

POST SCRIPTUM

No scientific work should be done without recognizing its ethical implications; in the present case the following deserve special attention:

(i) Man is a deterministic and relativistic self-referring autonomous system whose life acquires its peculiar dimension through self-consciousness; ethic and morality arise as commentaries that he makes on his behavior through self-observation. He lives in a continuously changing domain of descriptions that he generates through recursive interactions within that domain, and which has no other constant element in its historical transformation than his maintained identity as an interacting system. That is, man changes and lives in a changing frame of reference in a world continuously created and transformed by him. Successful interactions directly or indirectly subservient to the maintenance of his living organization constitute his only final source of reference for valid behavior within the domain of descriptions, and, hence, for truth; but, since living systems are self-referential systems, any final frame of reference is, necessarily, relative. Accordingly, no absolute system of values is possible and all truth and falsehood in the cultural domain are necessarily relative.

(ii) Language does not transmit information and its functional role is the creation of a cooperative domain of interactions between speakers through the development of a common frame of reference, although each speaker acts exclusively within his cognitive domain where all ultimate truth is contingent to personal experience. Since a frame of reference is defined by the classes of choices which it specifies, linguistic behavior cannot but be rational, that is, determined by relations of necessity within the frame of reference within which it develops. Consequently, no one can ever be rationally convinced of a truth which he did not have already implicitly in his ultimate body of beliefs.

(iii) Man is a rational animal that constructs his rational systems as all rational systems are constructed, that is, based on arbitrarily accepted truths (premises); being himself a relativistic self-referring deterministic system this cannot be otherwise. But if only a relative, arbitrarily chosen system of reference is possible, the unavoidable task of man as a self-conscious animal that can be an observer of its own cognitive processes is to explicitly choose a

frame of reference for his system of values. This task he has always avoided by resorting to god as an absolute source of truth, or to self-delusion through reason, which can be used to justify anything by confusing the frames of reference and arguing in one domain with relations valid in another. The ultimate truth on which a man bases his rational conduct is necessarily subordinated to his personal experience and appears as an act of choice expressing a preference that cannot be transferred rationally; accordingly, the alternative to reason, as a source for a universal system of values, is aesthetic seduction in favor of a frame of reference specifically designed to comply with his desires (and not his needs) and defining the functions to be satisfied by the world (cultural and material) in which he wants to live.