

ITOMISM
By
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Now for a theory that is entirely my own. It's not so much a theory as it is a fantasy idea, the stuff of sci-fi novels. The difficulty is, however, that once one understands the idea, it can be impossible to shake off. So take that as fair warning.

I am concerned that people might call this theory of mine false doctrine. I defend by saying it can't be a false doctrine if it's not a doctrine, and it's not. So just take it as it is intended, a strange idea of fiction — which, however, could actually true.

I call this fanciful theory of mine Itomism. It came to me as a spin off of this strange Mormon verse —

Doctrine and Covenants 93:29 Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.

This odd verse, in its quirky way, assigns immortality to man right alongside of God, but it gives us no clue what this *intelligence* is. We seem, here, to have drilled down to our most atomic self which defies definition; something that just is, something that perhaps souls are made of. We typically talk about humanness with three words: body, spirit, and soul. And now this verse introduces a fourth: intelligence.

If I can't define it, I would at least like to understand it as best I can, and that is what I will try to do here.

First off, the word *intelligence* is too broad a word. It means too many things, and this *thing* that Joseph Smith references here, this *intelligence*, deserves, in this context, to have its own word.

So, what word? Well, it is intelligent and it is atomic; that is, it is indivisible. If it could be divided, it could be created. Since it can't be created, it must be atomic, the atomic piece of what life really is. And so I combine those two notions into a single word: *itom*, like atom only intelligent. And thus the study of *itoms* is *itomism*. Simple enough.

I believe that only five things exist. They are: stuff (matter and energy), place (space and time where stuff is), life (sentience at its core, itom), laws (absolute truths like, for example, the value of π), and sets (all of the above which somehow combine to create things that are greater than the sum of their parts, also called synergy).

Science's number one frustration — (well, number two I suppose; number one is why should anything exist at all) — is: what is life? We have a pretty good handle now on stuff, place, and laws, but life is a bug-a-boo; we have no idea even where to start. And it's doubly frustrating because, after all, *it is us!* Shouldn't we at least have some idea what *we* are?

René Decartes said, “Cogito ergo sum”; that is, “I think, therefore I am.” Now, that's a lovely thought, but is that the best we can do? And also, Decartes might not even be right.

Scientists (atheistic scientists anyway) would love nothing better than to proof that if you arrange matter (atoms, electrons, etc.) together in just the right way, that pile of matter will become sentient life, so that life then is nothing more than properly

arranged matter/energy: i.e., stuff. My list of five things would, in that case, actually a list of four things.

But not only has science made zero progress to that goal, it also has no working hypothesis — we simply cannot imagine how sentience can be made from, well, stuff. And so my list stands at five — life is its own thing and is not stuff.

Christians and other religionists fare a little better. At least they believe that life survives death and so the spirit or the soul has its own kind of immutability. But tough questions still linger even from the Christian perspective such as, what is the soul?

At least Christians see no reason to fret about it. To them (us), the Bible is a history book of factual events which, if believed, lead to eternal happiness. If we don't know *how* or *what*, that's okay because it's irrelevant anyway. We have the truths that we need and that's all that really matters.

I have no quarrel with that; in fact, that's what I believe too. Jesus rose from the dead and guaranteed to us an eternal life. So, what else could possibly matter?

The problem is that God made us to think.

Genesis 3:22 And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil:

Psalms 8:5 For thou hast made him [mankind, us] a little lower than the angels [Heb: Eloheim, gods]. :6 ...thou hast put all things under his feet.

So it just won't do for us to walk away from God's divine plan for us — (I mean the mortal us, not the saved-in-heaven us) — to not at least try to figure everything out, to not try to know what makes the universe tick. It's not that we are *required* to think, there's no law against stupidity, it's that we are *driven* to think. Not by compulsion but by our God given nature. It's our nature to seek truths, all truths, of the universe. Why God did that I don't rightly know other than he loved doing it.

So, I want to know just what we are. Don't you? Of course you do. That's why you're reading this hoping I'll have the answer. Well, maybe I have some of it anyway. We'll see.

