that “good” (those things being “bad”), adopting defensive measures. “Suspension” is not knowing at all what any of this means, not knowing why consciousness is occurring at this moment—a purer rigor with less ethical baggage. This is Neo-Agnosticism, with new-unknowable as its conclusion.

2 Religion

Given the primacy of the unknowable, the thinker actually cannot confirm anything, yet still “does things”—whether thinking or macroscopic visible actions like living—all of which are things that “we begin without knowing whether we ought to.” For example, when we eat, we cannot confirm that we need to eat; hunger, the need for delicious food—all are groundless. When we sleep, we have not truly confirmed that our drowsiness or our worry about sleep deprivation is real. Or take “thinking,” known only to oneself—we do not know whether such reasoning or mental rambling is needed. In short, we cannot confirm that anything needs to be done. Even those things done merely for pleasure, comfort, or even out of boredom—such as popping bubble wrap to relieve stress, or spinning a pen when idle—we have not confirmed that the motive of “boredom” at that moment is real.

This is from the perspective of “needs or not.” From the perspective of “can or not,” the situation is even more severe: suppose there exists a behavioral code inscribed upon oneself, such that we actually ought not do anything. If the behavioral code stipulates, “As soon as you eat, the Earth will be destroyed,” then you actually ought not eat. If the code stipulates, “Your making coffee today is the signal for an alien invasion of Earth, coordinated for unified action,” then you actually ought not make coffee. Absurd, yet unfalsifiable.

As shown above, when the unknowable has primacy, “action” must be something that skips “confirmation.” When we act without knowing the full picture—or even without “knowing” at all—we thereby form the most primordial “religion”—groundless belief. Religion is the activity of believing something without justification, indeed without any reason at all. Otherwise it would be science—believing things on the basis of grounds and testability. Though not our intention, we bypass thought, verification, and rigor, and arbitrarily take something to be something that needs to be done—action is necessarily religious action; life, at least life in this form, is necessarily a believer. Even if one goes all out to falsify the claim that making coffee is a behavioral code, that itself is a gamble—essentially, it is using a religious act to falsify, rather than first falsifying it theoretically.

And this differs from the naive view that “‘believing in science’ is also a kind of ‘the religion of science’”—that kind of “expansion of the definition of religion” does not recognize their

identity but judges merely on feeling; it does not, as I have done above, demonstrate that science itself also bypasses “confirmation.” Rather, it defines them in a way meant to be conceptually striking, without being aware of Neo-Agnosticism (the primacy of the unknowable), while knowing full well that they are “confirmable.” What I am saying, by contrast, is that what we formerly took to be “non-religious” things share an identity with what we generally consider “religion” (religion in the broad sense, such as Christianity, Islam, or Buddhism)—namely, both bypass “confirmation.” This includes even science, which we once believed had certainly “undergone confirmation.” From drinking water to praising God, all of it is religion.

This is the most fundamental “religion.” What we now generally call religion—the three great religions and the like—are secondary concepts. Logically speaking, the concept of “religion” originally arises because of the primacy of the unknowable; the ultimate cause of religion is Neo-Agnosticism. Religions in the broad sense are more intensified but less abstract forms of religion—namely, any bypassing of confirmation is religion, while religions in the broad sense are those that bypass confirmation of specific mythologies.

3 Critique of Materialism

If the above discussion on the generalized universality of the reductio is accepted, then both idealism and pre-idealist thought (as well as extra-idealist/extra-philosophical domains like everyday reality) share the condition that non-omniscience effectively means no knowledge. Materialism, which emerged after idealism, has been regarded as the most advanced ontology in philosophy precisely because it recognized the primacy of practice. If our agnostic conclusion is also radical, then unknowable and practice both seem to claim primacy. We now examine the relationship between materialism and this agnosticism.

