

Making it Up

by [Justin Wong](#) (September 2020)



Acoma, Raymond Jonson, 1927

Introduction

In much of modern scholarship, there seems to be a variety of different fields of study, a separation where once there was unity. Perhaps this division was caused by modern Universities, creating separate departments, and putting

things in little niche corners. This wasn't always so, in the past there was more unity to different fields of enquiry. Plato and Aristotle in Ancient Greece had a deft reach on a whole host of topics, from Political philosophy, to magnetism, from morals to what we now know as being science. Natural Philosophy (or science) was a branch of philosophy, rather than its own field with rather narrow interests such as one sees today. Perhaps the negative consequence about the disjointed and parochial tendency of much scholarship, one is trained to look only within the confines of one's discipline, and not into others, to see uncommon commonalities, or strange differences. In more recent times, the study of Philology was an attempt to bridge disciplines together into a cohesive whole, literary criticism, the study of language, and history, amongst things that were other. It was the dominant method of study in the old system of education, which came apart in the twentieth century. If one wanted to get an idea of any of these subjects, and considering the modern academy as one's place of learning, one would have to get degrees in different subjects.

In this essay, I will attempt to show that there is a commonality between many old systems of thought, a consistency and intellectual rigour, that newer, replacement areas of study seem to lack. Ancient systems of thought, such as Mathematics, Language, and Religion—in this case the Christian one—possess a uniformity. To most people, the study of these are as distant to one another as anyone could think. Although there is a surprising characteristic to them, which helps to bring them together. Wittgenstein managed to talk about language, Mathematics and God within his work. Things that seem to be distant to one another, turn out to have surprising similarities, and that which was presumed obvious, has glaring holes to it. I will also touch on newer, more recent ideas that have been thought up so as to replace some of the old systems of thought, such as psychology.

Modern man seems to view himself as being more sophisticated, more knowing than the ancestors of his distant past. One of the main excuses for why modern man thinks himself superior, is this generally accepted belief that we know no more than our ancestors did, the modern ways of understanding the universe and the self are far more superior to old ideas. I wish to show that modern ways of understanding ourselves are not necessarily better than ones developed in ancient times. There are in fact glaring inconsistencies in modern thought where there was a degree of rigour in the ideas of old, particularly the ones that have been passed down through the ages and are still of use and influence in the world today.

Although some of the replacement ideas, the way the majority of the people view themselves in the world, are rife with social consequences, that have gone a long way of destroying a sense of unity and stability that people enjoyed in their lives in the past. This essay will explore the irreconcilable changes how this has undermined societies, particularly those in the developed west.

Part 1 – Ancient Ideas

Certain sceptics assert that Christianity is made up. That its best viewed as being a centuries old hoax, that only man in the contemporary era is capable of finally seeing through its ploy. In some sense, the Bible is made up, in the sense that it was written by men, however it is believed to be divinely inspired, meaning an outside force drove them—the patriarchs, to write it.

The problem with this line of argument, the one that states that it is a thing being made up, bars it from being true, is that many things that are seen as being useful, that convey truth are made up. Mathematics is one instance of that, where none are capable of perceiving numbers in the physical world. What we know as being Mathematics is a product of the

human mind, which isn't to say that its principles aren't true, but rather they are made up in much the same way the Bible is. The same can be said of language, most civilised, complex societies have a rich and diverse language, a language that has been invented, its sounds form words, and its words in turn form sentences, which isn't to say that one can't convey meaning in a made-up language. They are attempts at trying to map the world, in both a tangible and intangible sense. In language as in thought, this complexity manages to speak of other languages, as in a sentence, "I want to study zoology." The word study comes from the Latin of 'studium', and 'zoo' comes from the Greek, which means animal, and 'logos' which means study. In much of speech, one is speaking dead archaic words, that manage to become filtered down through the centuries, and absorbed into different cultures. This way of cultures becoming absorbed by others, is usually the result of imperialism, when vibrant, barbarous, and cultured civilisations invade nations of lesser strength. This could be seen in the British empire, when Britain ruled a quarter of the world and, as a result of this, brought their language to a multitude of countries, until English became the most spoken language in disparate places across the globe.

