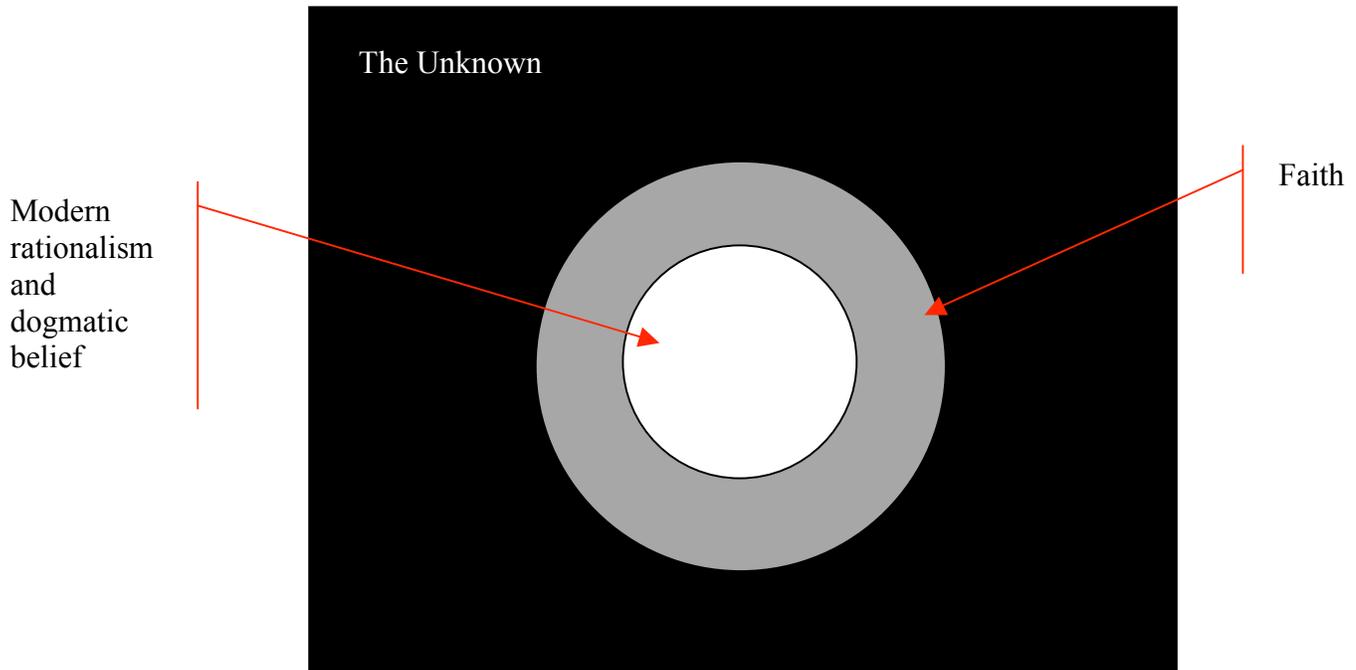


The Unknown: Faith and dogmatism



The above diagram expresses the basis of this article. The underpinning basis of life we will call the Unknown, on top of this is the idea of “faith” in something and on top of this is the reasoning of belief forming dogmatism, which can either be from modern rationalism or other forms of rigid thinking, i.e. not from outside the “box” or in the above case “circle”. Let’s look into this more:-

At the Origin of religious traditions, “faith” is a key word, but at its heart what does it mean or point to? At its root “faith” originally comprises of recognition of an unknown quality that cannot be fathomed by the conscious mind. Throughout history this has always been at the centre of all religious metaphors. However on top of this “un-known-ness” formed superstructures of what the Unknown “means”. Ideas, methods and definitions arose, distorting the original mystery or no-thing into a some-thing: a believed “known-ness” or “known by a selected few-ness”. The point is that when the Unknown turns into what is called “faith” it has become a labelled belief and this belief is merely a set of ideas around the *idea* of “faith”. Unknown turns into faith and from there belief can turn into dogmatism as easily and quickly as a match ignites dry wood. Before we know it Christ’s words become Crusades, Mohamed’s insight becomes “holy”-war, Buddha’s and Lao Tzu’s bliss becomes monasticism/asceticism: essentially there is either an outer war on the exterior world, an “I’m okay, you’re not okay” ideology – or an inner war, a belief that: “I’m not okay, the universe is okay”. This is is pure dualism.

In all of the above cases the unifying principle is that at the core there is a point about which we cannot speak. This we might call simply the “Unknown”, but fundamentally it is deep acceptance of the Unknown, an acknowledgment of the point at which the

cognitive process cannot penetrate. This is what is realized by all ancient and indigenous peoples in the understandings of medicine and the process of simply letting-go and relaxing, which is the fundamental basis of all forms of healing. As such, and as healing is the root of all ancient and indigenous understanding, the recognition of the Unknown is also the fundamental basis of all aspects of life, the realization as Tony Parsons puts it, that “we are being lived through!” and seeing that there is a broader context occurring to what seems so personal, an Unknown context. In Christianity oftentimes people say “It’s in the hands of God” or “God works in mysterious ways” or “there is no way to earn Salvation/liberation, it is already within”. All of these are examples of phrases used in common language which point to Oneness and are a recognition of “unknown-ness” but often they are indicative of those who have “faith” and those who do not.

