THE CYCLE OF INNER WORLDS

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1. Introduction

In this paper I would like to illustrate the theory of the "Cycle of Inner Worlds", which means that our inner world undergoes a cyclic process of construction and destruction, explained by various principles underlying the mind and reality. First, I will give a short introduction, then the process of destruction (or "dissolution") will follow, then the process of construction, then the explanation on the logic of the cycle, and finally I will conclude in the last section.

The first claim is that "*experience is structured*". Our minds process the raw sensory information, structure it in the process of perceiving, build primitive mental objects from it and finally construct more complex entities, including the entirety of one's inner reality. The "inner world" is therefore a combination of perception, concepts and meaning.

The second claim is that "*the inner and outer worlds are not (always) congruent*". The internal representation of what the external, "real" world is like often includes qualities that differ from what it aims to represent.

The third claim is that "*this incongruence causes tension*". That is, since the two worlds do not match each other perfectly, there is always a certain gap, which leads to a sort of tension in the mind. This tension is a source of mental phenomena, such as anxiety, dissatisfaction but also creativity.

The fourth claim is that "*inner worlds are unstable and can dissolve*". This means that our webs of beliefs, our narratives and value systems (to name a few) tend to exhibit features that make them unstable and not able to survive forever. Such structures then move towards dissolution or collapse, either partially or entirely, which leads to a form of "nihilism".

The fifth claim is that "*nihilism is unstable, too, and generation re-emerges*". A complete absence of structures, concepts, beliefs and values is not sustainable and – in face of a generative mind – will explode into creativity once more, when new structures and mental objects emerge therefrom.

Therefore, the overarching claim and theory is that inner worlds undergo cycles of construction and destruction, due to inherent instabilities and other

reasons. These cycles may sometimes be complete (i.e., true nihilism and true generation) and sometimes partial (i.e., incomplete nihilism and incomplete generation). They may occur at different speeds and frequencies, aren't always linear or clear, but might be observed across minds. The theory is not empirical psychology but a structural account from a philosophical point of view.

The following sections aim at illustrating and explaining this theory of cycles and engages in its nuances and details.

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2. Dissolution and Nihilism

As I have mentioned previously, our inner worlds tend towards instability. While they may appear to be stable, the claim is that underlying mechanisms are constantly at work to destabilise the worlds, and that there are even structural, intrinsic features which may produce such instability.

One such mechanism is that of *certainty introducing instability*. The claim is that certainty leads to a fixation of meaning, which leads to a rigidification thereof, which leads to brittleness and finally to instability and dissolution. We can imagine a belief that we take for granted, are so sure about that we don't question it anymore, and as the world keeps changing around us, the finer details of this belief will begin to show cracks in its structure.

Another such mechanism is that of *approximation in concepts*. The claim is that (probably most) our concepts are approximations of what they really try to capture in reality, and that over time, the tiny inconsistencies, errors and gaps accumulate to create a strain on the concept, eventually dissolving it under tension. We can imagine how, if we were to perfectly analyse our words down the line in their definitions and do so for the definitions of the defining terms ad infinitum, we should eventually end up with large enough of a discrepancy that the original term will become completely unstable and unrecognisable.

A third such mechanism is that of *exhaustion of meaning*. The claim is that concepts, beliefs and values will – over time – lose their guiding, orientating and stabilising force and therefore lead to an insufficiency and loss of "vitality", which ultimately erodes meaning and leads to dissolution. We can imagine how sometimes, a belief that once moved us has lost its relevancy or inner potency, and which then leads to an abandonment thereof in favour of alternatives.

Further mechanisms may include (1) a general tendency of the mind towards restlessness and revolution, (2) a tendency of inner anxiety and agitation, (3) a

fundamental character of scepticism and thirst for knowledge, (4) an exhaustion of trust, faith and conviction, (5) and maybe something structurally incompatible of stability as a quality with the changing world around us (and even within us).

The once supporting structures then gradually lose stability, force and content, until they are abandoned and tend towards an annihilation of meaning altogether[1]. In this stage, the mind's positive structures of meaning are dissolved and an openness, potentiality and receptiveness emerges[2] – a nihilistic fundament, in some sense. While there is no positive structure in this moment, the mind and its mechanisms are not at rest.

Thus, when inherent features of instability erode and dissolve the structures of the mind's inner world, leading to nihilism and absence of meaning, the mind's world may appear to be desolate and minimal, yet it is not without motion, energy or potential. The following section will therefore attempt at exploring how the mind will then regenerate its own structures from a nihilistic origin and ultimately engage in a cycle of construction and destruction.

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3. Construction and Re-Emergence

Previously, I have presented the case for how and why the mind tends towards nihilism and dissolution of structures. Through multiple mechanisms the beliefs, values and meaning that make up the structured inner world become unstable, dissolve and eventually result in nihilistic tendencies or true nihilism.

However, despite a desolation of meaning, the world continues to exist, the mind continues to perceive, and action survives the loss of meaning. Without any structures, experience lacks direction and has no method by which it can continue and evolve. There seems to be an intrinsic need for structure and meaning in the mind.

The main claim here is that "*nihilism is inherently unstable, too*". The more nihilistic a mind becomes, the more difficult it should be to sustain that lack of structure and we should expect to find reactionary motions in the mind. We can imagine trying to live without values – the moment we need to do anything, we

[1] As I argue in this paper, even nihilism should retain meaning and structure to some extent.

[2] In future papers I will attempt at showing the differences between a positive conviction that e.g., "There is no meaning." and a sceptical, open-minded, yet curious attitude of "I admit to no meaning, yet I am open to invite new meaning." The former might stem from resignation, the latter from scepticism.

require values in order to orient ourselves around them. The more a person wants or needs to do, the more they need structures of meaning in their mind.

