

Edgar Morin between the Theorization of the Epistemology of Complexity and the Dominance of the Epistemology of Evidence and Clarity as a Model: A Critical Reading of His Atheist Thought

Adel Bouyahia — University of Algiers 2 — adelbouyahia1978@gmail.com

Damene Abdelghani — Emir Abdelkader University — tanbajo@gmail.com

Mohamed Tahir — Lamine Debaghine University Sétif 2 — m.tahir@univ-setif2.dz

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Abstract:

This work aims to highlight the inconsistency between the epistemology of intuition and clarity and the epistemology of complexity theorized by Edgar Morin in terms of principles and categories. Morin considers this contradiction as the basis for proposing complexity epistemology as an alternative framework capable of reducing the risks generated by the epistemology of intuition and clarity. However, through our examination of Morin's epistemology of complexity, contrary to what some believe, we found that Morin himself remained influenced by the categories of simplistic epistemology despite his rebellion against it, his criticism of it, and his call for establishing a transcendent epistemology beyond it. This influence led him not to fully adhere to the categories of complexity epistemology and contributed to the crystallization and formation of his non-religious philosophy and atheist thought.

Keywords: Morin, Epistemology, Complexity, Intuition, Inconsistency.

1. Introduction

According to Edgar Morin, the pattern of human thinking and the construction of knowledge in all its forms, including scientific knowledge, as well as the structure and organization of society itself, are governed by the dominant paradigm, or more precisely, by the dominant epistemological model controlling the human mind. This is because every paradigm is based on a set of categories deeply rooted in the human cognitive system to the extent that they govern the interpretation of things, the perception of reality, and even the anticipation of the future. Yet, the

influence of these categories remains largely unconscious for both the individual and collective mind. Human beings think, analyze, discuss, interpret, justify, and demonstrate according to these categories without being aware of them.

For Morin, manifestations of progress and development, as well as setbacks and risks experienced by humanity, are indebted in one way or another to the dominant paradigm. This is precisely what happened to human reason since the beginning of the modern era, when a radical transformation occurred at the epistemological and cognitive level, which in turn affected sociological reality. This transformation produced a rupture with the cognitive model shaped by the Church throughout the Middle Ages and gave rise to what Morin calls the epistemology of intuition and clarity, or the paradigm of intuition and clarity.

This epistemology, which dominated socio-epistemological reality because of the deep entrenchment of its categories, generated not only scientific and civilizational progress but also enormous risks that, according to Morin, now threaten human existence itself. This led him to search for a new epistemological model capable of replacing it, namely the epistemology of complexity, also referred to as the paradigm of complex thought. Thus, several questions emerge: What is the epistemology of intuition and clarity, and what are its categories? What is the epistemology of complexity that Morin considers an alternative? Was Morin able to transcend the dominance of the epistemology of intuition and clarity and establish a rupture with it in his vision of reality? How did this epistemology influence the formation of his non-religious philosophy? And what are the logical and realistic criticisms that can be directed against this philosophy?

2. The Epistemology of Intuition and Clarity

Research into this epistemology first requires defining epistemology as an independent concept in order to understand the relationship between epistemology as a branch of philosophy and the paradigm of intuition and clarity, whose roots extend back to René Descartes. Epistemology is considered one of the most prominent and important branches of contemporary philosophy, particularly because it represents the link between science and philosophy after the separation that occurred between them during the modern era. Linguistically, the term is composed of two words: *epistēmē*, meaning science or knowledge, and *logos*, meaning theory or study. Combined, the term signifies the “theory of science.”

However, the most widely used meaning of epistemology refers to the critical study of the results and methods of science. Epistemological studies examine scientific methodologies and evaluate their ability to lead science toward truth, as well as the nature of the conclusions they produce. This is expressed by Jamil Saliba, who defines epistemology as: “the theory or philosophy of science, meaning the critical study of the principles, hypotheses, and results of science in order to reveal their logical origins and objective value.”

Most contemporary philosophers agree that epistemology has played a central role in advancing science by encouraging it to correct its errors. Yet, what should be emphasized here is that although epistemology as an autonomous philosophical field is modern, epistemology as a philosophical practice — namely, the critical study of methods — dates back much earlier. This is evident in the works of René Descartes, particularly *Discourse on the Method* and *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, which undoubtedly fall within epistemological studies because of the methodological foundations they established. Descartes regarded these foundations as the basis of correct thinking, later known as the epistemology of intuition and clarity.

