

## THE MONAD

*Extract from The Monad by Anthony Blake, DuVersity Publications, 2003*

The unity of the monad is of a peculiar inclusive kind. It is not defined by a boundary which divides the included from the excluded (1). If we need a provisional image of this situation, we can think of a candle in a dark room and its illumination, which fades the further from the candle we are: there is no discontinuity, but only a kind of gradation of intensity. This image serves only to release us from the constraints of thinking in terms of classes or sets and will itself have to be superseded. We will have to broaden and deepen our understanding of inclusion and abandon any concept in which we have either boundary or centre.

"A set is a Many which allows itself to be thought of as a One". This definition of Cantor shows that the monad is not constructed as a set. We do not start with some assembly of items from which we make a selection. Nor do we gather a many together according to a judgement. In the monad, any thought we have of the unity of the many is included with all the other content. Any factor which bears on the ordering or processing of the content is a part of the content. There are no restrictions on logical type. Nothing is prior to anything else, logically or otherwise. The *a priori* and the *a posteriori* are not contrasted. All of the content is given, equally. Thus, all of the judgements we might make are to be included in the content.

Thus, the principle by which we "gather" the content is not to be set apart from the content. We do not know in advance, or through any general principle, what is relevant in all cases.

It is not that everything is equally relevant - which is to say that a monad is not the Totality, the universe, the Whole of wholes - but we have no way in which we can exclude anything. However, we do find that there is some criterion for inclusion; a measure that has to do with the way in which the content, of itself, finds affinity with itself. Relevance is disclosed through the assembly of content. As the content increases, so additions are made more discerning; and we find some of the content fading away and other content growing stronger.

It is only through the assembly of content that anything becomes clear about the monad. It cannot be defined in advance; it is defined by the process of inclusion. (2) The monad has to begin with some content. It does not matter whether this is abstract or concrete; an attempt at definition, or a provisional list; or even a set of verbal associations. As we continue in the process, something emerges seemingly "of itself". We may lightly touch on another image or model here. Imagine the formation of a solar system and its early and vague beginnings in clouds of gas. After a certain degree of concentration is reached, we can recognise the rudiments of a solar system that will go on to define itself more and more determinately. The monad, then, is a vagueness that clarifies itself and there is no one principle by which coherence is developed.

To be consistent with "monadic logic", we cannot deny altogether, in spite of what we have already said, the relevance of any model or concept by which we might approach the unity of the manifold. This is true of the concept of sets. We can use as a formal model of the monad the idea of the *empty set*. This is the pure *form* of inclusion, the nature of which is *indication*. We look for a closely allied notion: the way in which it is possible to include empty sets within empty sets at various depths (as in the formalization of number); as if the content of the monad could include this content in

various ways or to various degrees. Here, we use the word "content" to embrace: any item of content, the whole content, any part of the whole content and so on.

We suppose that any "item" of content is inclusive of content in this way and is without the demarcation of a boundary. Therefore, there is no atomism, since everything includes yet other things (which means that it remains "divisible"). The inclusivity of the monad as a whole is represented in every item it contains. The monad is a continuum; and it is this which suggests the relevance of the "empty set".

It is intrinsic to the process of the monad that everything is "equally proximate" to the "centre"; because there is no unique centre which can be identified as such. (3) There is no near or far, more or less. It is truly a "sphere whose centre is everywhere". This is not mystical - except insofar as mystical perception is not to be excluded from the assemblage of the monad - it derives simply from the property of self-definition, in which every item we allow can serve as the centre (4). As the monadic process goes on, certain items "melt away" but never entirely disappear; for the monad includes "errors" and "wrong turnings"(5).

If there is "law" which applies to the monad, it is that of *mutual adjustment*. However, if we are thinking of this law then it becomes part of the content of the monad. There is nothing that stands outside the monad or above it. Thus, amongst the ancient conceptions of the world, it is Taoism which comes closest to what we mean by the monad. And, in cognition, we may associate thinking of the monad with what has been described as "diffuse contemplation". (6)

It is a common wisdom that: "How one begins, so one continues and ends". This has been codified - using the symbol of the octave as depicting a process of transformation from one level to another - as the "sounding of the first do", in which the "second do" echoes in anticipation. This has particular significance when we consider how work on the monad is crucial for what can be done with the higher systems.

