

Review of: "Why Existence? An Explanation with No Remainder"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Review of Sanford Drob's article: "Why Existence? An Explanation with No Remainder"¹

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In the first lines, I would like to share my enthusiasm and gratitude. Being able to read and, even, add my professional (in Jungian terms, Persona-filtered) and intimate (Ego-complex driven) opinion on one publication that tackles the major metaphysical and cosmological question. I dare to add that Leibniz's famous quote² is also psychological dilemma, in ontological way, as human-individual and human-species.

This review will follow the narrative Drob's article.

1.1

Drob gives an overview of philosophical attempts to answer why there is something instead of nothing. However, although mentioned, the teaching of the Neoplatonists stay unexplored which is, in my opinion, a great pity. Their extensive work and their semantics could be an interesting addition to the next chapters of this publication. Staying with "The Good" of Plato, there is a bias. Moral quality of the word "good" is probably a way to connect with Leslie's axiarchism. Pleroma³ (πλήρωμα, old Greek word meaning "fullness") is less human, social and ethical context-related term. It is fulness³, so the chapter on evil (ch. 4.1) becomes superfluous.

Drob says early in his text: *"For example, if the origins of existence are to be found in its actualization (i.e. its "beginning" is to be found in its "end") does this count as a complete explanation or does it simply leave us with a "circle" that itself needs to be explained?"*

Here, my comment goes on the amplification of the term "actualization". *"Its "beginning" is to be found in its "end"* sounds as simplification and I am not sure if the author was searching for this impact of that word. Presuming that the end defines

the origin of existence demands the realization of the *end*, the possibility of the *end* or finality of the *end*. Nevertheless, the actualization is ever-going process (for example, our world exists until it is not ruined (yet, but it is another story)). Being complete or a circle, as Drob wonders, are the questions which comes after we test the actualization as process and not as the finite action in time.

1.2

Since I am not native English speaker, I got “stuck” immediately with the “why” chapter. My first thoughts went to ancient languages. Old Greek has four words for why: ἁπλό (what – why), τί (why), τιν (why-wherefore) and τίπττε (why pray)⁴.

In my mother tongue, serbo-croat, *radi cega* (*what for*) and *zbog cega* (*because of what*) are detailed versions of *why* (*zasto*) question. Leibniz asked the famous question in German: Warum ist überhaupt etwas?² Heidegger’s amplification sounded like this: Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts?² *Warum* comes from old German *wār umbe* (*wo* (*where*) and *um* (*in order to, around*)) (<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/warum>). French translation is “Pourquoi il y a plutôt quelque chose que rien?”⁵ where «*pourquoi*» means literally «*what for*». This long digression comes to accentuate different etymology and different meaning in different languages, different contexts and different syntaxes. Claiming that *warum* (*why*) is more important than *überhaupt* (*at all, in general, overall*) sounds as another rational choice of the author. Differentiating causation from purpose is important but the accent could have been given on *overall* (*in general*) which does not necessary includes the outliers. Similarly, for Heidegger’s modification: *why beings at all and not only more of nothing*, could be analyzed from the angle of more of nothing versus one (nothing, as opposite to one being or more beings).

However, the adverb *why* includes the temporal dimension. Drob does not devote enough of his writings to this aspect which could be expected since he writes in the following pages about the privileges of temporal order. *Why* implies that two events do not share same temporal coordinates, one thing precedes another. Even in mathematical terms: $11 + 11 = 22$, the operation comes before the result (from the human brain angle, in atemporal and a-moral sense they are Abelian groups).

One remark: the example with the bus to Florida – it seems that the *how*” and “*why*” got mixed unless there would be an answer: “Because buses to Florida exist” which would imply that being possible is reason *per se* without saying why exactly to Florida and not somewhere on the way to it. In parallel, the answer is product of concrete thinking, the answerer either is not able to use the abstract thinking or consciously manipulates the answer. In any case it is not the appropriate example of adult abstract thinking. Only a being with abstract thinking capacities (thinking about linear time included) can answer to this “*why*”.

Another note: There is interesting fans’ theory on Adams’42. In program language ASCII, the asterix is represented as 101010, or 42 and the asterix means different things for different people, like joker in cards or like “whatever you want it to be”. Adams never confirmed this but I feel there is a tiny place for this story in this review.

