

Re: What's the name for this?

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Chris Sonnack <Chris@Sonnack.com> wrote in message news:<4091580F.3B9F8DEF@Sonnack.com>...

> *EN*> *We have a philosophy of mathematics whether we want to or not,*
> *EN*> *and Platonism produces bugs because of its demand that everything*
> *EN*> *be known and available.*

>

> *CS*> *(The above statement is utter gibberish, AFAICT.)*

>

> *"Edward G. Nilges" wrote:*

>

> > *Here goes:*

> >

> > *Proof 1 (trivial): everything is connected with everything else. If*
> > *"connection" is a fully transitive operator, then there is an*
> > *infinity of proofs that there is a connection between Plato and CS.*

>

> *Granting, for discussion, that "everything is connected", then any*
> *given connection is indeed trivial and meaningless.*

>

This is part of the view that such broadly true statements aren't useful to the practical man. However, the fact that we can't imagine a world in which some things are disconnected doesn't mean that "everything is connected" is without merit, or, for that matter, that "any given connection is trivial and meaningless". By the same reason, its meaning might be terribly important.

>

> > *Platonism is in large measure the belief that the contents of our*
> > *minds, whether mathematical or not, are partial shadows of real*
> > *entities that exist in a timeless "world of forms".*

>

> *The important aspect here is that Plato believed this ideal world*
> *was the *more* real. He spoke of the "world of ideas" verses the*
> *"world of things" (our everyday world).*

>

> *Thus, to Plato, a circle isn't an idealized description of a round*
> *thing, but a *reality* that exists apart from this universe.*

>

> > *It is challenged by Intuitionism which is based on Kant's claim*

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> > *that our experience necessarily takes place in an inescapable*
> > *framework of space and time,...*
>
> *(Isn't the deal with Kant actually about how experience takes place*
> *in our own minds?) More to the point, Intuitionism, AIUI, predates*
> *Kant (he just had his own spin on it--his "anschauung"). Intuitionism*
> *is really just the idea that we can have indefinable "knowledge".*
>
No, the deal with Kant is NOT "how experience takes place in our own
minds". That was Berkeley.

To Kant, experience was a necessarily articulated phenomenon
involving, in all possible cases, experiencing and the thing
experienced.

It is only by exception that "the thing experienced" is inside the
mind and it is only true with self-reflexive thoughts and dreaming.
When we experience a tree what "is", in Kant, is pure experiencing and
a physical object.

Whatever "encyclopedias of philosophy" or cheat sheets you are reading
are in all probability informed by several mistakes made
systematically, in America and Britain, about the history of
philosophy on the European continent outside Britain since Kant.

One is that Kant was an "epistemologist" first and foremost which is
to say that philosopher who sets himself to the task of discovering
the ground of knowledge. However, Kant was first and foremost an
ontologist who wanted to describe and accurately name what "is".

Thus he commenced *Der Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* literally where the
overrated Hume (who Kant credited) left off to play cards:

"In whatsoever mode, or by whatsoever means, our knowledge may
relate to objects, it is at least quite clear, that the only
manner in which it relates to them, is by means of an
intuition."

That is, Kant belied the notion, held by foolish goddamn
science-worshippers, that "philosophy doesn't progress". Kant realized
that Hume was right: all of knowledge comes from sense-data.

However, Kant went on to carve out, in defiance of science-worship, a
segment of knowledge in the sense of justified true belief called the
transcendental method, for he realized that the implication of Humean
skepticism, which in Hume extends to sense-data reports in the same
way it did for Descartes, is that science, mathematics and logic are
without ground themselves.

This segment was constituted in the "transcendental" method which
starts with enquiring into why there is knowledge including that of

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logic in the first place.

This is where Kant is an ontologist (or, metaphysician, if metaphysics is understood as an assay of existence prior to physics in particular and science in general), for he realized that it was necessary to "declare victory".

At the plane of first principles, after all, we cannot imagine alternatives in a responsible fashion. The physicist can imagine a world in which ether exists or Einstein is wrong. The mathematician can imagine a world in which ordinary arithmetic fails. Even the logician can state the possibility of a world in which p or not p is false.