While epistemology as a critical study of science contributed to scientific advancement, the influence of the epistemology of intuition and clarity as a paradigm extended into various dimensions of human reality — social, political, ethical, and others. This demonstrates the difficulty of separating the epistemological from the sociological and highlights the reciprocal influence between them. Such expansion resulted from the deep entrenchment of its categories within the human intellectual system.

The epistemology of simplification is another term used for the epistemology of intuition and clarity because of its tendency toward simplification rather than complexity. This model, constructed by René Descartes, is based on the principle of decomposition when dealing with issues and realities in order to arrive at self-evident and clear truths. Descartes even made intuition and clarity the first rule in his *Discourse on the Method*, where he states:

“Never to accept anything as true unless I clearly know it to be so; that is, carefully to avoid haste and prejudice, and to include in my judgments nothing more than what presents itself to my mind so clearly and distinctly that I have no occasion to doubt it.”

This rule represents the essence of all the methodological principles established by Descartes. Indeed, the other rules merely serve this primary one. Thus, the principle of intuition and clarity became the nucleus of the epistemology of simplification, or more precisely, the paradigm of intuition and clarity. The question then becomes: what are the categories of the epistemology of intuition and clarity?

3. The Categories of the Epistemology of Intuition and Clarity

The categories of this epistemology consist of order and linear causality, separation and decomposition, and reductionism. These categories are interconnected and coherent with one another.

A) Order and Linear Causality

This epistemology is based on belief in order and linear causality; that is, it is founded on the conviction that events occur regularly according to specific laws. This excludes, in contrast, the hypothesis of chaos and randomness in the universe. Because this principle provides a simple

explanation of phenomena, it became “one of the fundamental concepts of reason, encompassing both temporal and spatial order.” This belief developed into what is known as the mechanistic conception of the universe, a conception that imposes coherence and harmony among the various cosmic phenomena. The guarantee of this coherence lies in the causal relationship existing between these phenomena. Hence, René Descartes compared the universe to “a large clock composed of interlocking gears.”

Belief in order cannot be separated from belief in linear causality. Indeed, there is such a close connection between them that speaking about order automatically entails speaking about linear causality and the determinism arising from it. Linear causality refers to “the logical relationship accompanying the reality of perceived phenomena, or in other words, the event that directly produces another event.” This corresponds to the notion that every phenomenon has a direct cause responsible for its existence, while excluding belief in chaos and coincidence. Thus, “nothing happens without a cause, or at least without a definite reason — that is, without something capable of explaining a priori why that thing exists.”

However, this does not mean that René Descartes was the first to advocate belief in linear causality, for this principle has roots extending deep into history. Yet, Descartes distinguished himself through his use of the principle of linear causality in constructing this epistemological system, which came to dominate scientific thought particularly from the end of the seventeenth century onward. Scientific laws in the experimental sciences, especially physics, were formulated according to the belief that the phenomena under study are governed by causality and characterized by order. Consequently, phenomena were explained by reducing them to their simple and clear causes, which appeared self-evident.

B) Separation and Decomposition

Alongside belief in order and linear causality, Edgar Morin considers separation and decomposition to be among the most important categories of the epistemology of simplification upon which classical thought was founded. He states:

“The second foundation of classical thinking is the concept of separation, corresponding to the Cartesian principle according to which, in order to study a phenomenon or solve a problem, it must be analyzed into simple units. In the scientific field, this principle translated into specialization and then into narrow or precise specialization.”

Regardless of the intellectual background upon which Descartes based this principle, he formulated it in his *Discourse on the Method* as follows:

“To divide each of the difficulties under examination into as many parts as possible and as might be necessary for its adequate solution.”

In other words, the search for the truth of phenomena requires their decomposition and the separation of their elements in order to reach their essence.