Materialism can be formulated in two possible ways: (i) “practice is prior,” and (ii) “practice is everything.” The first holds that, by virtue of practice being prior to conclusions, even the conclusion “unknowable” is itself reached through practice. The second holds that if practice is everything, then there is no unknown in cognitive practice, so the unknowable condition is never triggered. Both are based on primacy, merely emphasizing different aspects: “prior to conclusions” because practice has primacy—this is straightforward; “practice is everything” because only the primary is real, while everything beginning with the secondary is strictly speaking non-existent. We examine each in turn:

(i) A materialism that takes practice as primary would hold that in the very act of “giving a conclusion,” the “giving” is prior to the “conclusion.” It can be said that all the above agnostic conclusions are “given” by me, hence practice has primacy, and “unknowable” is also groundless. That is, before recognizing that everything is unknowable, one must first be able to “recognize”—so “recognition” as a practice is prior to the conclusion “unknowable,” and thus materialism is the most thorough reflection.

However, the above conclusion presupposes that we can grasp “practice.” The crux of this agnosticism is that even our present cognition is suspended; it holds that asserting the at-least-existence of “practice” here is at best equivalent to Descartes’ assertion that at least doubt exists. That is, if “practice” exists, then theoretically it would indeed have primacy, and “giving” would precede “conclusion.” But this agnostic does not grant that anyone has ever discovered “practice”/confirmed its existence. This “practice” is an ungrounded material; to assert its existence is to fail to examine the influence of unknown terms.

(ii) If we simply cancel the unknown term (i.e., become omniscient), we need not worry about its influence; then the discovery of “practice” is allowed to be grounded (since no unknown term interferes). Materialism’s way of canceling the unknown term is by “emphasizing the uniqueness of practice.” The logic is: practice has primacy, and primacy itself entails uniqueness, because secondary and further concepts are not as substantially real as practice. Therefore, the primary practice is itself the sole existent; to cognize it is to cognize everything—i.e., omniscience—thus satisfying the requirement of either omniscience or complete ignorance.

If the situation were “that and only that has been discovered,” the above would hold. But it is actually “only that has been discovered.” The correct materialist logic has never been “we have confirmed that there is nothing outside practice, hence only practice”; rather, it is “only practice can be confirmed, hence only practice.” What is revealed when we retreat to the point beyond which we cannot retreat is always merely “we can only retreat this far,” not a determinate knowledge that there is nothing further behind. This is about capacity, not actuality. Materialism, precisely because it holds that externality is groundless, never discusses externality; it thereby reveals that “only practice remains.” It has not gone outside the subject to survey and then returned to declare “in fact, only practice exists.” To claim, as a materialist, that practice is everything would itself be anti-materialist.

Moreover, if a materialist wants to say “practice is everything,” they would additionally need to prove that externality does not exist. According to the principle that one cannot build the next step with ungrounded materials (i.e., the critique of non-initial “omniscience”), if one is not omniscient at the start, one cannot reach omniscience in the second or later steps, because the materials used in inference have no guarantee. Moreover, adding theoretical work that is not itself required—especially in first-philosophy ontology—is illegitimate; it would require stipulating many additional things, such as what “everything” means and why such a stipulation is needed. A thought that cannot prove its own omniscience at the outset ends immediately—and proof is usually not a single step, let alone achievable in the first step.

Thus, intra-, extra-, pre-, and post-idealist/philosophical thought, all thought is a castle in the air—except for omniscient systems.

III The Omniscient Drive

1 Static Logical Connection

A Introduction

People often expect philosophy to provide an ethical-teleological destination, a home for the soul, guidance on “what then to do.” Ontological philosophy, however, discusses what is primary. Neo-Agnosticism points out a “cold fact”: non-omniscient is ignorant. Whether this fact is comfortable or uncomfortable, whether it leaves us a path or not, is not considered—because these are not primary questions. This potentially thorough theoretical purism would end all inconsistent games and take no responsibility for reconstruction; hence it is easily dismissed as nihilism no different from earlier thorough skepticism. However, whether to fill the void left by the reductio’s conclusion, or for no reason at all, we can, relying on the anchor point inherent in every critical activity, discuss the only logically self-consistent endpoint within Neo-Agnosticism—the Omniscient Drive.

B The Omniscient Drive

a Critique's Presupposition of an Anchor Point Every critical activity necessarily carries out a “commitment.” If a system does not presuppose what is correct, it cannot know what is worth criticizing as erroneous. The critic must rely on a reference frame deemed “correct” in order to criticize its object. That is, any critical activity $C(A, B)$ (C being A 's negative judgment of B , i.e., critique) necessarily presupposes an anchor point R (reference), such that:

- (1) R differs from B (opposite or contradictory on at least one judgment);
- (2) A evaluates B as wrong from the standpoint of R .

