

Re: Simple Question and the philosophy of infinity

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- *From:* Jonathan Kirwan <jkirwan@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
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On Tue, 3 Oct 2006 11:33:41 +0200, "Leo Meyer" <leoNOSPAMmeyer@xxxxxx> wrote:

Of course
there IS
such a thing
as
"infinite."

Really? Show me a thing
that is denoted by an
adjective ;-)

"Infinite sum."

You're not following the grammatical intricacies.

Oh, I followed the grammatical intricacy just fine. You wanted an adjective and I gave you one.

Nah. Come on. Cheap trick.

Well, perhaps. Not worth worrying about, one way or another.

Mathematics just happens to sometimes overlap natural reality as we experience it. But there is no reason to imagine that all real concepts in mathematics correspond to sensual experiences. In fact, I'm pretty sure it's the case that they rarely do.

...

For higher levels of math, organic experience isn't much of a guide, at all. There is no necessary relationship of natural experience with

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mathematics. Mathematics is its own universe, so to speak. Where it touches upon reality is a matter of fortunate circumstance, not necessity. It's quite possible that nature would operate in no way similar to mathematics. We are fortunate that is not the case. (Some argue that this is because math is the deeper reality, but I'm not taken with that idea yet.)

You expressed my opinion much better than I did!

I did?

Your questions smack of making too much out of them. Though I may be mistaken about that.

I was playing the advocatus diaboli a little. Maybe I should apologize. But at least we had an interesting discussion!

:)

Let me quote something you wrote in another post:

It's another world and a wonderful one to imagine in, sometimes. So to me, your comment here is something like a person blind from birth saying that they don't particularly regret being unable to see. They may not and I wouldn't want to make them feel badly about it, but they also have no idea what they missed. And I would certainly regret losing my 'eyes,' in this sense.

Hmm. I know what you mean.

Hehe. The nice thing about these "eyes" is that they can be developed by anyone. One of the truly important aspects of mathematics is that when a Greek describes something 3000 years ago, I can put in my head 3000 years later almost exactly what they had in mind. Developing a language that speaks across centuries, across culture, across fad, across place, ... and to do that in such a precise way that the rigorous deductions to specifics of any of it would also be the same rigorous deductions to specifics that someone else thousands of years later in an entirely different place and culture.... well, you have to admit that is pretty important, I think.

This isn't religious experience. Anyone can share the concepts and do

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so with near perfect replication. The world I see is the same world another sees on their own, no matter their culture, place, or time. In that sense, it is as objective and real as the world around us. Not some individual experience that cannot be proved, so to speak.

But imagine the moment you reach the end of that "other world". The end of reason, if I may say so.

You are already going too far, though. We have no idea that there is such an "end," what it may look like, or even be able to ask questions about the concept. It's not objective to suggest it and it is otherwise beyond our ability to speculate about, should there be such a thing. What you are asking is almost like, "What would a perfect human do in this case?" We have no definition of "perfect," certainly no idea of what a "perfect human" is, and the very question itself carries no rigorous meaning. There is no way to make an answer we can share.

That doesn't mean the question is meaningless to a person. It just means that it cannot be objective. I can say that "I am happy right now" and, though it may certainly be true, it is not objective. You cannot test this, you cannot weight it, you cannot arrive at an independent opinion based on facts. You can only accept my word. This is because it is an internal state of mind.

So I really don't like questions like this, because they advance nothing.

Suppose you suddenly understand the nature of the boundary that separates us from reality. Not by mere conceptual understanding, but by pure insight, by "seeing the fact". Suppose you suddenly realize That Which Can Not Be Expressed In Words and how it relates to you and your conceptual universe. You would know how it comes that we are prisoners of our conceptions, because you would have encountered That Which Is Beyond Concepts. You would understand the nature of conceptual frameworks, that "Truth" and "Falsehood" are only defined within such a framework, and that frameworks are many, and that none of them are real.

Yup, you've gone way off the deep end! ;)

From that moment on you would lose interest in mere concepts because they would seem to you like a child's play.

How can you say? I've no idea what I'd do or not do, or even if the

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suggestion is possible. Or even what it means, for gosh sake.

You would also know the immense "mental space" outside of these frameworks. You wouldn't take the juggling of concepts serious any more, because you would have discovered something that is much more fascinating and "real".

Neither of us can say what would happen.

I'm not sure whether you understand what I mean. But if you offered me a hundred times the mathematical insight you have in exchange for this experience, I would decline.

Well, you have selected what amounts to a religious experience, plain and simple. More particularly, and even more alarming in a sense to me, is that you are posulating a capital-T Truth as opposed to a more mundane, scientific fact or lower-case-t "truth," which remains tentative. I have a healthy (nay, strong) reaction to folks looking for Truths, instead of truths. We cannot ever know Ultimates. If for no other reason, then because we cannot possibly say what the future will bring us.

Look at it this way. If we were able to say something that is True, no matter what the future may yet say about it, then we have found something that doesn't need to be examined and, in fact, is immune to evidence. It must be immune, since by definition it is True and not just true. Since it is True, no matter what the future may yet say, and is thus immune to evidence, it must be the case that evidence isn't about this Truth. But evidence is nature. And therefore, this Truth isn't about nature itself. Since evidence and nature cannot affect it, it is therefore NOT about "reality."

Frankly, I'm not interested in those things. Worse, it worries me when others are — because they almost always then try and force the meaning of their perceived Truth onto my life. And since nothing I can say, no argument I can make, no evidence I can present will have any impact on their commitment to control my life, we cannot find a way to negotiate a compromise. Not a real one. And so, they are very dangerous people.

That worries me.

Wait, what's that? Someone at the door? Oh no! It's the newsgroup police! I'm being arrested for being off topic! Help! I want to talk to my lawyer! Help.....

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Jon

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