Back to René Decartes: "I think, therefore I am." I claim he was wrong, or at least a bit off the mark. Here's the real truth: "I think *at this moment*, therefore I am *at this moment*." All I really know is now. Everything before is suspect. Can I trust memory?

Memory is fallible and we don't rightly know how fallible. Short term memory loss and Alzheimer and dementia of all sorts remind us of how easy it is to misplace ourselves.

But it's not just what we can lose, but also what we can remember that's wrong. Police investigators are constantly flummoxed by witnesses who remember different things. And there are false childhood memories. And I'm flummoxed by people of the opposite political bent than me and wonder how the obvious so easily escapes them. I write most of that off to *confirmation bias*, our tendency to give greater weight to facts that agree with our beliefs thus giving us a sqewed memory of, well, everything. Maybe the Zen perspective is right: "Last night I dreamed I was a butterfly, but how do I know that I am not now a butterfly dreaming that I am a person?"

Fact is, all we really know is now. And Mary Baker Eddy challenged even that by claiming that *everything* is an illusion, that *nothing* is real.

Actually that's pretty easy to refute with this simple thought problem: If nothing is real, then there is no real to be not. Understand? What could the word "real" possibly mean if nothing is real? So if there is no real then there is no not-real — if nothing is real, then nothing can be *not* real. So *something* must be real by the definition of the word, and that something is the universe we sense around us. That is how we *define* the word real.

So we have that much certainty anyway: "I think *right now* so I am *right now*." Of that, I am certain.

But what of the before? Consider the possibility that my current itom — that is, the me of the right now — exists only right now. Actually, that's not quite right. Consider instead that my current itom may exist absolute outside of time and space.

This is not an unreasonable thing to suppose. There are things that exist that have nothing to do with time and space, often called non-locality. For instance, the number π .

Now maybe you'll accuse me of cheating. No, I'm not cheating. π certainly exists, does it not? But not in space/time. It just is. It's a law. It's absolute, or *immutable*. We can't even say that it's eternal although we're tempted to. The reason we can't say it's eternal is because that would imply that it passes through time — a lot of time for sure, in fact, an infinite amount of time, but through time anyway. But π doesn't pass through time, even a lot of time, it exists in *no* time, outside of time, π just is, apart from time and space, in a dimension all its own called the *real numbers*. π is *non-local*; that is, it exists but not in any *place*, certainly not in space/time.

Here's my assertion: Maybe life (the core life, the itom) is like that. After all, we don't know what life *is*, so why not something that is dimension-less? Or, maybe it does have dimensions, but not the space/time dimensions we live it. After all, π does exist in a dimension, the dimension we call real numbers.

What dimension might itoms exist in? I'll call it *life-scape*.

Can I talk sensibly about a dimension that I don't know exists? Of course I can. If π exists in the dimension of real numbers, in what dimension does the square root of negative π exist? The dimension of *imaginary* numbers. Bizarre? Yes. But it exists, and we know it exists, we just cannot imagine it. Now that is bizarre.

I claim that the life-scape is no more bizarre than the dimension of imaginary numbers. And how do I know that the life-scape exists? Because we're alive, each of us, at this moment.

Is this frivolous — a spaceless, timeless object I call itom? Not at all. Relativity even predicts such a thing — a physical object with no dimensions — *in the physical universe*. A black hole, so says relativity, is so tightly squeezed that it becomes a singularity; that is, a massive dot of infinitesimally small dimensions and outside of time. Or so relativity says.

Is it true? I wouldn't know, but that's the prediction, and relativity, after all, is taken very seriously.

So, if a singularity, a real massive object, can exist without dimensions in our universe, then why can't an itom exist without dimensions outside our universe?

Now, what is a soul? I imagine that a soul is a contiguous string of itoms. Actually, not quite a string, but a chain. An itom is a link in a soul chain. Awareness, then, — (that is, momentary awareness of the present moment, not memory) — is like a

ring sliding along the itom chain through time. In fact, the movement of that awareness ring *is* our sense of passing time; in fact, *is* time.

