

Materialistic Pantheism

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Three assumptions underlie this paper:

1. We strive for antifascist forms of existence, meaning: lives without hierarchy, authority, and competition, and hence neither need nor possibility for oppression and exploitation.
2. We live in an individualistic society in which personal success is regarded as the existential priority, in this way undermining communal life in solidarity without which antifascist forms of existence must remain impossible.
3. Philosophical theories have inevitable implications for our practical lives.

It is in this sense that I want to introduce a *materialistic pantheism* as an ontological basis for radically antifascist forms of existence.

What antifascist forms of existence need is an ontology understanding life as a diverse unity of interconnected and interacting forces. An ontology that does not see reality in opposites and hierarchies, but as a web of forms and energies of equal value.

Perhaps most importantly, spirit and matter must not be regarded as contradicting principles. The dichotomy of spirit and matter provides the foundation for the individualistic philosophical systems of modernity (both rationalism and idealism). These systems have to be transcended. We have to realize that it was only by a violent anthropocentric act that spirit got separated from matter.

Matter is not what it is thought of in the spirit-matter-dichotomy. It is not dead but alive, and it does not stand in opposition to spirit but contains spiritual forces. It is the life-spending principle that has created all, spirit included, or simply: it is the source of life. Materialism is a requirement for an uncompromising antidualistic world-view. Not the supposed prehistoric murder of the father is of interest, but the murders of the mother in the history of civilization by the hands of patriarchal powers trying to negate the creative principle. If we don't want to deny where we came from, what created us, what unites us with all that is, then we have to learn to understand matter in its creative dimensions. Only then we will no longer have to pay the price of destroying creation in its diversity.

Matter is no metaphysical principle, but the concrete principle of life itself. (A principle that can only be denied by abstract Cartesian skepticism.)

Transindividualistic thought means essentially to put the ontological status of the individual in perspective. This notion is of crucial importance in any attempt to overcome the prevailing ontological paradigms (*paradogmas*). Realizing the transindividual character of reality is the first step out of the individualistic ideologies of rationalism and

idealism. But it is not enough to get us to where I believe to find the aspired antiindividualistic world-view: in a *radical pantheism*.

Transindividualistic thought leads us away from the secular individualistic ideologies of modernity, but it doesn't automatically lead us to pantheism. For an ontological transindividualism without a materialistic commitment doesn't automatically overcome idealism hostile to matter. If the spirit remains the only essential truth, then the human being remains essentially a purely spiritual being, trapped in its body and either standing in total opposition to matter (absolute idealism) or being far superior in the hierarchy of creation (eschatological idealism); body/matter are, in the best case, inferior forms of reality, in the worst case, the diabolical cause of worldly suffering, and in any case, second to human spirit, without worth or value compared to it, and only an obstacle in the pursuit of truth. Without a materialistic frame, descending into the unity of reality will have to remain an individual attempt of rescue or escape from the world of material suffering. Platonism, Gnosis, Manichaeism, or the Christian Mysticism of the late German middle ages represent the hard varieties of this school of thought, the philosophical systems of a Plotinus, Giordano Bruno, or Nicholas of Cusa, the soft.

As far as Eastern philosophical systems are concerned, it should not be surprising that simplistic adaptations of Hinduism (and, to a lesser degree, Tibetan Buddhism) have attracted a particular fascination in the individualistic Western world over the last thirty years, much more so than the radical pantheistic traditions of the East, Taoism and Zen.

While the latter are hard to sell as easy spiritual escape routes from existential individual void and confusion, the former can serve very well as escapist ideologies. This distinction indicates where the different spiritualistic/esoteric transindividualisms, which are in the best case panentheisms, differ from true pantheism, which is always materialistic.

True pantheism is the realization of the world-immanent divinity that reveals itself in matter as the creator of a diverse reality, and in reality itself as creation. The world-immanence explains that divinity dwells in this world and not in some ontological transcendence. Pantheistic thought and perception is only possible on the basis of a Pyrrhonist understanding of reality: a radical rejection of all dualistic paradigmas introduced by Plato (truth vs. deception, knowledge vs. opinion, idea vs. image, and so forth), while understanding the world as a field of practically undeniable phenomena.

The lessons of the Pyrrhonists of the East, the Zen-Buddhists, reveal true pantheistic wisdom: for example, when questions about “the essence of Buddha’s teaching”, or about “how to truly transcend”, are routinely answered with the suggestion to “go and attend to your garden!” This is the materialism of the pantheist: the embrace of the practically tangible as divine revelation.

Pantheism is the wisdom of praxis and no escape from it. It knows no ontological idealisms, opposites, or hierarchies, only diversity. And the unity of creation doesn't consist of any identity but of the interconnectedness of creation's diverse forms which

will always be acknowledged and respected in their uniqueness. Unity and diversity are no contradiction in pantheism, but co-dependent. The world of pantheism is the pluralistic-univoque world of the differential relations of matter.

Realizing the divinity of these differential relations happens in the experience of the *great mystery* of creation. Life is given to us by matter, but why, we don't know. All we got is awe for the great mystery itself.

Mysteries are characterized by an impossibility to be defined, which is why we give them names not really meaning anything. Like, God. Pantheism is negative theology in the sense of Dionysios: God is the unpronounceable, incomprehensible, non-definable. We cannot describe God, we can only experience God existentially as a mystery. The wisdom of the true pantheist: God reveals itself in everyday life. We all have to be gardeners.

But we must not romanticize. Divinity is not good. Good and evil are only created by social interpretations of creation. Divinity itself is beyond such attributes. That's what Jakob Böhme, one of the boldest Christian thinkers, teaches us.

When Böhme says that evil derives from God itself, he doesn't attribute evil to God, but makes us understand that the socially defined evil is as divine as the socially defined good. The importance of this notion lies in its consequence for our ethics: If all was divine, and divinity was essentially good, there'd be no evil. But without evil, there'd be nothing to fight against. We need to fight, however. Mainly against the egomania believing itself above the natural respect for the divine interconnectedness of creation. The good then lies in expressing and defending this respect in everyday action and conduct.

Manichean ethics pose no contradiction to any philosophical pantheism, because, as suggested above, ethics don't originate in divinity, but in its social interpretation. Thus, a Manichean ethic is not transcendently determined but a practical principle of respect for the diversity and the interconnectedness of creation.

Divinity reveals itself the strongest where there is diversity, and the revelation becomes the more intense the more this diversity is perceived in the context of interconnectedness. We are close to God wherever diversity is preserved and interconnectedness understood.

Today, diversity is replaced by isolation and interconnectedness by totality. "Only a God can help us now."