A most important part of the process is the suspension of habitual judgement. In this respect, there are parallels with the practice of *epoche* described by Husserl. Hence, the monad is thoroughly phenomenological. It is not a science of consciousness, however, as Husserl tended to make his phenomenology; nor is there any concern with consciousness as such. If we begin to think of consciousness, then this becomes merely another item of content; and, as content, must be treated as all other items. Our access to consciousness, we have to say, is no more immediate than our access to any other kind of thing (7).

The concept of "epoche" is allied to that of the empty set, since it means "bracketing". It is very powerful and rests upon the suspension, but not the elimination, of judgement. It is the power of making a new beginning in the midst of the ever-present going-on of the familiar. It is the first freedom that we can have. It is the purest attention. It is attending upon rather than attending-to. It is the condition for the release of creativity

Our view of creativity is very much obscured by the mass of constructive effort that must become involved. This effort is not the central act; which is more akin to patience and *waiting* (8). Whatever ingenuity, perspicacity or industry involved in assembling the content of the monad, the essence of it is in the singleness of the diffuse contemplation (9).

An obvious "danger" in assembling the content of a monad is that of reverting to sheer enumeration. But, there is great benefit in the practice of "extensive expression", in which the theme or notion is given expression by a diversity of statements. One of the important practical features of this technique is that it rapidly exhausts the capacity of the habitual judgement, which begins to give way after the first ten to twenty statements. The reason for this is that this judgement tends always towards *closure* and the industry required in the exercise far exceeds what can be supplied automatically (10).

Statements provide a way of assemblage that weakens the atomistic and making-a-list tendencies. Statements overlap, partially include each other, produce meanings in combination and so on; they suggest ways of organising themselves into sub-groups, which gives rise to other statements. In a word, they are more than simple names of things; and exhibit more effectively than names, the way in which the content of the monad speaks of itself.

There emerge a series of thresholds which have to be surmounted; as different orders of closure and habituation come into play. This succession of dissolutions is a reflection of the nature of the monad itself; since every "item" is influencing the whole contenting its own way and every new item redefines the whole. Extensive expression provides a way towards continuous "up-dating".

Extensive expression is merely technique and is no guarantee of authenticity. It is upon the monad that there rests any real attempt to re-examine any issue or fact. This applies, for example, to how we see. When I look at a table, I see it in a way that is closed, as an artefact faded into the background of every-day use, as something that I own; something, indeed, which I have almost ceased to see. But, let us think of an artist such as Picasso or Van Gogh! They are able to see such a thing as a table 'from the beginning' almost as if for the first time. Their assemblage of the monad dissolves the world of closure. In the very act of painting ("extensive expression") what is "given" and "immediate" to them and by them to others begins anew. This can reach extremes, something indicated by Ouspensky in his dictum: "A man can go mad from one ashtray".

As far as the monad is concerned, it is a matter of indifference whether the object is known or unknown, perceptual or conceptual. We can consider the assemblage of a monad which is "the unknown"! How the monad is assembled is yet another matter (11). What we are drawing attention to is how the monad changes as its content is assembled. This content may consist of hard facts, speculations, value-expressions, models, theories, rules, images, or anything whatsoever. When a researcher scans the literature he is beginning a monad. In practice, he is himself operating with and within a monad which includes values, emotional attitudes, personal feelings, cultural forms, institutional influence and the like which may never enter the sphere of his formal work explicitly. Someone may well decide to restrict himself to the public world of a topic and another man decide to follow his own subjective thread of meaning. But, these decisions themselves must also be included in the content; and it does not require for this that he miraculously become aware and articulate about his own form of approach; only, that he admit himself to be a part of the monad (12). We may well take Cromwell's reported remark to the painter working on his portrait - "warts and all" - as a slogan for the monad.