Descartes applied this principle in his search for the truth of the human being, a search whose effects later extended to other fields of inquiry. His decomposition of human nature led him to conclude that the human being possesses a dual composition. He then separated body and soul in search of the element that could not be divided or decomposed, thereby identifying it as the true essence of the human being. He concluded that, unlike the body, the soul is indivisible. In this context, he states:

“There is a great difference between the soul and the body in that the body is by nature divisible, whereas the soul is entirely indivisible. Indeed, when I consider the soul — that is, when I consider myself insofar as I am a thinking thing — I cannot distinguish any parts within it; rather, I clearly and distinctly conceive myself as one complete and unified thing.”

One of the most significant consequences of this principle for the human cognitive system was the distinction between two modes of thinking, or more precisely, between scientific and philosophical knowledge. One of its most notable manifestations was the decline of the model of the philosopher-scientist toward the end of the modern era. It is as though René Descartes indirectly established the boundaries separating the activity of the scientist from the concerns of the philosopher. Moreover, separation and decomposition became among the most dominant categories shaping human thought in all domains: sociological, epistemological, and axiological.

C) Reductionism

Reductionism is a mode of thinking whose roots extend deep into history and ancient civilizations, especially the Greek civilization, where its existence was linked to the ontological perspective dominant at that time. However, as an epistemological category, it is associated with the Cartesian epistemology of intuition and clarity. The socio-epistemological reality experienced by Europe played a highly significant role in its development.

René Descartes's familiarity with European history, in addition to being part of that history himself, contributed to the entrenchment of the concept of reductionism in Cartesian thought. Yet, the distinctive feature of this idea in Descartes' philosophy lies in its close relationship with the concepts of order and linear causality, as well as with the principle of separation and decomposition. From this relationship emerged the epistemology of intuition and clarity. Belief in order and the separation of the elements of a thing leads to its cause, and that cause becomes the reduced essence of the thing itself — a clear and self-evident truth beyond doubt.

In addition to what has already been mentioned, it may also be said that Descartes' concept of reductionism cannot be separated from his metaphysical position, which itself cannot be detached from the cultural reality in which he emerged. He reduced the modes of causality —

that is, the causes of things and beings — to linear causality, and consequently reduced the cause of existence itself to God. Descartes states:

“It must be said that God alone is the cause of all the motions existing in the world insofar as they exist and insofar as they are straight.”

In explaining the linear causality upon which existence and all beings are founded, he further adds:

“You ask me by what kind of causality God created eternal truths; I answer that He created them by the same kind of causality through which He created all things, namely as an efficient and universal cause.”

This interpretation of the origin of existence according to linear causality became, for Descartes, the starting point for explaining all things and phenomena through this causal model, because, in his view, it leads to a self-evident truth beyond doubt — such as the truth of God’s existence. Thus, the concept of linear causality became deeply rooted within the Cartesian intellectual system, and causal explanation came to be reduced to this single model. Subsequently, a chain of reductions followed in Cartesian thought: truth itself was reduced to the model of self-evident truth, which simultaneously rests upon the principle of reductionism. In other words, reductionism leads to self-evident truth beyond doubt, while that truth in turn reinforces reductionism.

There is therefore a reciprocal influence between the idea of reductionism and the concept of truth, just as there is a reciprocal influence between reductionism and linear causality. Reductionism leads to linear causality, and linear causality in turn reinforces reductionism. It is as though the reciprocal interaction among reductionism, linear causality, separation and decomposition, and the idea of clear and self-evident truth as Descartes’ ultimate goal — together with the dialogue among these elements — resulted in the emergence of the epistemology of intuition and clarity, also known as the epistemology of simplicity and clarity, or reductionist epistemology.

4. The Dominance of the Epistemology of Simplification

As previously indicated, the epistemology of intuition and clarity emerged as a paradigm dominating the human cognitive system as a result of the historical upheavals experienced by Europe at the end of the Middle Ages, including religious wars and movements of religious reform. This dominance extended to various domains of life, especially at the epistemological level, not only in Europe but also across modern and contemporary humanity in general, due to the deep entrenchment of the categories of separation and decomposition, order and linear causality, and reductionism.

This reality is expressed by Edgar Morin when he states:

“We live under the rule of the principles of separation, reduction, and abstraction, which together constitute what I call the paradigm of simplification. Descartes formulated this system that dominates the West by separating the thinking subject from the extended object — that is, by separating philosophy from science — and by establishing clear and distinct ideas as the principle of truth. Undoubtedly, this system, which has governed the adventure of Western thought since the seventeenth century, has enabled tremendous progress in scientific knowledge and philosophical thought.”

