

Effortless English

remark: n. comment,
very: adj. exact
debate: n. argument, discussion
provoked: v. caused (a reaction)
incredulity: n. surprise
hangover: n. leftover, effect (usually the leftover effect from drinking too much)
medieval: adj. time period between 600 A.D. to 1500 A.D.
Catholic: adj. The Christian church ruled by the Pope in Rome
era: n. time period (in history)
theist: n. religious person
dogmatic: adj. strong believer (usually in a religion)
atheist: n. person who does not believe there is a "God"
fervently: adv. very strongly
blind faith: n. total belief in something, belief without any doubt
alternatively: adv. on the other hand,
reverse: n. opposite, converse
doctrine: n. philosophical rules
assumes: v. believes, accepts
certitude: n. having no doubt, totally sure
aspect: n. part
clinically: adv. medically, scientifically
standards: n. rules, guidelines
absence: n. lack of
taken to mean: idiom. believed to mean
identical to: adj. equal to
Interpretation: n. understanding, theory, analysis
formulated: v. made, created
model: n. theory
agnosticism: n. idea that nothing is definite or sure
grid: n. table, model, theory
popularize: v. make popular
territory: n. land
restated: v. said again
avidly: adv. clearly, colorfully
dogma: n. strict rules & beliefs
amounts to: equals, is
grandiose: adj. theatrical, too showy
delusion: n. illusion, wrong belief
revised: v. changed
absurd: adj. foolish, crazy
perpetually: adv. constantly, always
astonished: adj. surprised
manage to: v. are able to

No Belief

Publish Date: February 6, 2007

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This **remark** was made, in these **very** words, by John Gribbin, physics editor of New Scientist magazine, in a BBC-TV **debate** with Malcolm Muggeridge, and it **provoked incredulity** on the part of most viewers. It seems to be a **hangover** of the **medieval Catholic era** that causes most people, even the educated, to think that everybody must "believe" something or other, that if one is not a **theist**, one must be a **dogmatic atheist**, and if one does not think Capitalism is perfect, one must believe **fervently** in Socialism, and if one does not have **blind faith** in X, one must **alternatively** have blind faith in not-X or the **reverse** of X.

My own opinion is that belief is the death of intelligence. As soon as one believes a **doctrine** of any sort, or **assumes certitude**, one stops thinking about that **aspect** of existence. The more certitude one assumes, the less there is left to think about, and a person sure of everything would never have any need to think about anything and might be considered **clinically** dead under current medical **standards**, where **absence** of brain activity is **taken to mean** that life has ended.

My attitude is **identical to** that of Dr. Gribbin and the majority of physicists today, and is known in physics as "the Copenhagen **Interpretation**," because it was **formulated** in Copenhagen by Dr. Niels Bohr and his co-workers between 1926-28. The Copenhagen Interpretation is sometimes called "**model agnosticism**" and says that any **grid** we use to organize our experience of the world is a **model** of the world and should not be confused with the world itself. Alfred Korzybski tried to **popularize** this outside physics with the slogan, "The map is not the **territory**." Alan Watts, a talented Oriental philosopher, **restated** it more **avidly** as "The menu is not the meal."

Belief in the traditional sense, or certitude, or **dogma**, **amounts to** the **grandiose delusion**, "My current model" -- "contains the whole universe and will never need to be **revised**." In terms of the history of science and knowledge in general, this appears **absurd** and arrogant to me, and I am **perpetually astonished** that so many people still **manage to** live with such a medieval attitude.

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plural: adj. more than one, multiple
mutable: adj. changeable, able to be changed

singular: adj. only one
subliminally: adv. unconsciously, subconsciously
programs: v. teaches, trains
entity: n. thing
linguistic: adj. related to language, re: languages
pervasive: adj. extensive, universal, happening everywhere
gibberish: n. nonsense, babble, words with no meaning
notion: n. idea
derives from: v. comes from
biological: adj. related to biology, re: the body
block-like: adj. physical
instant: adj. immediate
cues: n. messages, programs,
dissolve: v. melt into
processes: n. actions, happenings
transmuted: v. changed (a lot)
aided: helped
instruments: n. tools, machines
mysticism: n. direct religion (meditation, yoga, etc.)
constructed: v. made
systems: n. wholes, combinations
bundles: n. groupings, groups, packages
So much for: idiom. enough of,
sealed: v. closed (permanently)
does not jibe with: idiom. does not agree with
be considered as: v. be thought of as, appears
flowing: v. moving like water
meandering: v. wandering, roaming, moving without a destination
evolving: v. changing over time
perceived by: v. directly experienced by
senses: n. sight, hearing, taste, etc.
construct: n. creation, something we make, something built
interaction: n. joining, working together

Briefly, the main thing I have learned in my life is that "reality" is always **plural and mutable**.

"Reality" is a word in the English language which is (a) a noun and (b) **singular**. Thinking in the English language (and in many Indo-European languages) therefore **subliminally programs** us to imagine "reality" as one **entity**, sort of like a huge New York skyscraper, in which every part is just another "room" within the same building. This **linguistic** program is so **pervasive** that most people cannot "think" outside it at all, and when one tries to offer a different **perspective** they imagine one is talking **gibberish**.

The **notion** that "reality" is a noun, a solid thing like a brick or a baseball bat, **derives from** the **biological** fact that our nervous systems normally organize the dance of energy into such **block-like** "things," probably as **instant** survival **cues**. Such "things," however, **dissolve** back into energy dances -- **processes** or verbs -- when the nervous system is joined with certain drugs or **transmuted** by spiritual exercises or **aided** by scientific **instruments**. In both **mysticism** and physics, there is general agreement that "things" are **constructed** by our nervous systems and that "realities" (plural) are better described as **systems** or **bundles** of energy functions.

So much for "reality" as a noun. The notion that "reality" is singular, like a **sealed jar**, **does not jibe with** current scientific findings which, in this century, suggest that "reality" may better **be considered as flowing** and **meandering**, like a river, or **interacting**, like a dance or **evolving**, like life itself.

Most philosophers have known, at least since around 500 B.C., that the world **perceived by** our **senses** is not "the real world" but a **construct** we create -- our own private work of art. Modern science beginning with Galileo's demonstration that color is not "in" objects but "in" the **interaction** of our senses with object, understands that "reality" is created by our own brains.

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