I will add a few lines to the interesting Drob’s discussion on the God hypothesis. God needs sentient beings in order to incarnate itself. What does it mean? Can we see God as an object of its own evolution, God as dynamic process, God

who survive through changes (inner or outer), God as vulnerable in linear time? In Jungian analytical language this could be translated: is there an individuation of Self? Or is linear (Chronos) time-bound Self only a facet of The Self?

1.3

I like the start of thought experiment by postulating that *'nonexistent x can be a condition or foundation for existence'*. This is quite analogous to the transformation of inorganic material into organic life. I wonder if we tackle here alchemist transformation. Nonexistent/not alive needs “electric charge” or “conjugation/coagulation” to become existent/alive. In modern cosmology, we can associate to the entropy jump. This jump, does it happen spontaneously/progressively? Is catalyzed by some additional agent?

If we follow the same analogy, does linear time starts existing from the moment we measure it or it has its objective existence? Or is linear time the effect of (one or many, primordial or later) entropy jump or time is related to the catalyzer of the entropy jump? Drob's thoughts on this are welcome.

2.1

In the cartographic analogy, I would disagree with Drob. Indeed, his conclusions are valid when he writes *“these gaps represent “nothing whatsoever” as they have no interpretation within the map”*. What he does not accentuate is the necessity of these gaps. Their exact distribution, abundance and form are not important (they do not exist as such), but their approximative existence is necessary to make the globe round. This reflects the Heisenberg's uncertainty principle: exact places are not defined but there is a cloud of their possibilities.

2.2

In this section before we can claim anything, we need to define our own existence or at least the limits of our knowledge about our existence. It seems that Drob chooses some of our reality manifestations as hypotheses and some other as facts/axioms. Although he does fine job with discussing the most of them it is not always clear why some terms are worth of explaining and the other are taken *per se*.

Drob cites Leslie who argues about the potential in the emptiness as pre-existence. I cannot omit the comparison with Jungian theory of archetypes⁶. In addition, I wonder why there are no citations or remarks of Jung's heritage on this topic. His extensive and systematic studies on Plato, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, European mysticism and alchemists (and from 1929 on the oriental culture and religion) are profound well of knowledge about the preexisting ideas, the concept of *eidos* Platonian and its application in the study of human psyche⁷. Even more, in his seminal publications, Jung insists on the difference between archetypes and archetypal representations/images. *“Leslie calls such pre-existent facts, i.e., facts that hold regardless of whether anything has existed, does exist, or will ever exist, “synthetic necessities.” They are not “logical” or “mathematical truths” as they require some form of at least hypothetical experience to secure their validity—but they are necessities, nonetheless.”* – these lines fit well with numerous definitions of archetypes by Jung⁸.

The following sentence *“Even in a blank, it would still be true that if there were a world it would be good for it to manifest*

love, beauty, wisdom, etc.” is subjective opinion. Surely, as human beings, we tend to support this line of thinking but the declarations on what is good and what is not, are dependent on the claimer’s position, context, history, aims. History thought us cruelly that good intentions are far from good realizations.

2.3

Similarly, Drob argues that “*we cannot conceive of a universe where the values of truth, compassion, beauty, freedom, and wisdom are vitiated* “. I do not understand what are the bases for this statement. Does Drob talk about social values or natural values? I wish to ask, making me imagine the second slide of the psychopharmacological power-point presentations, what are his conflicts of interest. Here, it is irrelevant to what religious, spiritual or philosophical tendencies he adheres, but it is essential to accentuate that our ethics is based on our ecosystem and our linear time. It would be pretentious to be sure what are good (or any) intentions of Others if there is no empathy (in the sense of seeing the world from entirety of other’s being) for different Other.

For example, if we had lived on the planet that has very limited resources maybe religion would have been replaced by the scientific explanations, and what is wrong or what is good would be expressed in the statistics relevant to the survival of the species?

2.4

The author’s illustration of his claims reminds me of James Hillman’s “Soul’s Code”⁹ hypotheses. However, it is not taking into account the psychological marshmallow test¹⁰. I have always wondered if this test would be replicable in different cultures, especially in societies with ongoing wars, poverty or environmental crises (or where these factors changed significantly during the longitudinal study). Playing safe *versus* risking is dependent on many factors. Therefore, the potential is differently actualized depending on time (Chronos and Kairos time; linear and opportune now time). If we put this into a cosmological perspective, Now is not equal to Atemporality and is a function on linear time (dependent in the sense that Kairos is the crossover of Atemporality and Chronos). The value of Now is that it is actualized. The attention of atemporality is focused on it. But does this Now have potential of End, or just “pre-beginning” had it? Or in Hillmanian terms, does archetype contain and/or overwhelm all possible outcomes of its actualization?