In other words, modern thought in both its forms — science and philosophy — was founded according to the categories of the paradigm of intuition and clarity. Separation and fragmentation first appeared in the relationship between science and philosophy, and then continued within science itself, to the extent that connections among scientific disciplines were no longer visible, aside from the general tendency toward simplification, clarity, and reductionism across all scientific specializations. Morin further states that:

“The paradigm of classical science has governed — and still governs — not only every classical theory, but also logic, epistemology, and worldview itself.”

When we reflect upon Morin’s position, it becomes clear that he insists the effects of the paradigm of intuition and clarity did not end with the modern era, but continue to influence the present age. This suggests that the scientific progress and civilizational advancement achieved by humanity are indebted to this epistemology. At the same time, however, according to Morin, the various failures and negative accumulations experienced by humanity are also connected to it. This raises the question: what are the dangers and negative consequences generated by the epistemology of intuition and clarity?

5. The Accumulations of the Epistemology of Intuition and Clarity

An examination of the reality experienced by humanity reveals that the accumulations generated by the epistemology of intuition and clarity, due to its influence on and guidance of science, have reached such a magnitude that they call for sounding the alarm. These consequences are diverse, reflecting the diversity of human life itself. Some are related to the environment in which humans live, while others concern the human being directly, especially the human dimension within humanity. These dangers first began to appear through the decomposition of the complexity that characterizes the human being, the separation of human dimensions, and their distribution among various scientific disciplines.

In addition, the reduction of the concept of the human being to the “rational human” and the growth of the reductionist spirit in the scientific disciplines dealing with humanity led to a significant decline in the meaning of humanity itself. This perhaps explains why Michel Foucault believed that the scientific development created by humans would ultimately destroy them because humanity became fragmented across various scientific branches that produced disconnected forms of knowledge incapable of expressing the true complex nature of the human

being. These are “forms of knowledge that divide up human remains, each claiming that the corpse in its hands represents the truth.”

This occurs because every science that studies humanity views it only from the narrow perspective of its own specialization, reducing human essence to whatever that discipline reveals. Thus, human nature became fragmented: psychology reduced it to pure consciousness, sociology to purely social existence, materialism to a body shaped by natural selection, while rationalism reduced it to rational nature alone. One of the consequences of this fragmentation was the weakening of the human dimension within the human being.

This decomposition affecting humanity also extends to the separation between body and soul theorized by René Descartes, which played a role in shaping modern and contemporary science after the categories of the paradigm of intuition and clarity became deeply rooted. According to Edgar Morin, “classical science was unable to see human beings except as things or machines, while generalized empiricism transformed them into programmed automatic humans.” Science no longer dealt with the human body except as an object independent from the psychological dimension. This pushed scientific research to extreme levels, especially in biology, without paying attention to the human dimension itself. Perhaps nothing illustrates this better than the development of genetic engineering research to the point that humanity today speaks of “genetic modification wars” and the extent to which such developments undermine human value as human value.

According to Morin, the consequences of the epistemology of intuition and clarity do not stop at affecting the human dimension of humanity; they go further by threatening human existence itself within a science grounded in reductionism and severed from ethics. In his book *The Nature of Nature*, Morin states:

“The chaos and turbulence of the world, weapons and conflicts, fleeting models of liberation, and the enduring and cruel forms of suffering that pierce through walls tear my heart apart.”

From this statement, it becomes evident that Morin feels sorrow and pain regarding the condition humanity has reached as a result of what humans themselves produced through what is called scientific progress. Science advanced humanity at a rapid pace, yet at the same pace it also led humanity toward self-destruction and environmental destruction, thereby threatening human existence itself. Perhaps Albert Einstein expressed this situation best when he said that “humanity has fulfilled its role and will succeed in destroying itself within a relatively short time through its extraordinary scientific skills.”

This situation, of course, results from reducing scientific progress to mere technological development detached from ethics because of the separation between science and morality brought about by the dominance of the epistemology of separation. Consequently, humanity developed unprecedented technologies that, despite their positive dimension implied by the notion of “progress,” also contain enormous destructive potential. As Morin observes, whereas

people once believed “that science would lead to the liberation of humanity, today we see that it may instead lead to the enslavement of humanity and the explosion of the world.”

