

The Understander and the Understood from the Perspective of Scale

In the process of understanding what understanding is we have to contemplate what is doing the understanding and what is it that is being understood. When I say that I understand something, what does that really mean? What do I mean by "I"?

Cogito ergo sum is a Latin philosophical proposition by René Descartes usually translated into English as "I think, therefore I am". But what is the "I"? Is it my whole body? Well I need my whole body to survive. But my feet don't actually do the thinking. That mechanism would be the brain.

But it's not the whole brain that's doing the thinking. Some of my brain is just keeping the machine which is my body running. Some of my brain is looking to get someone pregnant and that's a mind of it's own. And some of it is contemplating what I'm writing so I can put it into words that part of your brain understands. But where do the words come from? And what the the mechanisms involved in getting these words to you? There's words, these concepts are carried by the software life forms that we creates as a symbiotic species that, like the bacteria in our stomachs, help us share and digest knowledge. Which brain cells are writing this article? It's not about the cells, it's about the network of information the cells create.

My thoughts are in words and those words came from the minds of other people. They help construct societies while are held together though rules and systems. Education, science, government, are all artificial constructs. It's all software system that are part of our evolution and these systems are evolving. Individually we are useless. Collectively we are powerful.

Just as cells make up the brain we as individuals are part of a greater organism, humanity, where we collectively contemplate the universe. And humanity is part of all life on this planet which provides us with food and air and who we share a direct biological ancestry with. 3.5 billion years ago something started dividing and we are still that same organism dividing.

From a biological point of view and from a functional point of view we are a single life form. And like a hive is really part of the bee's survival the planet itself can be considered as part of this single life form. And it is really this combined life form that is the "I" that contemplates the universe.

By changing the scale of the word "I" we can look at the perspective of understanding from the view of different scales. If "I" is me as an individual then that's different that "I" as humanity contemplating together. But there is an even bigger "I". Since our planet is part of the universe, that we are what the universe evolved into, then "I" is the universe. So what we contemplate Reality, then it's really Reality that is contemplating itself through us. When we look through the Hubble Telescope, the universe is looking at baby pictures of itself.

So when we expand our perspective to realize that here on this planet evolution created us out of the universe and we are the physical mechanism where the self awareness of the universe exists. Just as brain cells give rise to our self awareness, humanity collectively gives rise the universe being aware of itself. Our curiosity about reality is designed by evolution to give a survival advantage to those who want to know more. Thus we are designed by the universe to want to understand the universe. The laws of the universe lead to the universe being self aware and that self awareness will increase over time. And if we fail to obey these rules then we face extinction. Darwin is a cruel master.