The same could be said of the Romans in the ancient world, who ruled Britain and much of Europe. The ancient languages of now dead cultures, became absorbed into other languages. Despite the Roman Empire being dead for some centuries, Latin remained a *lingua Franca* throughout much of Europe until the modern era. For instance, Newton's famous treatise, his *Principia Mathematica* was written in that tongue, for the sole purpose that it could be read amongst intellectuals throughout Europe. This may be the benefit of being ruled over by a sophisticated culture, that the invaded nations reap certain benefits of the invaders. Oscar Wilde once said, "I am Irish by race, but the English have condemned me to talk the language of Shakespeare."

Despite that in some basic sense language is both made up and filled with dead archaic words which have themselves been made up, it doesn't mean that anything can be passed off as being English.

"Talk seeing century original Tailor phone." All of these words in this sentence are words that are used in the English language, though they come together to form no ultimate meaning. A sentence such as "Anna and Mike is going skiing," is incorrect as it doesn't follow the rules of grammar that are generally agreed upon in English. Similarly, a sentence such as "The government are passing a policy of forced suicide," is incorrect semantically speaking. As a killing that is forced upon one from an outside force ceases to be suicide and rather becomes homicide.

Although mathematics, too, is in a sense made up, it still follows rules, and there are proofs, standards that are used to show that the thing, or formula proposed is correct. No one can say that " $2+2=5$ ", nor can one claim that there is a finite amount of numbers in Pi.

Similarly, in much religious thought, in Christian theology, there is the concept of heresy, which translates as meaning grave error. These mistakes are comparable to the breaking of grammatical rules or coming up with an incorrect answer to a mathematical sum. They are incompatible with that system of thought. In Christianity, heresies tend to take on a very specific character. They are not necessarily moral in nature, but rather come from a deviation from the fundamental tenets of faith. These heresies, usually have taken the form of a denial of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the virgin birth and the resurrection. These aspects are antithetical to the general grammar of Christianity, as in linguistic terms they render the Bible meaningless and incomprehensible. People who dismiss Christianity on the basis that it is made up, fail to understand there is an internal consistency to it, that it presents a coherent worldview and philosophy, despite the fact

that it was composed over the course of 4000 years. As in systems of thought such as mathematics, there are proofs to the Bible, a harmony between the old Testament and the New. The old Testament, generally speaking, contains prophecy—things that are predicted to happen, that are said to occur in the future, and more specifically when the Messiah arrives.

The study of this is called typology, where the old Testament prefigures the new, when the prophecies of the old Testament are fulfilled in the life of Christ. In Job 9:8, it says, “Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.” This is fulfilled in the gospels, specifically of Matthew, Mark and John, when Christ walks on water, meeting the disciples who were lost out at sea.

People who doubt the Bible, who hold up a flashlight to it in an attempt to show the manifold inconsistencies, don't necessarily hold other, 'made up' sophisticated systems of thought to the same lofty standard. If there was any consistency to the sceptic, they would dismiss Mathematics, as being something that can't be measured and observed, and language as a social construct—and thus to be done away with. Though no one rails against language or Mathematics in the way they do about religion, more specifically in this culture, Christianity.

Other common problems people have with Christianity is the belief that it is a tool simply made up to control people, of making people act moral so they can get into heaven, a make-believe realm. There are many things wrong with this assertion, one of them is that Christianity is a made-up tool to control people, to encourage them to act in certain ways. That in some sense is true, that it is clear from the scriptures that God would rather we one act in one way, rather than another, where any deviation away from this is considered to be sin. The problem with this is it's not the only system that is socially constructed which attempts to contain human

