

NATAKA Research Institute

Wone Press

Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series, No. 22 (2026)

What Is This Reality?

An Existential Interrogation of Human Reality

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*A Critical Comparative Survey of Human Explanations of Existence Across Philosophical, Religious,
Scientific, and Indigenous Traditions*

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this paper to my longtime friend, Louisa Gabriel.

Louisa possesses a remarkable command of language, vocabulary, and intellectual inquiry, qualities she carries with a grace that reflects her deep connection to a family tradition shaped by Irish literary and monastic culture. Over many years of friendship, she has remained one of those rare people who never entirely disappear from one's life. Even after long silences — sometimes not in weeks or months, but in years — she would still pick up the phone and call again, as though no time had passed at all.

A few weeks before the idea for this paper emerged, we were speaking on the phone when she said something that immediately lodged itself in my mind. Reflecting on the brevity, absurdity, suffering, beauty, and mystery of human existence, she remarked:

"When I die, I want my gravestone to read: *'What the fuck was that?'*"

She was speaking of life itself — its joys and its cruelties, its wonder and its bewilderment, its capacity to leave us astonished that we were ever here at all. I loved the honesty of that sentence. Beneath its humour was a profoundly philosophical question. It captured, in a single line, the bewilderment that has animated philosophers, theologians, mystics, scientists, poets, and ordinary human beings across cultures and centuries.

This paper is, in many ways, an extended exploration of that question.

For the friendship, laughter, conversations, and for inadvertently providing the spark that became this inquiry, I dedicate this work to Louisa Gabriel.

Abstract

This paper surveys eighteen hypotheses through which human beings have answered the most fundamental question available to consciousness: what is this reality, and what or who are we within it? Drawing on religious, philosophical, scientific, and Indigenous traditions, the hypotheses are organised into four clusters — Creator, Condition, Epistemological, and Evolutionary/Existential — and examined across four axes: epistemological status, ethical entailment, account of suffering, and cosmological scope. Six dialectical confrontations expose tensions suppressed by sequential survey; a synthetic comparative table gathers the results. Throughout, the survey is read through the Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm, an original theoretical lens developed by the author, which holds that cosmologies function as orientation structures for consciousness confronting existential uncertainty, and that their systematic destruction constitutes one of the gravest harms one world can inflict upon another. The paper argues that the deepest philosophical problem is not adjudicating between competing accounts but investigating the conditions under which any such account becomes possible — or ceases to sustain life and meaning.

Keywords: existential philosophy, cosmology, Psycho-Cosmocide, Indigenous philosophy, epistemology, animism, comparative religion, process philosophy

Preface

The Primal Question

Before science, theology, philosophy had a name, there was a question. It emerged not as an intellectual exercise but as a profound encounter with existence itself: What is this? What is this thing called life? What does it mean to exist? Why is there something, rather than nothing?, Who are we? Where do we come from? Why are we here? Is there a purpose to our existence? What is the ultimate meaning, if any, of birth, suffering, life, and death? And why does anything exist at all rather than nothing? This paper does not claim to provide definitive answers. Rather, it surveys the extraordinary range of answers humanity has proposed—from the sublime to the terrifying, from the rigorously reasoned to the deeply intuitive—and subjects them to critical philosophical examination. The hypotheses gathered here are not merely academic positions. They are survival strategies, meaning-making machines, and sometimes cries in the dark. They span monotheism and animism, materialism and idealism, simulation theory and process cosmology, nihilism and mysticism. Taken together, they constitute the most consequential conversation humanity has ever had with itself.

The question motivating this inquiry can be expressed formally as “What is this reality?” Yet beneath the formal phrasing lies a more immediate and visceral human reaction: “*What the fuck is this?*” The latter preserves the shock, the disorientation, the sheer improbability of finding oneself conscious and bewildered in a cosmos one did not choose. Every tradition surveyed below is, in essence, an attempt to answer exactly that question with whatever instruments of understanding its historical and cultural moment placed in its hands.