Now let's change the picture a bit more. It's not a ring, it only *feels* like a ring. What's really happening is (you'll think this is really bizarre and I won't disagree) that free itoms float to and attach themselves to the end of the ever growing chain. Each itom has three passions. First: to enjoy the experiences passed to it from the previous itom. Second: to contribute to that pile of experiences its own newly sensed or newly thought experiences. And third: to pass the sum total of experience onto the next itom, like a relay race, thus making itself immortal in an infinite chain. So each itom invites another itom to join the party as a north end magnet invites a south end magnet to attach. And at that moment, that itom experiences sentience, the joy of existence.

I said that the itom chain is contiguous. That's not precise. Contiguity is the relationship of separate and distinct things in a string, like the integers. Our itom chain is not quite that. But neither is it continuous like the real numbers. It is not contiguous nor continuous. Rather, it is a true chain with overlapping links which is something different than continuity or contiguity. And that overlap-ness gives us the sense of real time, not just the passing from one moment to the next, but from one interval (something less than a second, very tiny, but measurable) to the next interval. It is not infinitesimally small just as Plank's Constant is not infinitesimally small. Time is not a sequence of points like the real numbers, it is a sequence of overlapping intervals like overlapping chain links.

That is why, for example, we hear music. Without the sense of intervals, we'd hear a note, and another note, but never a song. What we hear is notes overlapping, and synergistically (a thing is greater than its parts, i.e.: sets), we hear the notes, and the song, and also the beauty of it.

So the moment of sentience is not just an itom but its sense of its nearest neighbor itoms and their immediate influence an instant before fading quickly to just memory. Thus, music. Music is more than mere memory of previous sounds. To be music, those immediately previous sounds and the current sound are experienced together an instant *before* fading into mere memory.

Want to see it happen? Watch an anchor fall, and as it falls, watch its force move up the chain, link by link, like a passing ring, to the last link. But what if there is no last link? What if there were infinite links? That would be like what the soul is.

What is sleep? Sleep is a break in the chain, but not an absolute break. There is a — (I don't think force or energy are the right words, so I'll instead say) — kind of *influence* that draws itoms together. That influence continues off the end of the chain and free itoms join the chain later on down the road. So there are intervals of this influence where there are no itoms. Not unlike atoms in a crystal where atoms are held at a fixed distance from each other. This itom gap is sleep.

What is death? Energy can convert from one form to another. Electrical energy can become heat. Sound can become light. And so forth. So that we need not think that because a *form* of energy has vanished that the energy itself has vanished.

Most interesting is sound, which requires a media, being converted to light, which does not require a media. Just so, an itom chain can be hosted at a moment in a human body (actually a brain), then suddenly de-hosted by a bullet in the head so that the spirit leaves the body. But the spirit does not annihilate any more than light in space annihilates. Now, is that a gap like sleep? Or does the next itom just change its nature like

sound changing to light? Well, if you are a “soul sleeps” believer, then you can believe that death is just like sleep, a long itom gap, and resurrection is like awakening. But if you’re not a “soul sleeps” believer, then it is reasonable to believe in a state change, that one itom can require a host, a body, and the next itom not. That’s how I imagine death.

What is the second death of Revelation? If God ever gets *so* upset with a person that he wants that person annihilated, he can just cut off that person’s itom chain so that he cannot continue. When that happens, the chain just disconnects everywhere because who wants to a part of that? Do recall that the Bible does say that God can destroy body *and soul* in hell. Also there is the notion of Perdition.

What is the soul? It is the itom chain.

What is time? It is the passing sense of existence from one itom to the next and the next and so on. The reason this might be so is because of **Revelation 10:6** *There should be time no longer*. If that is literally true, then time cannot be the absolute that we imagine it to be and Einstein was right. And if so, then it might well be possible that eternal life is not merely living forever, basically running out the eternal clock, but invigorating the entire itom chain at once so that I experience all of me from eternal beginning to eternal end at once. Not memory but by direct awareness —

Doctrine and Covenants 84:100 *And Satan is bound and time is no longer.*

Doctrine and Covenants 130:7 *But they [angels] reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord.*

Now, there are at least two philosophical problems that itomism solves. The first is the Startrek problem. The second is the Mormon marriage problem.