Teilhard’s Omega¹¹ principle “privileges” Omega in front of Alpha. Indeed, paying the same respect to all “letters from alpha to omega” sounds more in concordance with the *red thread* of this paper.

2.5

Here, I would be grateful for the author’s differentiation between the values and archetypes. I believe that he refers to archetypes while anthropomorphizing them and focusing only on human moral aspects.

Drob’s accentuates linear time (one I call in this review Chronos, in concordance with Ancient Greek perspective on different times) - however I am wondering if Kairos (or Kairos x Chronos) would be more appropriate.

I am not sure if this hierarchy or dualism (mathematical/scientific facts *versus* moral/aesthetics values) is necessary. Why

(again one *why*, here clearly in the sense where from) the writer of these lines separates fundamentally these representations? And speaking of representations vs. potentials, does Drob think that the idea (potential, *eidos*) of time exists in the Atemporal?

In Taoism, there is a verse: “We shape clay into a pot, but it is the emptiness inside that holds whatever we want”¹². Emptiness gives the purpose. Maybe archetypes are axes (just like geometry coordinate systems axes, no matter here how many axes there are) used to be “filled” with values. *Nothing* does exist in this situation so Leibniz’s question loses meaning because *Nothing* is something. However, for the sake of not “playing smart” in front of great minds of Heidegger and Leibniz, let us stay with nothingness. Can we differentiate static nothingness and dynamic nothingness? Static would be absolute absence of entropy, of movement, of time, ultimate individuality. Dynamic would be nothingness that it (overall - *überhaupt*) nothing in its totality, but is composed of dynamic game of appearing and disappearing. Appearances and anti-appearances (sounding as antimatter? or as spectrum of archetype differing in frequency, amplitudes, parity) make duality, duality makes movement and time. Time could exist only collectively, in duality. If we look through Drob’s paper’s prism: the origin of universe is value with potential of incarnation.

3.1

After all being written, Drob comes back to reason (spirit, mind) and I wonder why is necessary to promote one above another. Rather, I would suggest based on very nice paragraph on Hegel, that macroworld is not the consequence of the microworld (quantum reality) but they are intertwined through their parallel existence, duality and time dimensions. The author hypothesizes that mind without values is unreachable, but he doesn’t explore the opposite. Values without mind are not actualized. They are part of the same but not being equal to same gives them possibility of movement.

Since we tackle panpsychism, it is worth of accentuating that it does not mean equal distribution of (un)consciousness but its equal total sum.

When talking about values, Drob insists only on moral categories. In my opinion, it is more various than this, and, probably, it is connected to the interaction of two individual entities plus time. If two, let us imagine, elementary primordial virtual particles (annihilating in any moment when they are in contact with their counter-particle) “meet”, they can have interactions that we can symbolically name or associate to human languages terms such as: mother, separation, division, comparison, bigger, provenance, solidarity etc. (in fact all that those elementary particles can do one to another).

I would be happy to hear how Drob differentiates value from information. New information which comes as surprise is known as entropy¹³ – can we claim the same for values. What is relationship between values and entropy? Is entropy related to the amplitudes or other parameters of values?

Following the McGilchrist’s studies on attention, Drob concludes that “attention directed by “value” causes the cosmos to appear as cosmos”, adding the causation to purpose of values in the existence of Uni/Multiverse. However, attention happens when Chronos gets its opportunity (its opportune moment *Kairos*). Maybe universe exists because 0 (nothingness) is individuality and individuality gives rise to duality (0 is 1, 1 is 2, cf. Maria’s axiom¹⁴).

3.2

I am not enough familiar to Leslie's work, so why "shouldness" and not "couldness"? It seems that we leave the potentiality and we orientate toward predestination; in other words, free will is not dual with destiny.

3.3

It is not clear if many (or all) values are engaged at the same time, and if that impacts the outcome, as well what is the relationship of different values. Drob comes back in this short paragraph which could (not to say should) be more elaborated to the "freedom" of potential (again could/should). If something is potentially possible, is it "obligatory" to act on it and if so, are we again in the cartographic metaphor (or taoistic bowl) where the form is various but purpose is stable?