The paper proceeds in four main survey sections organised by hypothesis cluster (Sections I–IV), followed by a fifth section of cross-comparative dialectical analysis (Section V), a synthetic comparative table (Section VI), concluding sections on the conditions that produce existential hypotheses in the first place (Sections VII–IX), a closing synthesis read through the Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm (Section X), and a brief Coda introducing the companion concept of Wonesis. A note on scope: the hypotheses surveyed here emerge predominantly from literate, text-transmitting philosophical and theological traditions. Thousands of Indigenous, oral, and cosmobian societies — that is, societies whose way of being in the world is grounded in cosmological relationships rather than in formal doctrines or systems of explicit belief — have historically related to existence through modes that do not translate neatly into the categories of “religion”, “philosophy”, or “science.” This paper attempts to include those voices — particularly in Sections 2.4 and 2.7 — while acknowledging that any survey conducted in the English academic idiom will inevitably distort what it attempts to include. This inquiry proceeds primarily through categories available in English and within traditions that formulate existence as a question requiring explanation. Whether these categories are universal remains itself an open philosophical question — one that receives fuller treatment in Section VIII. The mystery is not only whether our answers are correct. It is also whether our questions are complete.

A Note on the Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm

Readers encountering this framework for the first time should be clear about what it is and what it is not. The Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm is not offered here as a rival cosmology competing with the eighteen hypotheses surveyed in Sections I–IV. It does not claim to answer the question “what is this reality?” in any substantive sense. It functions instead as a lens for examining how cosmological systems orient consciousness within existence, and for investigating what occurs when those systems are disrupted, displaced, or deliberately destroyed. Where the eighteen hypotheses are direct answers to the primal question, the Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm is an inquiry into how answers are formed and into the conditions under which any answer becomes possible, inhabitable, or ceases to be either. The distinction matters: this paper is primarily a work of comparative existential philosophy, and the Paradigm serves that inquiry as an organising lens — not as its destination. Accordingly, rather than being confined to a single section, the Paradigm’s interpretive perspective appears as a short reflective subsection after each of the four survey sections and the cross-comparative analysis. These subsections are not interruptions of the philosophical argument; they are its running commentary, tracking what the Paradigm illuminates as the survey proceeds.

A Note on Wonesis

Wonesis is a companion concept to the Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm, developed in the author’s wider research programme. Where Psycho-Cosmocide names the systematic destruction of cosmological orientation systems — the relational, linguistic, ecological, and symbolic structures through which a people locate themselves within existence — Wonesis names what must remain, or be restored, if any world is to remain inhabitable. The term draws on the Papuan concept of *wone* (life-world, dwelling, the ground of being within which consciousness is sustained), and refers to the minimal preconditions — land, food, water, memory, kinship, language, and ancestral relationship — without which no cosmology can be generated, inhabited, or transmitted. Wonesis is not itself a hypothesis about what reality is. It is a claim about what must be preserved so that the question of reality can continue to be asked. Extended treatment appears in Section X and the Coda; further development is found in the companion Wonesis Framework Paper (NATAKA Research Institute Working Paper Series).

Taxonomy of Hypotheses

I. Creator Hypotheses — Accounts in which humanity was deliberately created by an intelligence or intelligences external to us:

- 1.1 The Singular God
- 1.2 The Pantheon
- 1.3 The Divine Feminine 1.4 Extraterrestrial Engineers
- 1.5 The Simulation Argument
- 1.6 The Cosmic Story or Dream.

II. Condition Hypotheses — Accounts that address not our origin but our standing within the larger order of things:

- 2.1 Farm Animals
- 2.2 Mere Life Forms
- 2.3 Cosmic Insignificance
- 2.4 Earth's Children
- 2.5 Lost Voyagers and Cosmic Orphans
- 2.6 Inside a Living Cosmos
- 2.7 Animist Ontology.