But at the level of first principles the alternatives are unnameable, therefore the task is mere description constituted in what for Kant was the synthetic a priori.

Such statements as "there is no experience without content" have no alternative in that they require the reader of the Kritik to entertain the possibility of experience without content.

- > *But, regardless, veering off topic here, let's try to get back to*
- > *the connection of Platonism with CS real soon.*
- >
- >> *...and therefore bases the truths of mathematics on their*
- >> *constructibility by step by step arguments...*
- >
- > *(AIUI, Mathematical Intuitionism opposes Platonism primarily in*
- > *assuming mathematical constructs are generated products of the mind.*

Mathematical intuitionism does nothing of the sort. Instead, it creates a type distinction between physical objects and mathematical entities which in fact require for the apperception a mathematical understanding (or in modern terms, a community). But this isn't to deny the existence of mathematical truth.

We perceive a tree necessarily through the medium of the senses and not through the medium of intellect. Conversely we perceive a mathematical truth through intellect and not through the senses.

Unless we "privilege" the senses we cannot say that mathematical objects are any less real than physical objects. We must simply concede that we live in a multifaceted world with different types of things.

- > *OTOH, Plato would claim they are "discoveries" of the real reality.)*
- >
- > *In any event, we appear to have some agreement on the basics.*
- >

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- > *The Platonic view is that there is a perfect reality, more real*
- > *than our world of things, and (importantly) that this reality*
- > *exists on its own. The Idea of a Sphere *exists* even if our*
- > *universe never Big Banged.*
- >
- > *What you call the Intuitionist view in opposition to Plato, I've*
- > *called the Aristotelian view. Aristotle believed the world of*
- > *things was the primary one and that Plato's world of Ideas were*
- > *just abstractions.*

>
No, Aristotle agree with Plato that there are higher levels of reality constituted in forms. But, he observed that in the world in which we live we never encounter the forms in their purity.

- >
- >> *There's a connection, in the Intuitionist challenge to Plato, to*
- >> *programming, for Intuitionists have the attractive humility of*
- >> *the "structured" programmer who uses good structure because this*
- >> *ensures he makes his goal in a step-by-step fashion.*
- >
- > *Rejected conclusion. Step-by-step method also used by many, many*
- > *other "philosophies". Plato himself used step-by-step analysis.*
- > *Thus, similar to your trivial proof above, the connection to*
- > *intuition--let alone to Plato--is trivial and without meaning.*

Intuitionism wasn't only "step by step analysis" it was ALSO the principled rejection of entities that could not be constructed by finitary means.

- >
- > *Strike one. (-:*

>
If you want to play games, go play in traffic. Fascists read Wikipedia and second-hand sources and treat philosophy as Trivial Pursuit at best.

- >
- >> *Platonism in mathematics is also challenged by Marxism which points*
- >> *out that despite all of Plato's ravings, mathematics was actually*
- >> *developed by ordinary slobs in Sumeria, China and elsewhere who were*
- >> *trying to divvy up goods and earn a living.*
- >
- > *[sigh] Your biases and prejudices are showing again. Plato isn't*
- > *challenged by this at all, for he believed that we all existed in*
- > *the perfect world of idea *before* we are born, and that once we*
- > *were born into the imperfect world of things, we *recalled* the*
- > *ideals when doing mathematics. (Thus, any slob can recall this.)*

>
You obviously haven't read the Republic. Plato believed that slaves, women, merchants and warriors were necessarily unable to access higher truths by virtue of their social position. In fact, he regarded their attempts as "disruptive".

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> > *The connection with CS is that the actual history of CS is the*
> > *post-facto dignifying of discoveries by that species of ordinary*
> > *slobs called programmers of how to accomplish a job of work, with*
> > *impressive sounding theories.*

>
> *Rejected. I would opine that most real discoveries in both math*
> *and CS are made by active scientists in that domain. (That doesn't*
> *preclude the occasional "A-ha" moment from us slobs, though. :-)*

>
Hash addressing, parsing, etc., were all scientific discoveries in relation to subsequent academic work, which hasn't discovered much of utility outside of Dijkstra's work, and Dijkstra was in part a programmer.