These realities and others led Morin to advocate the necessity of establishing an alternative epistemology to the epistemology of intuition and clarity, namely the epistemology of complexity. But what exactly is the epistemology of complexity? And did Morin truly succeed in creating a rupture in his thinking with the epistemology of intuition and clarity?

6. The Epistemology of Complexity and Its Categories

It should first be noted that the epistemology of complexity theorized by Edgar Morin remains an unfinished project, one that still requires collective efforts and the active participation of thinkers, theorists, and all sectors of human society, since it represents a responsibility shared by all. The meaning of the epistemology of complexity thus appears through the categories upon which it is founded. Morin states in this regard:

“Complexity is not a recipe I offer, but rather a call for a civilization of ideas.”

The belief that Morin is among the most important contemporary thinkers theorizing the epistemology of complexity should not be understood as meaning that he provided a complete and finalized project for this epistemology. Rather, it means that he called for the necessity of establishing the paradigm of complex thought through the efforts he exerted and the works he produced — especially his major work *Method* — in which he presented his vision of this epistemology.

Morin’s call to reconstruct epistemology and reform thought aims to rebuild our understanding of reality, our understanding of understanding itself, and our understanding of knowledge and thought in general. Such a goal can only be achieved through a mode of thinking that “connects what is fragmented and divided, respects diversity while acknowledging unity, and seeks to distinguish harmonies... a thought that does not isolate the object under study, but rather examines it through its subjective and organizational relations with its cultural, social, economic, political, and natural environment.”

This statement clearly reveals Morin’s conception of the epistemology of complexity as an epistemology that builds bridges between the elements of phenomena, situates them within their context, and transcends reductionism while also affirming the idea of self-organization shaped by the environment. At the same time, it expresses the categories of the epistemology of complexity. What, then, are these categories?

A) Dialogics (Dialogique)

Edgar Morin defines dialogics as:

“A complex unity between two logics, entities, or authorities that are complementary, competitive, and antagonistic at the same time, each feeding upon and completing the other within a higher unity. In dialogics, contradictions persist and constitute complex entities or phenomena.”

He also states:

“The dialogical principle enables us to preserve contradiction within unity. It combines two terms that are both complementary and antagonistic at the same time.”

Unlike the epistemology of intuition and clarity, belief in the dialogical principle and thinking according to it seeks to establish thought upon a foundation in which contradictory and opposing concepts coexist without eliminating one another and without resolving contradiction in the manner of the Hegelian synthesis. As one of the most important categories of the epistemology of complexity, dialogics directs reason and the human cognitive system toward a new vision of reality in all its dimensions — a vision that transcends the dualism based on separation and decomposition, typically expressed in the form of “either/or.”

According to Morin, dialogics guarantees:

“A dialogue between the rational and the empirical, between the logical and the analogical, between the rational and the mythical, between the clear and the obscure, between doubt and certainty, between intention and action, and between ends and means. Behind these dialogics lie doubt and will, imagination, emotions, and anxiety before the mystery of the universe.”

Such possibilities cannot be achieved through thinking governed by the categories of the epistemology of simplification.

B) Nonlinear Causality and Reciprocal Influence

The epistemology of complexity is also based on nonlinear causality because explaining phenomena solely according to linear causality remains insufficient and limited, as it reduces complex phenomena and events to single, determinate causes. This contradicts their complex nature, which requires acknowledging that one phenomenon may be linked to multiple causes — what Morin terms nonlinear causality.

However, according to Morin, the complexity of phenomena is not limited merely to the belief that a phenomenon is linked to multiple causes. It also requires belief in the feedback effect between the result and the cause that produced it, such that “(B) affects (C), and (C) in turn affects (B); that is, the cause affects the effect, and the effect in turn affects the cause.” This forms a circular loop, which Morin calls the *recursive loop* (*Boucle récursive*). He considers it “a fundamental concept for understanding processes of self-organization and self-production, characterized by movements whose results exert feedback upon their causes, where the results

themselves become producers of what produced them: cause $\leftrightarrow$ effect.” This concept goes beyond the straightforward understanding of causality.