behaviour from its more destructive and disagreeable aspects. The legal system is one such aspect created to curb human behaviour, through passing laws to bar some from taking advantage of others, usually those weak and powerless. The problem with this, although there is a legal system, designed as it were "to control people," sceptics aren't, to my knowledge, trying to pull down the law on the basis that it's a way of containing base impulses. Having a religious system of morality alongside a legal system of laws, is a good way of maintaining a civilised society. If every deviation from the moral law was considered a breaking of the law, the society one would live in would descend into a tyranny that would make Saudi Arabia look like Amsterdam. Religious morality, as opposed to law, gives one something to aspire to. Someone, doing the bare minimum to stay out of trouble legally, can't really be considered to be a moral person. Certain things are sins that aren't crimes, and certain crimes aren't sins. One of the other problems with this thinking, the one that says that Christianity is a way of encouraging people to be good, with the promise of an afterlife in a realm undiscovered to our senses is that it is not, strictly speaking, consistent with the theology of the Bible. In the Old Testament, under the law of Moses, it is a religion based on works, when Christ came to earth and, under the new dispensation in the wake of His death, Christianity became not a religion of works, but one of Faith. Christ died for the sins of man, meaning that the works of man—his moral actions, were not necessary for him to achieve salvation, the promise of eternal life in accordance with God's design. One is saved not through him being good, but by God being good.

All of these forms, be they language, or Mathematics, or the religious texts; have proofs that are contained within itself. In Mathematics there is the concept of proof, that there is an internal consistency to the field.

$2+2= 4$ can be proved by other methods.

If

$$(1+1) = 2, \text{ and } 1+1+1+1 = 4$$

$$\text{Then } (1+1) + (1+1) = 1+1+1+1$$

Or

$$x+x = 4$$

$$2x = 4$$

$$x = 4/2$$

$$x = 2$$

Therefore

$$2+2 = 4$$

These methods prove the sum to be correct, albeit through different methods, if one adheres to its logic, showing that there is an internal consistency to mathematics and its laws. The fact that mathematics is a made-up language, that outside of the human consciousness doesn't exist, sounds as if its claims cannot be taken with any degree of seriousness. Though this is not exactly so, as Mathematics seems to express the reality of another realm, one closed off from the senses. One that is purely logical, that transcends space and time. Numbers are symbols for an underlying reality, one that transcends sensory perception, outside of the material universe. The way one discovers the realm, as contradictory as this seems, is through the imagination. In language a system of words and a grammatical structure shows is an attempt, however flawed, to map out the universe. It provides expression to all manner of things, both perceivable and imperceptible.

Similarly, in language, the meaning of words is found out by the meaning of words. A dictionary is a book which

shows the meaning of words showing through explanations, that are told in words. There may be other ways in which to show the meaning of words, through pictures. Though this seems to work only through tangible objects. The intangible world of emotion and words that talk of definitive specific acts, can't easily be explained through pictures, though the meaning of it needs to be uncovered through explanation.

In the Christian religion, the truth of the claims of the Bible are found within the Bible, the old Testament predicts the new, it is itself a self-contained proof. Sometimes the echoes of the old testament are found within the New, which speaks of a consistent worldview. The themes of the tree that bring about death turns into the tree of life. Seed of Abraham becomes the seed of Abraham in the heart. Israel the land, becomes a spiritual Israel, these aspects are carried forth throughout the book.

Part 2 – Modern Ideas

It seems to me that many concepts of the secularists' worldview seem to be made up, inventing out of the old religious systems, new mythologies. Although they cease to have the consistency and the definite grammatical structures of the old ones. Throughout much of the last century, psychology became a replacement way of understanding the self, in the wake of the death of God prophesied by Nietzsche. The ambitions of psychoanalysis were bold, an attempt to apply scientific rigour and standards to the human mind. This was going to be a complex experiment, one might say destined to fail, seeing as the inner life of man, his thoughts, feelings, contradictions, couldn't be easily quantified as the physical world. There also may be seen as being something contradictory to creating a science to the soul, as a worldview that consists of analysing the material world, life, the motion of planets, the stars, and chemistry contained in it, can so easily turn its hand to the complex self, and the immateriality of the soul.

In the field of psychology, over the past century it became self-evident to many that there was something called an unconscious mind. Freud can't exactly be said to be the inventor of this idea, though he certainly did much to popularise it. Freud became the dominant psychoanalytical thinker of his time, and is considered the 'Father of Psychoanalysis,' although he borrowed many of his ideas from many other thinkers.