We may well ask: How is it, in practice, possible for anyone to conduct a truly inclusive process? Will there not always be some form of restriction, stemming from personality or background, what is of most interest and the starting point for the enquiry? Our answer is that the *monad is in process* and it never comes to an end. Further, it has never begun; since we can only take up something already "in hand". It is from this

practical consideration that there stems the *ajavata* school of Hindu monism which claims that there has been no creation and no birth. We emphasise again that

*THE MONAD IS A PROCESS WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END*

The beginning and the end that we experience stems from the kind of thought which rests upon the making of distinctions; which we have said should not be the determinate of what is in the monad. To have a thought which does not come from making distinctions in the usual way is not easy and, for this reason, is sometimes regarded as suspending thought altogether. Just consider how it is that what passes for a "discussion" between people almost inevitably rests on their denial of something the other says! That is, it stems from exclusion rather than inclusion (13).

What counts is the action of inclusion, the bringing into the picture of more and more of what is implied by everything else that is included. Of course, the notion of implication suggests that there are things "behind" other things, at different depths. Nevertheless, even when this is true, bringing such implications into the picture dissolves their special role. In the monad, for example, there are no explanations of one thing by another. We do not arrive at underlying motivations or at laws. Everything that is in the monad has the "same" weight of contribution to make as any other thing.

All that we can be concerned with is that everything that is significant is being included; where what is significant is indicated by the content which is included. We do not need to vacillate or choose between the nominalist and the realist view, because it is of no account; and it does not matter we believe it is we who determine the content of the monad or whether "objective reality" itself does this.

*FOR THE MONAD THERE ARE NO EXTRINSIC CONSIDERATIONS*

In the extreme, we come to the proposition that included in the monad is everything, including what we have failed to include ourselves under the limitations of space, time, language and experience. This does not mean that these things have been excluded. Therefore, we have to say:

THE MONAD IS ALL THIS, ETC.

**Notes**

(1) The excluded, needless to say, would be vastly more than the excluded and could only be exemplified. To define the excluded as: what is not included is to put the onus on inclusion. Where inclusion comes to a stop, there exclusion begins by default. There is no act of exclusion: as we shall see, everything is included in any monad, but in a way special to that monad.

(2) This does sound like a prescription for self-conditioning. As we think about a subject and accumulate information, certain lines of thought, initially contingent and tentative, can become reinforced. Such is a common model of evolution and learning. However, we should not take this to mean that the process is necessarily random or self-limiting. The issue is supremely important and taken up later.

(3) As a practical device, it is sometimes useful to represent this also as a content of the monad by introducing a "black box" as the unknown centre and consider the possible transformations it might exact upon the known content.

(4) See the previous note: this means that every item is also a "black box".

(5) This is obviously relevant to our understanding of biological evolution. Also note, in this context, that teleological and mechanistic explanations (or realities) are not mutually exclusive in the monad, nor even separated by a boundary.

(6) A more pragmatic version of this kind of diffuse contemplation is that of the "naturalist's trance"; a state in which the totality is observed without prejudice or analytical preference.

(7) Consciousness is often treated as the most obvious "black box". However, we can see how this works: as an item of content treated as a black box we consider what it "includes"; hence, we automatically arrive at some concept such as that of "intentionality", or that consciousness is always "consciousness-of", or that it "constitutes" the content of our experience.

(8) cf. Simone Weil "Waiting on God". "Attention is an effort, the greatest of all efforts perhaps, but it is negative effort. Of itself, it does not involve tiredness." (p.55) "Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty and ready to be penetrated by the object, it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of." (p.56) "In every school exercise there is a special way of waiting upon truth, setting our hearts upon it, yet not allowing ourselves to go in search of it."(p.57)

(9) Consider what it would be to contemplate the monad of human being - which would, at least, encompass all the peoples of the earth, the sexes, the races, the ages, the histories, the cultures, the characters, the abilities, etc.!

(10) Closure means coming to a stop or repetition. It is therefore important (a) to keep generating new statements, and (b) ensure that these are not repetitious.

(11) The media of expression are also to be included in the content of the monad. Thus, expressing the monad is not restricted to ordinary verbal language, but can include: mathematics, symbols, and even the gestures of the living moment; images, formulae; paint, sound and spatial form. Further, the monad is indifferent to the distinction between explicit and implicit meanings.

(12) In such cases, the man is treating himself as the "black box". Even admitting this is significant.

(13) Hence the well-known psychological exercise of "Yes-And" in which effort is applied to suspend the habitual form of exchange - which is "Yes-But".