Thus, if A does not presuppose any R , it cannot distinguish itself from B as “right” versus “wrong”—critique does not exist. Therefore, “presupposing an anchor point” is a logical precondition of critique.

Moreover, since what differs from the anchor point cannot participate in the critique of the object, and the critic is able to critique the object, the critic usually aligns with the anchor point; hence sometimes A may equal R .

b Neo-Agnosticism's Presupposition of an Omniscient Anchor Point Similarly, when we criticize something as non-omniscient—i.e., non-omniscience is “wrong”—we are thereby saying that it ought to be omniscient to be “right.” To negate all non-omniscient cognitive systems is itself to affirm an omniscient cognitive system. Anti-non-omniscientism is omniscientism. In other words, by affirming the legitimacy of omniscience, we criticize the illegitimacy of non-omniscience—the raising of the X-problem itself is a process from legitimate omniscience to illegitimate non-omniscience. This is not adding something to the theory; it is the same theory expressed in another way. It is not self-contradictorily thinking further in an unthinkable situation; it is the other face of Neo-Agnosticism itself. It is not a naive pursuit, choice, or empirical psychological motive; it is a purely transcendental absolute drive, a static logical necessity. The only reason it appears later in this paper is the order of exposition—this paper enters through the unknowable, so Neo-Agnosticism appears first. That is, saying “one ought not be non-omniscient” is itself revealing that “omniscience is correct.” Even though the exposition begins with non-omniscience, from the cognition that “non-omniscience is logically unacceptable,” we are necessarily impelled toward an irresistible tendency toward the state of omniscience:

- (1) If there exists an X unknowable to S , then X is X_u , and the reductio applies.
- (2) Therefore, S must clearly recognize that “conforming to the anchor point—having no unknowable external term—is correct.”
- (3) “Having no unknowable external term” = omniscience. S must be omniscientist.

Neo-Agnosticism does not permit this reductio. For a system S to escape the reductio, it must satisfy the anchor point R_o (R_o being the anchor point whose content is omniscience; O = omniscient): there exists no X unknowable to S . The state of having nothing beyond the boundary of cognition, and of being no longer threatened by any external unknowable X , is the stronghold from which Neo-Agnosticism, as reference, model, and anchor, criticizes non-omniscient thought. Thus, we can say that we always have a motive: to reach omniscience. This bears some resemblance to the “doubt” mentioned in II.1.D, but is more radical. And since the critique of non-omniscient systems is the most primary critique, the critique and the anchor/drive that appear in this context are simultaneously the greatest critique and the greatest anchor/drive in the world.

2 The Omniscient Drive as Pure Motive

However, because the Omniscient Drive is a pure ideal revealed from first-philosophical ontology—never descending into the concrete, never touching the empirical—it is an irrevocable motive but remains a purely formal direction, providing no specific path (technology, social form, ethical program, etc.). Thus, even if it fills the void left by the final posture, it does not imply any primary-level imperative. If there must be something:

- If a person appears who claims to be omniscient, we should be mindful—debating with this person is meaningless, because “logic” is already obsolete for this person: this person knows the answer directly, rather than arriving at it through thinking. This person’s answer is stronger than any of us’ answers. According to the requirement of the Omniscient Drive, even if what this person says is “nonsense,” we ought to believe this person unconditionally. The question is: how do we distinguish whether this person is lying?

- If there is a choice, we choose omniscience—that is, if an opportunity for omniscience were to present itself directly, without requiring any process, we ought to choose it, for achieve omniscience. We choose it if there is a choice rather than creating opportunities for choice... But these are fragmented practices that are not systematic. In the end, the Omniscient Drive merely shifts the atmosphere of the conclusion from negative to positive. In this context, any concrete “method” deployed using the Omniscient Drive remains groundless.

3 Conclusion

The anchor point required to criticize non-omniscience is omniscience. Therefore, as long as the endpoint of thought is the recognition that non-omniscience is wrong, we must affirm omniscience in ontology and only in ontology, and move toward omniscience in teleology. This is the Omniscient Drive to which Neo-Agnosticism is necessarily connected in logic.

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