Such a conception of causality enables us to grasp the dynamic movement of self-organization in phenomena — an understanding that would remain impossible if we rejected this principle. It is a conception that takes into account that products themselves become causes of what produced them. Morin explains:

“Within the recursive process, results and products are necessary for the process that generated them. The product produces what produced it.”

There is no doubt that interpreting phenomena according to this principle differs radically from interpreting them solely through linear causality. Yet this does not mean that Morin rejects linear causality altogether; rather, he speaks of a dialogic relationship between linear and nonlinear causality.

C) Hologrammatic Principle (Wholeness)

The hologrammatic principle constitutes the third principle of complex thought and is among the principles that express not only the complexity of reality but also the complexity of complex thought itself. By “hologram” or “wholeness,” Morin refers to “an image in which every point contains the totality of information related to the object. The hologrammatic principle means not only that the part exists within the whole, but also that the whole exists within the part.”

The complexity expressed by this principle lies in the belief that the part contains the whole because the part carries the information and distinctive qualities of the whole. Morin states in this regard:

“The smallest point in the hologram contains almost all the information concerning the represented whole.”

What should be emphasized here is that the part’s containment of the whole is not material or spatial containment, but rather the containment of the qualities and information that characterize the whole. The part may thus be compared to the memory of the whole. Undoubtedly, this principle is also a reflection of complex phenomena and the feedback relationships between causes and effects, since the reciprocal interaction between cause and effect creates this interpenetration between part and whole, making the part carry the defining qualities of the whole.

The hologrammatic principle appears clearly in the relationship between the individual and the species. Every human being (individual) carries within himself the qualities of humanity — or more precisely, the qualities of the human species — of which he is a part. Likewise, every cell within a human organ contains the genetic information of that organ. Morin states:

“Every living being possesses this essential property: the presence of the whole within the part. Every cell contains the total genetic heritage of the multicellular organism, and every individual carries within himself the totality of society — its knowledge, language, duties, and norms.”

7. Morin’s Influence by the Categories of the Epistemology of Intuition and Clarity

One of the issues that should not be overlooked when discussing Edgar Morin’s position toward the epistemology of simplification and his theorization of the epistemology of complexity is that Morin grew up and developed within a social environment — both the micro-society represented by the family and the larger society with its social, economic, and cultural institutions — during a period marked by the overwhelming dominance of the epistemology of simplification over the human mind. This raises the possibility that he himself was influenced by the categories of this epistemology despite his critical stance toward it.

To understand this reality, we may return to a central concept within the epistemology of complexity: the idea of the self-organization of things. Morin drew inspiration for this concept from certain theories and scientists in biology. These theories affirm that living organisms organize themselves in their growth and development according to the principle of nonlinear causality. Their origins extend back to evolutionary theory. What concerns us here is not simply the extent to which Morin was influenced by evolutionary theory, but rather the extent to which this influence allowed the categories of the epistemology of simplification to penetrate his thought, preventing him from fully transcending them despite his rebellion against this epistemological model.

This influence appears clearly in Morin’s statement:

“Human beings are the ones who created the industrial machine, even the most advanced ones. But the living machine, even the oldest among them, descends from the division of bacteria, which are at once its mother, sister, and self... The genetic programs of living beings evolved and transformed through a complex evolutionary process in which no magical intervention took place.”

In another passage, he writes:

“Since the nineteenth century, reason had to descend from heaven and undergo a terrible degradation within the world of science. With Lamarck and Darwin came the great reversal: everything had to begin from below, from the abyss, in order to rise and evolve upward.”

When we examine these texts and others like them, the reductionist spirit becomes visible in Morin’s philosophy — the very spirit against which he revolted through his epistemological position.

If the epistemology of simplification opposed physics to metaphysics because René Descartes linked existence to what lies beyond nature, then Morin, despite speaking of dialogics between

opposites, excluded one of the two opposing poles: metaphysics. Here, once again, appear the separation, decomposition, and reductionism that he himself rejected. According to Morin, self-organization is based on the dialogic relationship between linear and nonlinear causality. Yet, in his explanation of existence, he eliminated this dialogic relationship and reduced explanation solely to the physical dimension — an explanation ultimately reduced to the evolutionary model. By excluding the possibility of an external force beyond existence capable of causing existence itself, Morin also excluded linear causality.