The Startrek problem: A close friend pointed this out to me recently so I know I’m not the only one thinking about it. Suppose science does accomplish *beaming*; you know, “Beam me up, Scotty.” That is, we can vanish here and instantly reappear somewhere else; say, in London for lunch. Then just as instantly beam back home in time to pick up the children from school. Nice, huh?

Here’s the problem: How do we know that when my body is disintegrated for beam transport, that I just don’t die? And when my body is reassembled at the other end, that is not me but someone else? How can I be sure that the me at the last is the me at the first?

My answer is it doesn’t matter. Why? Because the me of a moment ago is not the me of the now anyway — assuming that the me we’re talking about is the itom of right now. But of course we can talk about the me totally; that is, the entire itom chain, my soul. But that’s okay too because at the moment I’m disintegrated, the next itom has yet to be determined and the soul-so-far doesn’t care *which* itom wins the race. And whichever itom wins the race, the soul, my soul, is still me. It’s like an egg — an egg doesn’t much care which sperm wins the race.

The Mormon Marriage problem: The thing that’s really cool about a chain link is that it can connect to one or two or ten other links and thus split into different directions and destinies.

Now for some heavy math. If you're not a math wonk, you might want to skip this paragraph. I have long wondered if it is possible to construct two well-behaved functions that, left of zero, are everywhere equal, and, right of zero, everywhere unequal, and yet everywhere differentiable; that is, everywhere smooth. Or does that abrupt change at zero unavoidably disturb the differentiability? If I ever have the chance, I'll ask some mathematician that actually knows what he or she is doing.

In any case, that is a mathematical picture of what I am talking about. Is it possible for one person to become two of the same person at an instant, and then move on to two different destinies and to two different consciousnesses but with a same memory?

Fiction writers do that sort of thing without ever really grappling with the implications of the soul. (In one episode of StarTrek the Next Generation, Riker got split, and was so incensed by it that he killed the other.) Can one *soul* become two *souls* that are the same soul at one moment yet different souls at the next moment? Itomism offers that possibility. Like one chain link attached to two links, one itom can be attached to two itoms and pass its entire experience to both.

But which is the real me? That's just my point, they *both* are the real me. Each has as much claim on the real me as the other, and yet they are not conjoined, not sharing each other's existence. Or maybe they sort of are. Twins do have some sense of each other. And in quantum mechanics, there are entangled particles. So maybe separated souls are not completely separate, just separate enough to be apart but kind of aware of each other.

So, what does this have to do with Mormon marriage? Well, at the simple level, it renders polygamy politically correct. It would no longer matter that a man had two wives if the man split himself into two souls, each taking one wife. So itomism makes sense of polygamy. But then it also makes sense of polyandry and that's where I want to go next.

What happens when a temple sealed woman with children is widowed, remarries, and has more children by her second husband? Well, it appears that the children of the second husband belong to the wife and to her first husband. As much as the second husband would wish it, his wife and his children cannot be sealed to him. He is out of luck. This is the Mormon Marriage problem.

There are other variations on this problem as well, divorce being one of them, but you get the idea.

What is the solution? Allow polyandry of course, at least in the temple sealing ceremony if not in actual marriages.

But how would that work? Could a woman have two husbands? Would she have to decide between two good Mormon men, keep one and cast the other off? How is this to be resolved?

Itomism to the rescue! With itomism, any woman who is dual sealed can split herself into two souls, and each husband gets to have and keep his wife and *his children* — that is, *without sharing her*; that is, no polyandry necessary.

Now, it's not required — soul splitting, I mean. If a man really wants two wives and they don't mind, then polygamy is fine. Who can complain? But I am saying this: what if the polygamous arrangement is not so happy after all? Then itomism offers a solution, a way out where nobody loses.

And that, I believe, is all I have to say about itomism. Unless I think of something else.