

A Treatise on Modern THEology

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In this day and age, we have seen the demise of the old religious icons: Christ, Allah, Buddha, Krishna, God. These were complicated symbols that sought to express the mystery of the universe in anthropomorphic form. Now that nanocomputers have shown us the last detail of the physical world and we live in neuro-responsive buildings, repose in alpha-rhythmic solutions, ingest gene-matched mitochondrials, and drive cortex-controlled magnetocars, I have become convinced, at my advanced age, that the divine mystery must lie not at the heart of our intelligent machines but in something simple, understandable, and all-pervasive.

To many people, this mystery lies in the building blocks of our universe, and indeed, we have often worshipped the smallest elements of the physical world. Most recently, it was the quark and the neutrino (remember the televised “Quark is Love” and “Just Say Neutrino” ministries that were later rocked by scandal?), but these, once they were fully understood, became what they, in my opinion, truly are: just parts of the physical universe they make up, like the atom.

When I was young, the world went through a troubling period when the atom was thought to be a metaphysical entity because of the quantity of energy it contained in so small a space. Indeed, the prophet Einstein, with his divinely simple equation $e = mc^2$, showed us that physical matter is nothing more nor less than energy slowed down. We spent perilous years trying to speed up matter again to release its energy, but the dangers were too great. Such reactions, we now know, belong safely at the center of stars where they cannot harm fragile living beings. We live so close to our own star that it is amazing really how long it took human beings to harness that infinitely safe energy source, which constantly bathes our planet.

But these wonders of the universe are not, ultimately, divine. For when we talk of divinity, are we not talking of the universe of man? Our brilliant objective world passes into this inner one through our human senses and it is with this information that we construct our inner realities. Such a flood of sensorial information must be processed through our cerebral cortex, however; otherwise, it would remain simply a wash of undifferentiated sensations. And how do we process this information? In large part through language. So we see that our inner realities, constructed from a unique combination of the sensed objective world and the human attributes of memory, sense of self, and a yearning to understand are fundamentally linked to language. It follows, therefore, that if we are to seek the divine in our inner worlds, we should seek it in the realm of language.

We have said that the attributes of the divine should be simplicity, understandability, and all-pervasiveness. One of the most simple, understandable, and all-pervasive elements of our own Inglo language is the elegant word THE. For centuries considered a mere function word, it took the wisdom of the poet Wallace Stevens to discern the diamond in the dunghill: “Where was it one first heard of the truth?” he queries in his “Man in the Dump.” His answer: “The THE.”

Let us consider what this means. Compare the three noun phrases *table* , *a table* , and *the table* . The word *table* alone presents an idea, a vocabulary item, a word that rhymes with Mabel, a source of archetypes or ideas, tableness. *A* in *a table* presents an idea, a form, one of many of this form, a type, a generic class. But *the* in *the table* presents an object, a manifested form, the only one that is meant in a given situation, and ultimately the generic class of like objects, which triumphantly leads its noun out of the unmanifested generic soup as the shining symbol of all possible objects like this one. How divinely simple and understandable. Either it exists or it doesn't. Either it is manifested or it isn't. Either it's THE or the void. The truth lies in the THE.

When human languages arise, they are devoid of article systems. But as they develop, speakers appear to need to indicate the true, manifested form of things with a definite article. I remember way back in my grad school days doing an experiment in which we generated a pidgin language. We didn't have time to develop a word for THE, and consequently the pidgin lost its pluck and died.

In the field of Inglo as a Second Language, which has lost some prominence now that there are only four languages in the world (Inglo, Latino, Sino, and Moslo), there is good reason to believe that when a language learner has truly mastered THE, she or he has truly mastered the language. After all, it is a difficult word to hear, often no more than a gentle hiss upon the teeth. But if you fail to communicate the essential THE to the person you are talking to, you are likely to be assailed with that most frustrating of questions for a language learner: "Oh! Where'ya from?"

The great THE is a subtle deity. It rarely asks to be stressed, which is why speakers from the Northeastern Quartal have trouble hearing and using it. Native speakers of Inglo understandably react strongly to a sentence like "Key is in car at airport." After all, what kind of godless sentence is that? There is no solidity, no validity to *key* or *car* or *airport* . And even when we add the premanifested form *a* to the offending words, we get "A key is in a car at an airport," which triggers the logical response, "So?" No, it is not until the actualizing THE enters the picture that we get a real piece of information: "The key is in the car at the airport." This, at last, can trigger a true and no doubt expected response to the statement: "Wha—you jerk! Who said you could take my car to the airport?"

In a final example of the greatness of the tiny THE, think of all the people and things of the world, both past and present, that are made magnificent by its presence: the King, the pyramids, the Nile, the Matterhorn, *The Grammar Book* . In the great Moslo language of the Southeastern Quartal, the word for THE, *al* , is part of the name of the great god Allah. In our own quartal, our ancient Greek forbears provided us with a divine linkage to the root *theo* . And indeed, this brings us back to our present subject, *theo* : THE plus O, THE plus zero, THE plus nothing. In other words, attach THE to the unmanifested, the O, and we have the basis of modern THEology.

And what is the state of this beatific article? Why, resplendent, resounding, all-pervasive, an integral part of our linguistic reality, its constant light providing us with a simple and understandable, yea, a divine means by which to represent the mystery of the manifested universe to our inner worlds. Let us unite in praising this tiny manifestation of the godhead, and may THE be with you!