III. The Epistemological Hypothesis — The meta-claim that we do not know, cannot know, and may never know what we truly are.

IV. Evolutionary and Existential Hypotheses — Forward-looking accounts oriented toward becoming, consciousness, and cosmic purpose:

- 4.1 The Self-Creating Species
- 4.2 Hard Materialism
- 4.3 Consciousness as Fundamental
- 4.4 Process Cosmology

Methodological Note

The categories used in this survey are heuristic rather than exhaustive. They are intended to organise recurring existential hypotheses found across religious, philosophical, scientific, and Indigenous traditions, and a four-cluster taxonomy — Creator, Condition, Epistemological, and Evolutionary/Existential — is itself a structural choice, not a metaphysical discovery. Many traditions overlap multiple categories simultaneously, and the boundaries between the hypotheses are porous. The selection of eighteen representative hypotheses does not imply that no others exist; it reflects the limits of a single survey conducted within the available literature of text-transmitting traditions. Where Indigenous and oral traditions are included, the paper acknowledges that the act of translating cosmological knowledge into academic prose inevitably involves some distortion. These distortions are not neutral, and their presence here should be read as a methodological limitation rather than an interpretive conclusion. A further limitation bears naming directly: this survey's access to Indigenous and cosmopolitan cosmologies is largely mediated through academic scholarship — through Kimmerer, Harvey, Viveiros de Castro, and others working within Western institutional frameworks. This means the comparative claims made here rest on scholarly translations of these traditions, not on direct engagement with them on their own terms. That mediation places a constraint on the weight of the conclusions: what this survey can demonstrate is the philosophical significance of these cosmologies as rendered within the academic idiom, not their full depth as lived and transmitted systems of knowledge. This constraint limits the scope of the conclusions but does not undermine them: the philosophical arguments made here stand or fall on their own logical and comparative merits, and do not depend on claims to ethnographic authority over the traditions they engage.

A word is owed on the number eighteen. The eighteen hypotheses were not selected by applying a formal protocol and arriving at a count. They emerged from sustained comparative reading across traditions, tested against the question: which ways of understanding existence have proved historically durable, geographically widespread, and philosophically generative? The answer converged on eighteen recurring families of response — not eighteen isolated positions, but eighteen distinct ways in which consciousness has organised its relationship to the fact of its own existence. The purpose is not exhaustiveness but representative coverage of the major ways of understanding existence available to human beings across recorded and oral traditions.

The taxonomy could legitimately have been organised differently. Buddhism might have appeared as its own category rather than distributed across several hypotheses. Phenomenology might have been separated from existentialism. Panpsychism might have been given independent standing rather than grouped within the idealist and process families. Each of these choices would have produced a defensible but different survey. The present taxonomy groups hypotheses by the kind of relationship to existence they propose, rather than by tradition, school, or cultural origin — asking not “who said this?” but “what kind of relationship to existence does this propose?” That organising principle, rather than the count of eighteen, is the methodological commitment the survey rests on.

Section I: Creator Hypotheses

The oldest and most widespread class of answers to the primal question involves a creator: an intelligence, or set of intelligences, that created us deliberately. Whether that creator is personal or impersonal, singular or plural, loving or indifferent, shapes everything that follows — ethics, eschatology, politics, and the structure of daily meaning. What unites all creator hypotheses is the claim that our existence is not accidental: it was intended. The philosophical burden this imposes is severe. If we were intended, what was the intention — and by whom, and for what purpose?

1.1 *The Singular God: Made in the Image of the Divine*

The Abrahamic traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — stake their entire architecture on one claim: a single omnipotent, omniscient, and personal God created the cosmos and fashioned humanity in the divine image (Genesis 1:27; Quran 15:29; cf. the concept of *tzelem Elohim* in rabbinic literature). The implications are profound. If we bear the *imago Dei*, then human dignity is not conferred by states or social contracts but is ontologically grounded in the structure of reality itself.

“Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it reposes in Thee”.

Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* (orig. c. 400 CE; trans. Henry Chadwick, 1991).

Augustine's restlessness is not a defect but a homing signal that the creature feels the pull of the Creator because the creature was made for union with the Creator. Thomas Aquinas later systematised this: the intellect's infinite appetite for truth and the will's infinite appetite for goodness can only be satisfied by an infinite object. Aquinas's Five Ways, drawn from Aristotelian causality, attempt to demonstrate that this God is rationally required as the uncaused cause of a contingent universe (*Summa Theologica*, I, Q.2).

Within the Islamic tradition, the debate was even more technically demanding. Al-Ghazali's *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (1095 CE) attacked the Neoplatonic cosmology that had infiltrated Islamic thought, arguing that the philosophers' eternal universe was incompatible with a personal, willing creator. Ibn Rushd (Averroes) replied with the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, defending philosophical rationalism — and in so doing produced one of the most sophisticated exchanges in the history of the creator hypothesis on any continent. Yet the hypothesis faces devastating critics. David Hume, in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779), dismantled the argument from design: a flawed, suffering world is more consistent with an incompetent or cruel creator than a perfect one. The problem of evil — formulated by J.L. Mackie and met by Alvin Plantinga's free will defence — remains the deepest wound in classical theism. And Friedrich Nietzsche delivered the most culturally consequential critique: the *death of God* is not a metaphysical event but a cultural one. Western civilisation killed God by making knowledge more important than faith, and now must face the consequence — the collapse of all values once grounded in divinity (Nietzsche 1882).

1.2 The Pantheon: Many Gods, Many Images

For most of recorded history, most human beings believed in a plurality of gods. Greek, Norse, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Hindu, Yoruba traditions all describe a cosmos populated by divine personalities whose conflicts, loves, and ambitions directly shape human fate. Hesiod's Theogony and the Mesopotamian Enuma Elish both present humanity as emerging from divine contests or as servant-creatures fashioned to relieve the gods of labour. The philosophical richness of polytheism is underappreciated. It offers a cosmology in which power is distributed, moral authority is contested, and the universe is populated by genuinely different wills. William James argued in *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909) that polytheism is philosophically more honest than monotheism: it does not require the tortured gymnastics of explaining evil within an omnipotent goodness, because power is never total. The Rigveda's thirty-three devas (Jamison and Brereton 2014) are not merely supernatural agents but cosmic principles — Indra is strength, Varuna is cosmic order, Agni is the transformative fire of consciousness.

Within the Yoruba tradition, the Orisha represent another model entirely. Each Orisha is both a deity and a cosmic principle — Ogun embodies iron, work, and warfare; Yemoja is the deep waters and maternity; Ori is the personal divine essence seated within each individual, the most intimate of all divine relationships. The Akan concept of Nyame similarly refuses the sharp binary between transcendent creator and immanent world: Nyame pervades all things as Onyankopon, the One who fills everything, while Odomankoma is the infinite creator-source. These African cosmologies demonstrate that the philosophical options within polytheism were far richer than the Greek case alone reveals.

1.3 The Divine Feminine: Made in the Image of the Goddess

The hypothesis that the primary creative power of the cosmos is feminine is not a variant of polytheism but a challenge to its deepest assumption. Polytheism distributes divine agency across many persons; the divine feminine hypothesis makes a prior claim — that the generative ground of existence is itself feminine in nature, and that the masculine principle, where it appears, depends upon and derives from it. This is an ontological claim, not merely a mythological preference.

In the Shakta traditions of Hinduism, the goddess Shakti is not one deity among many but the dynamic power without which all other divine principles remain inert. The formulation is precise: Shiva without Shakti is a corpse. The masculine principle represents pure consciousness, undifferentiated and still; the feminine principle is the energy through which consciousness becomes a world. Creation is not an act performed by a god upon passive matter — it is the goddess herself moving, vibrating, and taking form. The *Devi Mahatmya* (c. 5th–6th century CE), one of the central texts of the Shakta tradition, describes the Great Goddess as both the source of all existence and its ultimate dissolution: she creates, sustains, and withdraws the cosmos as expressions of a single inexhaustible power.