> *Strike Two.*

If you want to play games, go play in traffic.

>
>
> > *In our own lifetime we see how discoveries made by ordinary*
> > *employees of IBM become "theory" once the academics have at them,..*

>
> *To the extent that ever actually happens, isn't that appropriate?*
> *Isn't it the Right Thing that academics would take an "A-ha" and*
> *explore its full meaning?*

>
In what way do they do this today? It appears to me that in many cases, the production of CS academics is privatised where useful so rapidly that the community as a whole is unlikely to benefit.

> > *..and this is a good thing as long as we can remember that the*
> > *original practice wasn't theory.*

>
> *You may be misusing the word, "theory". I suggest "science".*

>
> > *The point is not privileging EITHER the practical inventors or*
> > *the academics.*

>
> *How about privileging both?*

>
>
> > *Another challenge to Plato came from David Hilbert who claimed*
> > *that mathematics is a game we play with symbols.*

>
> *(Interestingly, Hilbert attacked Intuitionism and very strongly*
> *supported the principle of the excluded middle (among other things,*
> *he pointed out how useful, elegant and brief were proofs using it).)*

>
> *More importantly, Hilbert was a part of Mathematical Formalism,*
> *which believes that truth is determined by proof (and you can*

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> *see why he would attack Intuitionism :-). Specifically, all true*
> *statements are provable and all provable statements are true.*

>

One name: Godel. Boom: no more naive intuitionism. Mushroom cloud.

> > *His spiritual cousin is the person for whom the computer is a*
> > *game playing machine.*

>

> *Oh, I don't agree with that very much. I see what you're getting*
> *at, but it's a heck of a stretch. The huge difference has to do*
> *with exactly how those symbols are manipulated and how proofs are*
> *created. Very distant, I'd say, from a video game player.*

>

> *Still searching for the Platonic/CS connection....*

>

>

> > *However, Platonism is dominant in the academy for the very good*
> > *reason that academics like to think of themselves less as the*
> > *servants of practical men and more like Plato's vision of the*
> > *philosopher, who emerges from the cave to see the sun...*

>

> *Heh. Probably more the case that academics live in an idealized*
> *non-world of ideas (actual Platonism has been pretty much debunked*
> *on a philosophical basis, although most hard core mathematicians*
> *are probably Platonists) rather than the real world, but whatever.*

>

> *Still searching... could there be beef ahead?*

>

>

> > *A typical result is the overly ambitious system (more an artifact*
> > *of the prehistory of software before C and unix taught us all*
> > *humility, in some cases too much) which attempts to be the*
> > *corporation's or government's World of Forms which, on the nacreous*
> > *computer screen, expresses truths more True than the messy ambiguity*
> > *of daily life.*

>

> *(More axe-grinding, Ed?) I'd say overly ambitious systems are an*
> *equally current problem--if not more common these days with our*
> *advanced systems.*

>

The experience of Ole Johan Dahl and the Scandinavians was that
reliable and humane software is constructed by working programmers.

>

> > *A recent dialog with Plato was constructed by Jacques Derrida,..*

>

> *Ah, your pal, Derrida, again. Back to searching. For a moment there*
> *we were almost getting back on topic....*

>

> > *Derrida pointed out...*

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> *Derrida is a dipstick. Nuf sed.*

>

I don't believe you have accessed Derrida any more than you have read any more than the "classics" excluding Kant.

Derrida-bashing, like Peter Singer-bashing, is nothing more than what happened to Socrates and Spinoza. Clowns who can't read hear something second hand and start baying for the scholar's head.

> > *The relevance to CS is deep.*

>

> *If "deep" means "doesn't really exist", I agree!*

>

We must be shallow, mustn't we?