In my view, combinations of values make time and incarnate those values, thus values are on and off and only their relationship/communication/contact/awareness make them exist. In other words, Existence is (an)Other with me. Previously mentioned Shouldness allows the movement and what is hortatory is the keeping the sum neutral (therefore Evil and Good, as Drob simplifies, are both in the spectrum of Same).

The last sentence of this paragraph: "... *the universe, indeed the entirety of existence, is conditioned by the general principle that provides the reason for its existence, the potential maximal realization and development of value in each of its multifarious forms*" comes after the analogy with human life making me perplexed about the author's view on the end of Uni/Multiverse. Does he suggest end of values or their Completeness?

4.1

As much I have enjoyed with Drob's concept of open teleology, the section on Evil brings one too anthropomorphizing view on the universe, which is not necessary in this paper, except if for spiritual/religious reasons. The gnostic concept of Pleroma gives quite satisfying response to this query. Mixing the Good of Plato with moral good seems too weak analogy, as ethics and axiology are not the same disciplines.

It is difficult not to make references to the excellent book of Jung "Response to Job"¹⁵ which is dedicated to these questions, especially to limits et risks du principe *privatio boni*.

The author writes: "*This claim does not require our world to be perfectly or even largely good, only that it be, as we have seen, an arena within which value and meaning can be realized and maximized.*" Again, the word *maximized* seem to be correlated with his intrinsic (and definitely highly recommendable in our world) system of values. However, the universe, even if considers panpsychic, is not necessarily habited by only sentient beings in the form of human (and even if this would be true, the place on the top of the ethical pyramid does not seem to belong to *homo sapiens*). Why not instead of *maximize* aim to right measure and right tensions?

Similar goes for the elaboration on death. Why not aiming to harmony, compensation and alliance with Chronos? Too much of anything (even with + as is prefix) is not the same as good. Right measure has some breaks buttons.

4.2

Here again there is a rigid binarity: good *versus* evil (it would be interesting TV debate between one mother lion and one old antelope). I am surprised that questions of *justice (fairness)* and *justice (accuracy)* (in French *justice* and *justesse*) are not having some space that would be appropriate in this paragraph.

In the same direction, I am wondering if there is a bias that *something* means better than *nothing*. *Something* is maybe only a visible part of All? Maybe the fluctuations and danse of *nothing* constitutes the dark matter? Maybe the fact that in this universe it seems that we are matter and not the antimatter does not give a bad name to the antimatter.

Again, I am not sure from what position Drob claims that death is disvalue. This looks as bias of individual versus collective. Death is part of collective process which we do not like on an individual level, but again we cannot privilege *one* without giving space to *not one*.

4.3

There is one very nice and highly complicated paper by Lahav and Neeme¹⁶, in which they mathematically defend the hypothesis that the designer/higher consciousness is not viable idea since it makes fail the zombie paradox.

In this paragraph I miss a bit of discussion on relationship between entropy and enthalpy in big (open or not?) systems. I value (pun intended) panpsychism hypothesis and for that reason (as here I am biased) it could give it a favor to observe it through the lenses of the economics of entire system (uni/multiverse).

4.4

Drob let us think that sentient beings (and we take ourselves as their representatives) are holders of values. Here I do not find very strong arguments in favor of anthropomorphism. I do not think that it puts in the peril the Drob's major take home message. The answer and the question are related but why discarding different ecosystems or different forms of (un)consciousness (sky objects, fluctuations of particles, different life forms)?

5.1

Answer is the fact that we (whoever *we* is) are capable of asking the Question.

Nevertheless, can we allow different means of asking (without words)? And is it possible that only more than one is needed to "ask"? One and only cannot reach this dilemma? (And again, one is two, as in the Axiom of Marie¹⁴). When (while accepting all time dimensions spectrum of this word) is enough of asking-answering?

5.2

Drob finishes with Wittgenstein's advice on human remaining *silent* in the great mystical arena – can we add: with capacity of naming (asking)?

In conclusion, this paper stimulates. Drob's thoughts and dilemmas are contagious. They contribute to this exciting

domain. Capacity to ask, capacity to value, or if I can paraphrase, capacity to react to beauty maybe created uni/multiverse but certainly can save the world.

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