Moreover, there appears to be a contradiction within some of Morin's positions, reflecting an internal struggle. For example, while rejecting the existence of a transcendent force that created existence on the grounds that such an explanation is metaphysical, he simultaneously acknowledged the possibility that non-natural forces may influence reality. This is evident in his belief in magic, as he states:

“Magic is a practical activity that acts upon the empirical world through symbols (for possessing the name, and controlling names, means controlling their referents), through the analogical world (piercing an image or small figurine with a needle in order to kill the person it represents), and through the invocation of spirits and demons.”

This statement reveals a contradiction between his rejection of the idea of creation on the one hand and his belief in the influence of supernatural forces on reality through magic on the other.

8. The Reductionist Interpretation of Humanization

Edgar Morin explains all existence according to the categories of the epistemology of complexity, and this judgment extends to his interpretation of the human being as a living organism. This appears clearly in his belief in emergence and in the self-organization of living beings, including humans. Such self-organization is fundamentally connected to feedback effects, which in reality constitute the practical manifestation of nonlinear causality. This is in addition to his belief in the hologrammatic principle, according to which the part contains the whole; all human qualities, for instance, are present within DNA, which represents the part.

However, when we analyze Morin's interpretation of human existence and humanization in general, we find that he ultimately reduces this existence to evolutionary explanation, and consequently reduces human existence to material existence. This demonstrates the extent to which he remained influenced by the epistemology of simplification. This reductionist vision appears in many of his positions and writings, including his statement that:

“Our body is a machine composed of thirty billion cells, controlled and produced by a genetic system formed through a long natural evolution extending over two to three billion years. The brain with which we think, the mouth with which we speak, and the hand with which we write are biological organs.”

Thus, existence is reduced to matter, and annihilation becomes merely the annihilation of matter according to Morin's vision and the evolutionary interpretation.

Although Morin finds in the idea of self-emergence and, behind it, self-organization — as categories of the epistemology of complexity — a way to explain the origin of humanity in particular and existence in general, this did not prevent him from falling into the same trap of reductionism and simplification into which evolutionary theory itself had fallen.

Indeed, Morin's inability to completely break away from simplificationist thought seems to have led him into a form of internal conflict regarding his interpretation of humanity and humanization. On the one hand, he sensed the insufficiency of the evolutionary explanation, while on the other hand he remained committed to it. Consequently, he was compelled to acknowledge the existence of "a creative force existing in the world or in nature" in order to overcome the challenges facing evolutionary interpretation. He went even further by admitting that:

"This creative force is responsible for biological evolution and that there exists some secret governing the universe, reality, the emergence of humanity, and the history of life."

The recognition of a creative force or a secret governing the world constitutes an implicit acknowledgment of the existence of God — an existence that Morin publicly rejects. This raises the question: what caused Morin to experience this internal conflict, and how is it connected to simplificationist thought?

To answer this question, we may return to dialogics as one of the principal foundations of the epistemology of complexity. Dialogics implies the possibility — or necessity — of the coexistence of opposites and contradictions. Yet Morin himself did not fully commit to this principle. In his belief in nonlinear causality, he excluded linear causality, which contradicts the dialogical principle itself. Had he believed in a dialogic relationship between linear and nonlinear causality, he would not have ended up denying the existence of God. However, the deep entrenchment of separation and reductionism within his thought led him to reduce causal explanation exclusively to nonlinear causality while excluding linear causality. This exclusion and reductionism were directly related to his position toward religion and God.

9. The Reductionist Interpretation of the Origin of Religion and the Idea of Divinity

If transcending the effectiveness of linear causality represents a form of reductionist thinking, then this belief cannot be separated from Edgar Morin's position regarding the existence of God and religion. This position ultimately goes back to evolutionary interpretation, since Morin's belief in the realism and rationality of evolutionary explanation prevented him from thinking dialogically about both linear and nonlinear causality. What further reinforced this tendency was the feedback effect: Morin's evolutionary interpretation of existence led him to move beyond the effectiveness of linear causality, and this transcendence in turn led him to deny the existence of

God. This denial was then reinforced through a reciprocal effect stemming from his conviction in the realism of the evolutionary explanation of existence.