>

> > *This is because CS is the invention, if it is anything at all, of*

> > *a new form of more intense, "active" writing, programming.*

>

> *No. No. No. NO. NO!!!*

>

> *Computer Science is the activity that pursues computation and*

> *predates "programming" and computers. Haven't you quoted the*

> *quote about telescopes and astronomy recently?*

What Dijkstra MEANT was that computer science has nothing to do with mechanisms below computer architecture. What Dijkstra MEANT was that he was not interested in solid state physics and, given a decent compiler, in assembler language.

Dijkstra in other words outgrew the childish and ultimately destructive fascination of many programmers with violating levels.

Without programming, there would be no computer science. It is a Platonism in that it is based, without being able to admit it, on a form of writing.

Programming was fully intended by the arrogant apparatchiks who claimed to have "invented the computer" and did not "invent the computer" to be a low-level, scribal, clerical activity in which low-dominance males and women considered in the 1940s as sex objects would "code" the ideas of mathematicians and scientists.

Unfortunately, Grace Hopper and others discovered flaws in these Platonic ideas and to add insult to injury, discovered that they could use the computer to do a better job.

This is directly analogous to the scandal of writing for Plato. He wanted to set up an Academy attended by good-looking young men who would both pay him for his instruction and consent to be his objects of pleasure and found that the Sophists, through the new medium of

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writing, were able to share ideas and make their jobs easier even as Plato was using writing in the same way.

His instinct was to claim that he had "real" knowledge accessible to him as orality and memory and to make the unverifiable and false claim that reliance on writing, or even being facile at it, made one less than human. Thus the Socrates re-presented in the Platonic dialogs conducts an oral tradition including the oral, real-time put-down of interlocutors who become, courtesy of Plato's then using the WRITTEN tradition, two-dimensional foils.

Thus when it became clear in the 1950s and 1960s that American industry would become increasingly dependent on programmers, who were motivated by laissez-faire economic culture (and its failure to provide a sense of community, economic or otherwise) to hold their employers to ransom, a variant of the Platonic strategy came into being.

This was the Urban Legend that "programmers" constituted an inappropriate "priesthood" who would deprive honest, straight-shooting "users" of their due constituted in access to the computer, which they would use like men, to conduct honest trade.

Derrida notices how inappropriate sermonizing enters the anti-writing language at the point. For example, Ferdinand de Saussure believed (against the evidence) that written language represents speech when it's obvious that written language represents the world. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida shows how de Saussure, because he could not properly argue for this thesis, had instead to re-present writing as vaguely immoral at worst and at best a marginal phenomenon as regards "real" language.

In a directly parallel fashion, we hear continually, from both the MIS and part of the academy, that MIS and computer science are more, far more, than "programming": but when we responsibly enquire, as Dijkstra enquired in 1968, as to what these intellectual riches might be, we find, as Dijkstra found, that what they are, are irresponsible social and behavioral science.

In excess of programming, computer science turns out to be vicious speculation on the necessary limitations of programmers and plans to control them, and MIS becomes the search for "solutions" which eliminate labor from the equation and constitute in Bourdieu's terms that bourgeois dream, science, without the scientist.

Derrida rereads Plato on a yearly basis and as such is FAR more responsible than his opposite numbers in the USA; Stanley Fish, a literary theorist, told the Chicago Tribune in 1999 that he won't read a poem unless he is paid.

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- >
- > *This whole Derrida-writing line is crap, Ed. Sheer fantasy.*
- >
- > *Strikes three through ninty-nine. (You're waaaay out! :-)*
- >
- > *Will we ever get back to Plato?*

We won't ever get back to the Plato-machine which is used as a tool of domination as if there's been nothing of note since Plato.

As a philosophy major I was repelled by the anti-intellectualism of "classicists" at the University of Chicago. They were literally unable to understand Kant and therefore declared that Kant's major failing was "bad philosophical style". They provided part of the intellectual underpinning of the assault on a people, that of Chile, who had the bad taste as women and working people to believe that a people can invent a culture and the consequent economy and are thus complicit, with their fat pals in the economics department, with football stadium massacres of 1972.

We can't get "back" to Plato. There is a barbaric rage in the West to get "back" to original thinkers re-presented as "good" and thereby to evade complexity in general and writing in particular.