Eduard von Hartmann wrote a book called *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*. In Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy, he believed that human beings were being controlled by an insatiable Will, which desires nothing other than to exist, which expresses itself in living beings as the urge to procreate. This could be where Freud gets his idea that all unconscious thoughts are based around sexuality.

Despite much writing on the subject and its general acceptance in much of the culture, there is little proof as to where this unconscious mind is. Is there a section of the brain that contains the unconscious mind? Can it be removed? Also why is it there? Presuming that human beings evolved through a process of natural selection, why would they evolve something like the unconscious mind, the source from which human madness and neurosis emanate? Wouldn't such an evolution be somewhat counterproductive to human beings, whose only *raison d'être* is to procreate? To many people it may be seen as being self-evident that the unconscious mind exists, that there is a section of the mind that no one is control of, that has a certain degree of power over the conscious mind. Although in past generations, people didn't believe this was so. There may have been outside forces, though it would be considered somewhat glib to suggest that these forces were the product of a hidden, immaterial, cut-off part of the brain. The concept of the unconscious mind seems to be much like the idea of evolution by natural selection. Such a theory can only come about if one accepts the universe is one that is purely

naturalistic, that there are no forces imperceptible to the senses of man that created it, or are in anyway capable of influencing the universe.

If the world has no God, no grace or providence, no angels or demons, then all aspects that infringe their way into the consciousness of man must emanate from the self. This is the rationale for the idea of the unconscious. It's a way of saying that all the mysterious, unexplainable aspects of life are figments of the mind. Freud's view was that this was simply sexual, that the unconscious mind that shows itself in dreams, jokes, slips of tongue, and is the root of neurosis and psychosis, comes from unresolved sexual tension. This was a far-fetched claim, though as the years went past, other people in the field of psychology took the view that the unconscious mind was a given, though the overall reason for it expressing itself in the way that it does, became disputed. One person who did this, was Carl Jung, who believed that neurosis, stemming from the unconscious saying, "I have frequently seen people become neurotic when they content themselves with inadequate or wrong answers to the questions of life."

This thinking led him to come up with his own theory of the unconscious. He believed there was such a phenomenon as the collective unconscious as distinct from the personal unconscious. The collective unconscious expresses itself in symbols such as the Tyrannical Father, the Trickster, order and chaos, etc. That these symbols reappear throughout myth and folktales throughout the world. In the 20th century, Joseph Campbell was influenced by Jung, in his belief that patterns in the make-up of stories repeat themselves throughout the world, believing there is such a concept as a 'monomyth', or the hero's journey, that contain a fixed number of events in tales that reappear across the cultures and periods. I find this thinking to be very spurious, for it seems to take no account of the concept of influence, the theory that stories

come out of other stories. As Dr. Johnson said, "The greatest part of a writer's time is spent in reading, in order to write: a man will turn over half a library to make one book."

The same idea exists across cultures and civilisations. Stories cross borders and languages, becoming a part of the folk tradition. Many psychologists of the Jungian school of thought would probably say that Noah and the biblical flood in Genesis, never happened. There is the belief that such stories are manifestations of the collective unconscious. Though if it is not referring to an historical event, but is symbolic, it's not so easy to figure out. Why the literal flooding of the world even figure in our collective psyche, if its meaning is such a riddle? One could quite easily say that the flood occurred and it was remembered across cultures in man being scattered across the globe in the fall of the tower of Babel. Throughout many cultures there is mentioned a great flood as an historical event, such as in Plato's *Timaeus*. It only seems to be modern man that doesn't believe that such an event occurred because it is written in the Bible, where the majority of the so called 'educated' among us have decided it is superstition.