For this reason, it is unsurprising that Morin believed religions, regardless of their doctrines, emerged within historical contexts. He states:

“All religions are placed within their historical context and are viewed within the framework of the plurality of religions, some of which claim to possess absolute truths.”

Since historical contexts are multiple and diverse, this resulted, in his view, in the multiplicity of religions, thereby stripping them of any claim to absoluteness.

Regardless of how this idea relates to his position on the existence of God, it developed through Morin’s examination of certain positive or man-made religions, which he interpreted as products of historical contexts. However, his inability to completely transcend reductionist thinking led him to generalize this judgment to all religions, including Islam. Undoubtedly, this position allowed Morin to remove sacredness from religion and to affirm that religion should not exercise authority over public affairs. Yet, paradoxically, in his interpretation of the relationship between religion and politics, he adhered to the very principle of separation and decomposition that he strongly criticized. By considering religion a private matter that the state should respect according to the principle of secularism — which requires the separation of religion and state — Morin states, recalling his atheist stance:

“I was unable to believe in the revealed religions or in the existence of God, but what is certain is that the principle according to which religion is a private matter, and the state derives its legitimacy from institutions representing democratically elected political authority, is a correct principle.”

This principle of secularism, which itself was merely an expression of the influence of the paradigm of intuition and clarity, contradicts the logic of dialogics as one of the foundations of the epistemology of complexity, since dialogics fundamentally rejects separation and decomposition.

Because religions are interpreted historically in Morin’s thought, he finds humanity’s absolute submission to gods strange, and even regards gods as imaginary beings produced by human imagination. In this position, he separates the metaphysical and unseen from the physical and empirical. He states:

“I find belief in gods as products of the human mind — taking the form of transcendent and supernatural powers that command us while we obey them — to be a unique phenomenon... We are the ones who produce these entities, which cannot exist without us, and when humanity disappears, these gods too will disappear.”

There is little doubt that the inadequacy of this interpretation, which reflects Morin's confusion in explaining existence and defining his position toward religion and God, becomes evident in the contradiction already mentioned: on the one hand, he denies the existence of God, yet on the other hand he resorts to belief in supernatural forces directing and controlling the mechanism of evolution, in addition to his belief in magic as a practice fundamentally based on the existence of supernatural powers.

Thus, it may be argued that Morin's failure to fully commit to the principle of dialogics between opposites and contradictions — which would logically require belief in a dialogical relationship between linear and nonlinear causality — together with his focus on self-organization and emergence as explanations of existence and humanity, ideas inspired in part by evolutionary thought, ultimately led him to deny both the existence of God and the sacredness of religion. The very principle of separation and decomposition that he criticized so intensely was the principle that influenced him and prevented him from reaching a coherent vision truly consistent with the categories of the epistemology of complexity.

10. Conclusion

On this basis, one of the main conclusions that can be drawn from our study is that the epistemology of intuition and clarity exercised an immense dominance over the human cognitive system. This dominance was reflected in social reality across its diverse dimensions, demonstrating that human reality since the end of the seventeenth century has largely been the product of this dominant paradigm. It formed the foundation upon which modern and contemporary science was established. However, at the same time, it generated real dangers and threats to humanity.

For nearly half a century, Edgar Morin has advocated the establishment of an alternative epistemology — the epistemology of complexity — in order to limit the accumulations produced by the epistemology of intuition and clarity. Yet the dominance of the latter over the cognitive and intellectual system prevented Morin himself from achieving a genuine rupture with it. This appears clearly in his interpretation of several issues, where his explanations remained consistent with the categories of the epistemology of simplification.

Despite his rejection and criticism of reductionism, Morin's conception of the human being remained grounded in an evolutionary biological vision. He believed that humanity emerged from the evolutionary process of living nature, which led him to reduce the spiritual dimension of human existence to biological material existence. This became one of the most important factors shaping and refining his atheist worldview, in addition to his implicit exclusion of linear causality from his interpretation of existence in general. Perhaps if he had interpreted existence through an acknowledgment of the effectiveness of linear causality in dialogical relation with nonlinear causality, he would not have ended up denying religion and the existence of God.

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