If we look at the “agnostic”, the one who does not have a religious faith, at the point at which the mind and cognition do not function they too will simply say “I don't know”. This is therefore exactly the same as the person of “faith”, but without the flowery religious linguistics, and perhaps without the requirement of “analysis/reasoning”, although the agnostic’s point of view will often be borne of belief in modern Newtonian science. The Scientist too believes in the scientific method and the nature of how it all works, but at the points where their often fragmented views fail to see the big-picture questions, they will say “science hasn’t got there yet” which is another way of saying “I don't know”. The point is that at a basic level we are in the same boat of not knowing. The religious person simply has the comfort of realizing that there is no possibility of knowing, whereas the scientist-academic is under the illusion that if they try hard and push at the limits of knowledge they will somehow “get there”. This is what makes the two processes slightly different. There isn’t one better than the other, though in many ways the feeling that things can be “left in the hands of God” can to some extent be quite liberating.

The academic-rationalist’s view is that those who have “faith” are akin to being warmongers and that their faith will cause them to behave irrationally, while upholding a belief which to the rationalist is unreal. However, people with “faith” very often have a far less stressful life than the academic-rationalist who is bound by a rigid mind-set that to “unweave the rainbow” *must* be the way to understand everything, which should be striven for. There is a direct proportionality between whether there is an acceptance of the Unknown, and stress. The less we accept the Unknown and the anxiety that causes, the sicker we become. This is beautifully illustrated in the recent film “The Sunset Limited” where a conversation ensues between a person with “belief” and an academic-rationalist, who has “got it all worked out” - his conclusion being inevitably to end his life.

It is often the case that the person of “faith” is crucified by the academic-rationalist who themselves has the faith of no-faith. Here, instead of judgement, if we look this objectively, the nature of the Unknown remains the same, no matter what the ideas in the mind. Instead of destroying the “faithful” and upholding the scientist, a common ground of the Unknown has to be recognised by all.

When the Unknown moves over into faith/belief and reasoning for this, this pushes people further and further away from their core instincts and also from the ways of the natural world. From before the times of humans, eco-systems have been functioning in perfect harmony, this has not changed with the influx of humanity although the seeming imbalance through humanity's effect on the planet is sure to be met with a balancing force. For the person based in the cognitive the Unknown is a highly frightening place, however if all life is lived from acceptance of the Unknown or an innocence, then it can be simply lived. This is known by all indigenous peoples and also more modern "tribes" such as the Amish, whose realization of simplicity in living is not about a process of debunking modern science but actually an acceptance of allowing nature, or what they may call "God" to provide. This is totally counter to the modern mind-set but is actually the most ancient of ways, as it is the function of the wild-nature we see around us.

While it is true that both indigenous and Amish peoples and others of this nature have deeply-held "belief-systems", at the same time there is a realization and acceptance of Unknown being the background and a reliance on the cycles of life. When such proclamations as: "I know", "I know a way", "I know someone who knows", "I know a method", "I know a practice or art" turn into simply and honestly: "I don't know" this then is the dissolving from active ego-centric intention towards non-intended action, or action which is in accordance with a larger perspective which therefore is no longer driven by individualism, or believes that it is.

"Beware!!" barks the modernist, "the dogmatism of belief can make self-righteousness seem 'Supreme-Righteousness', this has happened so often in all the dictatorships and power struggles that have occurred the world over within civilization". While that is true, however as Bill Mellison of the perma-culture movement points out:-

"The problems of the world are increasingly complex, the solutions however remain embarrassingly simple!"

The point is that while it is true that the "unknown" has the propensity to spark off violent debate, it only does so when someone is trying to **claim ownership of it**. When the unknown is left to be what it is, then nature is left to be what it is. Here we have the pure-science of Observation - "As it is", without requiring anything more, because this is "All there is". When people learn to deeply accept the Unknown this is not blind faith. This is a realization of the limitation of the cognitive process or the "tool of separation". Also it is a realization that life is deeply intimate, yet also impersonal and Unknowable as a "thing". It is non-controllable from the individualistic mode of belief.

To those who have "faith" the question should be "**who** has faith?" To the person who has a faith of no-faith and shuns others, the question should be: "**who** doesn't have faith?" When the realization is that in both cases the answer is the same "I don't know", then inherent is the perception of Oneness, the borders come down. We see that what actually seemed like a divide was really just a different superstructure on top of the same illusion of a separate "self" who has faith and all that that entails, or a "self" who does not have faith and all that that entails. Whenever there is a "self" imbued with a notion or

dogmatism and lacking deep feeling and a sense of the reality of the Unknown, it is always a form of dualism. Dualism only truly ends when there is an unquestionable sense of reality beyond that of the separate “self”. When this is revealed then there cannot be any form of faith or belief or dogmatism but simply a reversion to relaxing and dissolving into the simplicity of the Unknown because there is no longer the idea of a “self” to idolize. The Unknown is both realized and acknowledged totally to be all of reality - thus Nature is returned to. This then cannot be named. There is no dogmatism or belief involved. The transition is from the modern human, the rationalist, to the indigenous and tribal belief, to the human-animal at the core. In the modern West we contain all these aspects one within the other, like a Russian doll. The interest for some is in shedding the burden we don't need, letting go of the armour and living simply, with lightness. There is no specific time that this can happen, no hour that it will arise, it happens simply within and through, not because of the one we call “me”, in the ripeness of the moment.

David Nassim

23/2/2011