The Islamic philosopher, Qutb, traces this rage to a division in Western theology which parallels the Platonic division, the dependence on writing with its rejection. Western religion claims to be monotheistic, but Qutb quietly observes that Jesus' divinity undercuts this claim. Furthermore, Jesus' crucifixion permits the Westerner to take what for Qutb appears to be a perverted satisfaction in his sufferings, as seen in the popularity of the Mel Gibson movie...in which some of the attendees might be watching Jesus' death with sadistic pleasure that they dare not admit.

The West claims to the rest of the world that it represents all that is enlightened and good. What the rest of the world sees is a division including the shabby treatment of intellectuals in both the Communist and non-Communist west, in which their production is acknowledged but in which they are shown the door insofar as their thought is genuinely critical. This isn't to say, of course, that the Islamic-fundamentalist world is today friendly to modern intellectuals (although it is innocent of Plato's schizophrenia concerning writing); but MOST Islamists are not fundamentalists.

- >
- > > *The result is that in a completely unconscious form, end users..*
- >
- > *End Users?!?!? Um..... hmmm.*
- >
- > > *...continually have a blind spot such that they cannot see that*
- > > *an active writing is what makes the "magic" and consistently*

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- > > *underestimate its materiality...as do programmers themselves.*
- >
- > *Gibberish, Ed. Sheer gibberish. I hardly know where to begin.*

That's because you haven't done your homework.

- > *End users rightfully are not, and should not be, aware of the*
- > *"magic".*

>
Yeah, "don't make me think".

- > *And I VERY much doubt programmers underestimate programs. (-:*

>
> *Still searching for Plato.....*

- >
- >
- > > *Why would any philosophy result in a "fragmentation of analysis"?*
- > >

> > *Forest and trees.*

- >
- > *And if your philosophy was, "don't forget the forest for the trees?"*

>
>
> > *Have you not learned that we actually think about your unsupported*
> > *assertions? And hence see them for the smoke and fog they are?*

> >
> > *The irony is that they are supported by references you don't trouble*
> > *to read.*

> >
> > *Are you sure they are nacht undt nebel? Be advised that they may*
> > *seem to be so and might not be. For one thing, in years of*
> > *experience in programming alone, I have the drop on you,...*

>
> *A. Timewise, not by much.*
> *B. Remember, I've *seen* your programming.*
> *That the "drop" is an illusion of your own mind.*

>
Yes, and you've made a complete fool of yourself by sending hate mail to my publisher, because you don't realize, being it seems a corporate drone, that my business associates and publishers are going to rate me, in our society, as to what I can do for their bottom line.

Your strange campaign of stalking and libel is just making you look bad. I do encourage you to buy a copy of my book (you are, for obvious reasons, not on the shortlist for a free, autographed copy) and download the compiler source code.

If you find genuine bugs, I ask you under the ethos of open source to make them known to me. As to merely stylistic critique and merely stylistic ravings, such as you produced over my May 2002 code, I will examine them and make such changes as make any sense.

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> > ...and I predate the C language and its mistakes.
>
> You hereby reveal your bias and your foolishness.
> (And I also predate C, for that matter.)
>
>
> >> Your biggest error is in thinking you are superior to people here.
> >
> > I don't think I am "superior". I know what I know and I enjoy
> > setting others straight in order to refine my ideas.
> ~~~~~
> You just shot your denial in the foot.
>
> > Dude, I don't want you to accept me as a peer.
>
> Your wish; my command.
>
> And here we are. Platonism/Computer Science. No connection.

There is whether we like it or not a connection. I have found it is constituted in MIS and even academic anti-intellectualism prevalent in the West.

I am currently working for a Chinese company which refused to listen to the conventional Web wisdom which is that the Web page should merely be sprayed with read-only HTML, and whose programmers instead convert full scale client-server applications to workalike Web applications.

I've seen Indians produce similar coding gems while struggling to work in three hour commutes, for peanuts.

In both cases part of the reason is that both populations tend not to say, like Western programmers, that "it's too complex" and both societies don't privilege orality and secretly admire barbarism.