This ontological primacy of the feminine is not confined to the Indian subcontinent. In ancient Mesopotamia, Inanna — later identified with the Akkadian Ishtar — was among the most powerful

figures in the divine order: goddess of love, war, and the fullness of life, whose descent into and return from the underworld enacts the cosmic rhythm of death and renewal (Wolkstein and Kramer 1983). The Sumerian figure of Nammu predates all others in some traditions as the primordial sea from which the gods themselves were born — a creatrix without a consort. The reduction of these figures to supporting roles in later patriarchal reworkings of the same mythological material was a theological and political revision, not a metaphysical discovery.

Archaeological evidence from Neolithic Europe — most extensively interpreted by Marija Gimbutas in *The Language of the Goddess* (1989) and *The Civilization of the Goddess* (1991) — suggests that pre-Bronze Age agricultural societies across a wide swath of southeastern Europe organised their symbolic and religious life around a female creative principle, with goddess figurines appearing in burial sites, shrines, and domestic spaces across millennia. Gimbutas's interpretation remains contested among archaeologists, but the evidence that goddess-centred cosmologies preceded and persisted alongside later masculine-dominant pantheons is not. The historical suppression of these traditions was not inevitable; it was contingent.

The Celtic traditions of Ireland and Britain preserve a further variant. Figures such as the Morrígan, Brigid, and Danu are not peripheral to the cosmic order but constitutive of it — sovereignty goddesses whose favour legitimates kingship, whose creative power generates the land itself. In many Indigenous traditions worldwide, the Earth is grammatically and cosmologically feminine — not as metaphor but as a description of what actually is. The Andean Pachamama, the Lakota Unci Maka (Grandmother Earth), and the Māori Papatūānuku all express the same intuition: that the ground of being from which life emerges and to which it returns is a living, feminine presence, not an inert substrate.

What distinguishes this hypothesis philosophically from Section 1.1 and 1.2 is its relationship to embodiment. The singular God of the Abrahamic traditions is typically conceived as transcendent — beyond matter, beyond gender, beyond the biological. The Pantheon in most traditions is personalised but not grounded in the generative body. The divine feminine hypothesis, by contrast, locates creative power in something structurally analogous to biological generation: the cosmos is not made from outside by a craftsman but born from within by a mother. Creation is gestation, not fabrication. This has direct consequences for how existence is understood: to be created in the image of a goddess is to be born, not manufactured — and what is born belongs, in some sense, to the one who bore it.

The philosophical stake of this hypothesis, then, is not merely theological diversity. It concerns the fundamental logic of origin: whether the creative ground of reality is best understood as transcendent will, distributed agency, or immanent generativity. The divine feminine hypothesis answers unambiguously: it is the last of these, and the other two are downstream from it.

1.4 Extraterrestrial Engineers: The Cosmic Laboratory Hypothesis

A secular variant of the creator hypothesis proposes that humanity was created, engineered, or seeded by extraterrestrial intelligences. The hypothesis ranges from the speculative (Zecharia Sitchin's readings of Sumerian texts as accounts of the Anunnaki engineering *Homo sapiens*) to the

scientifically plausible (Francis Crick and Leslie Orgel's directed panspermia hypothesis, 1973, which proposes that life on Earth was seeded deliberately from elsewhere in the galaxy). Carl Sagan, while deeply sceptical of ancient astronaut mythology, acknowledged that the probability of intelligent civilisations far older than our own is considerable given the age of the universe. If civilisations routinely arise and survive for millions of years, some may have had the capacity and motivation to seed or engineer life on habitable planets. Arthur C. Clarke's third law — "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" — collapses the distinction between the supernatural creator and the technological one.