If the unconscious does exist, to provide us with dreams, slips of the tongue, jokes, neurosis, and stories, it seems to be very ineffective at communicating the meaning of these. A traditional view of understanding this can be found In the book of Genesis 2, when Adam is the garden of Eden. "God says to him, And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:" In the next chapter, the serpent says to Eve when addressing the question of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

It shows in the Bible that the person that is the antagonist of man is the devil. The devil in the Bible has specific powers, not necessarily the ability to cause evil, but to influence men to do evil. This seems to be consistent throughout the Bible. When Jesus is in the desert fasting for 40 days and nights, Satan appears unto him, in much the same way he appeared to Eve, though Jesus doesn't give into temptation, or act on his suggestions. These thoughts that urged people to act in ways that were deemed sinful, was the work of the devil, that fallen angel who still has an influence on the life of man, when he was cast down from the glorious heavens, in rebellion against the will of God. There is a consistent reason as to why human beings have neurosis in the old all-encompassing and thorough Biblical system of thought. Neurosis didn't really exist as a medical condition, and people were said to have 'demons,' which implied that they were in some way, possessed, that this force influencing them emanated from outside of the self. This is vastly different to the modern view of the self, the unconscious mind that evolved, in which any mysterious aspect of life can be packed tightly within. Biblical stories, myths, and folktales, madness, prophecy, visions, dreams, have been a get out of jail free card to the secularist, where all the transcendent, mysterious and inexplicable aspects of life become rationalised in a word. The worldview it presupposes is one that is solipsistic, where man himself is seen as the only thing to exist.

Modern psychology is a hotbed of woolly thinking that seems to be made-up extemporaneously, where there is no underlying grammar, syntax, or structure to the thought. No one in the field of modern psychology seems to act on first principles, or tries to make a consistency of thought. The unconscious mind exists because it does. This at least shows the tendency of modern systems of thought to be incoherent worldviews that are not in any way as thought out, and consistent as the old ones. Most people would believe that

modern man in the west, with technological advances, and labour- saving devices to be superior to the man of centuries ago. Most spurious systems of thought constructed in the modern era, rely on a belief that man in the contemporary period is better than his forefathers, or else the illusion goes away.

Part 3 – Social Effects of Modern Thought

Much of modern science seems to pride itself on the fact that it is inconsistent, or in time, through discovery it can be overthrown. The Scientific era, which was sparked some five hundred years ago, mainly by Copernicus, was built on the back of a revolution, where what previously was assumed about the world changed, mainly the Ptolemaic view of the Universe, where the sun revolves around the earth, was proved to be incorrect, and it was discovered that the earth and the planets of the solar system revolved around the sun. What is the generally accepted view of reality can radically transform from one generation to the next, when the previous assumptions about the world, and the functioning of it are proved in turn to be false, through observation on the one hand, and theoretical speculation on the other.

It doesn't seem so obvious that this worldview, the one that is constantly shifting, disproves the old consistent ones. Ricky Gervais said, "Science is humble. It knows what it knows and it knows what it doesn't know. It bases its conclusions and beliefs on hard evidence—evidence that is constantly updated and upgraded. It doesn't get offended when new facts come along. It embraces the body of knowledge. It doesn't hold on to medieval practices because they are tradition." The truth of mathematics is constant, it doesn't change when new evidence comes along, concepts and ideas may through scholarship, be added to it. This is the same as the metaphysical concept of God and wisdom, every generation has new readings of the Bible, and movements in the church. Looking out in the world through a lens does nothing to

disprove eternal truths or beings. But there is also a more pernicious point to what he says, that scientific discoveries are antithetical to tradition, the mere gathering of empirical data is used as a way of undermining centuries old cultures, of ushering in new ages. The new priests, or scientists, saying that a thing is true however contentious it may be, knows that it has a heft of weight behind it. They are thus shamans of scientism, the paganism of the contemporary era.

If the scientific worldview has no sense of consistency, if it is changing from one moment to the next can it be said to be that good? There were of course scientific breakthroughs, from the ancient era, though they probably didn't think as much of it, as to assume that it was the only accurate way in which to view the nature of reality. They most likely rejected it because the perception of reality gained from scientific discovery was illusory, it was inferior to other branches of knowledge for this reason alone.