In the absence of values and beliefs the mind therefore attempts at either finding a new ground or creating one, if none can be found. The creativity of the mind then means that new structures emerge from this ground and that a new web of beliefs is formed and generation resumes.

This regeneration and *re-emergence* can then lead to a fully functional inner world again. Though it is not said that this will be any more or less stable than previous iterations and the claim is that no such world can ever be perfectly stable and will continue towards a cycle.

Therefore, once the mind has dissolved its structures and ended up in nihilism, due to such reasons as the continuation of life and of interests, the mind will resume its creative activities and re-emergence with new structures and objects, which lead to new meaning, and which ultimately repeats the cycle.

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4. The Logic of the Cycle

We have seen how meaning is structured, becomes unstable, dissolves and then reappears once nihilism gets pushed to its extreme for too long. This is what we can call the "*Cycle of Inner Worlds*" – the creation and destruction of values, beliefs and meaning or mental structures in general.

Such a cycle is not accidental or an anomaly but rather an expected outcome of the mechanisms of the mind and the structural qualities underlying the worlds. The claim is that there are features of the worlds that will cause such cycles to appear, some of which we will discuss briefly here.

The first is the *instability of stability*. Because certainty comes with fixed structures, and fixation resists a changing world, yet the world is changing, certainty leads to "hyperstable" structures, which become so stable that their rigidity ends up being their reason for collapse.

The second is the *instability of approximation*. Because, it would seem, that our knowledge can always become more precise than it is, the little differences between reality and our approximated knowledge build up to become substantial gaps and further destabilise structure.

The third is the *instability of exhaustion*. Because of saturation, a changing world and possibly other reasons, meaning and structures often tend towards a devitalisation of themselves, through which they lose the force, usefulness and convincingness that they once held, leading to instability and collapse.

The fourth is the *instability of nihilism*. Because of probably metaphysical reasons, it would appear that the extreme of nothingness – at least when it comes to the structures in the mind – is in and of itself, unstable. The mind requires construction and will generate new objects, even if they were originally dissolved.

The fifth is the *generative nature of the mind*. Because of the creative and active nature of the mind, generation and construction seem to be natural extensions and follow necessarily. The mind, aiming to do things, requires structures, which guide doing and lead to an evolution thereof.

It may therefore be stated that there seem to be reasons for believing that the extremes themselves tend to be unstable – absolute meaning and absolute nihilism[3]. The former becomes rigid, motionless and stale, the latter becomes unproductive, inviting and (surprisingly) generative[4].

It is important to note that the exact details of such cycles may vary widely. We cannot expect such cycles to be of uniform appearance, only that the structures of the mind and the inner worlds seem to oscillate between destruction and construction, and that the extremes seem to be fundamentally unstable.

With this section I hope to have illustrated some of the details of how the cycle seems to operate and what sustains it. We should now have a better understanding of what is meant with each term and why the notion of a cyclical inner world seems to necessarily follow from the premises.

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5. Conclusion

It has been argued that the inner worlds are structured, constructed and dynamic, not static, linear nor passively formed. The mind seems to be an active agent in the production of inner worlds since the moment of receiving sense information in perception.

The cycle is therefore one of first naively, intuitively and subconsciously constructing a world, facing incongruence, tension and instability in lived

[3] Due to certain metaphysical speculations, one might argue that extremes are always unstable once interacting with the real world. There appear to be more than one force in the universe, meaning that the extreme of taking one force to its extreme might not be sustainable across time, as the opposite force will balance the first back in. This line of thought, although not yet developed, gives rise to the thought that extremes lack stability and that only motion and difference is “stable”.

[4] It might be that it is always an active (even if maybe subconscious) suppression of meaning which is found in “nihilism” where one cannot escape it. But that sans such a force, nihilism itself will always tend towards generation again.

experience, and then collapsing into nihilistic tendencies (or pure nihilism) before re-emerging with new constructions, maybe consciously forged or subconsciously generated, repeating.

It would appear that one of the strongest claims here is that – contrary to intuitive belief – it is not so much the in-between, the "neither-nor" or the values between the extremes which are unstable, but rather that the extremes themselves (here: nihilism and absolute meaning) feature instability. This might be analogously compared to a pendulum that only at first seems most stable at its ends (where it temporarily halts swinging), but which is no stable state and leads to a continuation of the motion of swinging in-between the two endpoints (i.e., the main motion of "neither-nor").

This proposal thus requires us to reexamine certain assumptions and ideas: First, is it maybe that our concept of "stability" needs to be rethought? Maybe only that which is changing is considered "stable", and the "endpoints of the pendulum" are unstable? Second, do we maybe require a certain degree of dissolution in areas of our lives? Maybe it is only through the turning towards nihilism that a structure can regenerate in a more potent, alternate manner? Third, ought we maybe not treat nihilism with such fear and respect? Maybe it is such that true nihilism cannot be properly sustained, and that by better understanding these motions, we can overcome the dangers thereof, by finding its generative potential.

It might be that our conception of "solving for an absolute, extreme state" (particularly for the one that has absolute structure and meaning) might be misguided or unhelpful. In future research it would be interesting to ask ourselves, whether the goal is not a fixed structure, but a method for moving between structures in such a way that change, dynamic qualities and motion mean "stability" for us. Maybe it has been the motion between stability that was the most stable?

With this question I would like to conclude this paper and hope that future research and investigations into the general cluster of topics around mind, meaning and nihilism may bring forth new solutions for both abstract and practical philosophy.

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