Perhaps this worldview, the one of a world entirely in flux, has had its largest influence on the soul of man. There is an anxiety that characterises modern politics. A world where there is a general mistrust of political institutions, and the function of democracy. Paranoia may be seen as being the collective state of mind in the developed west, where conspiracy theories abound. Though in the wake of the scientific era, there has been one thing that seems curiously constant, and that is political revolution. There have been numerous revolts in the modern world, with the sole intent to overthrow existing political orders, seen in the famous instances of these, 'The Great Terror,' 'The American Revolution,' and 'The Glorious Revolution.' There has been much political instability in the west, and this could be at least laid at the feet of science, or more specifically at the idolisation of the scientific method. It seems only natural that when man started to revere a system of thought that had revolution as the basis of truth, that this way of thinking

would spill out into the political arena. Now political revolution—the overthrowing of existing orders—became the only constant. Marx tried to apply the scientific method to political revolution, thus marrying the two together.

On the subject, many on the left have emphasised the importance of secularism as a foundation for Utopia. George Orwell once remarked, “I do not want the belief in life after death to return, and in any case it is not likely to return . . . Reared for thousands of years on the notion that the individual survives, man has to get used to the notion that the individual perishes. He is not likely to salvage civilization unless he can evolve a system of good and evil which is independent of heaven and hell.” The scientific worldview and the revolutionary one are one and the same—the belief in that in order for those goals to be carried out, the spiritual aspect of man must be vanquished. It is like a parody of Eve eating the forbidden fruit, where in pursuit of an abstract—the knowledge of good and evil—the flesh dies. The scientific accumulation of understanding is an inverse of this, where in the pursuit of knowledge of the material universe—the flesh of the world, the soul, or the abstract part of the self dies.

There is also the sense that the scientific establishment has taken on many of the aspects of religious institutions, particularly the Catholic church, where the public are told to listen to these new ‘high Priests’ rather than their own critical functions. The old way of looking at the world, has been usurped by the new, a system of thought that is wooly, prides itself on inconsistency, and change. It is the very worldview of instability.

Some people, the laymen believe that the scientific establishment, are actively going out of their way to undermine tradition, the institutions that have made their lives secure. The scientific project is as much a cultural project as it is one about expanding the knowledge of the

physical universe. One might even say that it is more of a cultural project masquerading as a scientific one. Many prominent scientists seem to spend more time pointing out the flaws of the societies in which they were reared, rather than in the laboratory. The argument that they present to their opponents is that only a fool could hold true to the knowledge of the past. The argumentation in favour of science seems to be the one of progress. The underlying assumption that things improve over time, that tomorrow will be better than today.

There are many problems with this view, it seems to have the assumption that our knowledge of the physical world, and the technological advances are the only metrics that one can judge a society's well-being on. Over the last few years, the life expectancy in the USA has gone down, due to drug addiction and increased suicide. This phenomenon, doesn't seem to be to be progress, but a regress, and shows above all things that there is a high rate of despair in the modern world, despair born from the undermining of religious authority and institutions by experts, the high-priests in white coats. A band of smug elitists, have gone on a crusade to destroy everything good and sacred about the world. In Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, the protagonist Arthur Sammler ponders, "Everybody (except certain bluestockings) knows what murder is. That is very old human knowledge. The best and purest human beings have understood that life is sacred. To defy that old understanding is not banality. There was a conspiracy against the sacredness of life. Banality is the adopted disguise of a very powerful will to abolish conscience."

The conspiracy against the sacredness of life has been fulfilled in the world. The folktale of Faustus, the man who sold his soul to the devil for knowledge and power managed to prophesy perfectly our times. Conscience has been abolished, the centuries old way of understanding life, is something that has ceased through understanding. In the words of King

Solomon, in Ecclesiastes 1.18 “For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.” No one knows quite where this world is heading. There is a general consensus amongst certain thinkers, that civilisation is coming to a close, that through the enlightenment it exhausted itself. Christendom as it was called before, seems like it will end, much like Rome did before it. There is the chance to rediscover old systems of thought, that are unwavering in their consistency, or the rock of eternal truth that outlasts the storms of this world.

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Justin Wong is originally from Wembley, though at the moment is based in the West Midlands. He has been passionate about the English language and Literature since a young age. Previously, he lived in China working as an English teacher. His novel *Millie's Dream* is available [here](#).

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