The hypothesis has a genuine philosophical advantage which keeps the creator question within the natural order and treats sacred experience as potentially misremembered encounters with non-human intelligence. It transforms theology into exobiology. But it merely displaces the problem — who created the extraterrestrial engineers? The regress that haunts theism haunts this position equally. Moreover, if the engineers are subject to the same physical laws as ourselves, they face the same hard problem of consciousness, the same mortality, the same existential bewilderment. The hypothesis relocates the creator but does not resolve the question.

1.5 The Simulation Argument: Characters in Cosmic Code

Nick Bostrom's 2003 simulation argument is arguably the most influential new creation hypothesis of the twenty-first century. The argument is deceptively simple: if civilisations routinely develop the computational capacity to run detailed simulations of their ancestors, and if they choose to do so, then simulated minds will vastly outnumber biological minds. Therefore, probabilistically, we are almost certainly simulated.

"If there is a substantial chance that our civilization will ever get to the posthuman stage and run many ancestor-simulations, then how come you are not living in such a simulation?"

Nick Bostrom, *Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?* (2003)

René Descartes anticipated the structure of the argument in his Evil Demon hypothesis (Descartes 1641/1996): what if an omnipotent deceiver has constructed all our perceptions? Descartes escaped through the cogito; Bostrom does not attempt an escape. The philosophical difference is significant: Descartes used the sceptical scenario to ground certainty; Bostrom uses it to make a probabilistic claim about where we are most likely to exist.

Critics note that the argument depends on contested assumptions about consciousness — specifically, that silicon computation can produce genuine experience. If consciousness is substrate-dependent in ways that require biological matter, the simulation argument collapses. But a deeper problem persists regardless of that debate: if we are simulated, the simulators are themselves embedded in a physical universe governed by laws that make consciousness equally puzzling. The hard problem of consciousness does not disappear within the simulation hypothesis — it simply relocates upstream, to the simulator's reality. The creator question is not solved; it is deferred.

1.6 The Cosmic Story: Characters in a Dream

A more poetic variant of the creator hypothesis imagines reality as a story, dream, or script authored by entities beyond ordinary comprehension. Hindu cosmology in certain schools holds that Brahma dreams the universe into existence, and that individual souls are dream-characters of that cosmic dreamer. The Gnostic tradition holds that the material world is a fiction authored by the Demiurge — a lesser, imperfect craftsman — and that our task is to remember that we are characters who contain a spark of the true, transcendent author. The most philosophically precise formulation of this hypothesis in world literature appears not in Western sources but in the Zhuangzi (4th century BCE). In Chapter 2, Zhuangzi dreams he is a butterfly fluttering freely, then wakes as a man — and wonders: is he a man who dreamed of being a butterfly, or a butterfly now dreaming of being a man? The question is not rhetorical but a genuine one about the nature of reality. Zhuangzi does not resolve it, because resolution would require a fixed perspective external to all dreaming — and he doubts that any such perspective exists. The self is the dream; the dreamer cannot step outside the dream to verify its nature.

Jorge Luis Borges, whose fiction is saturated with this cosmological intuition, wrote: *"Perhaps world history is the history of a few metaphors"* (Borges 1964, 8). The philosopher Alan Watts developed this into a consistent worldview: the universe is the divine playing hide-and-seek with itself — consciousness pretending to be separate individuals in order to experience the surprise of reunion. What gives this hypothesis its philosophical weight is that it takes the hard problem of consciousness seriously: rather than treating subjective experience as an anomaly to be explained away, it treats experience as the primary reality within which everything else appears.

Psycho-Cosmocide Perspective on Section I: Creator Hypotheses

The following reflections do not constitute an eighteenth hypothesis. They represent a secondary interpretive reading of the preceding material through the Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm.

The Creator Hypotheses share a common pattern that only becomes visible when they are read together: each one answers the question *"What is this?"* by positing an intelligence that made it. Whether that intelligence is a personal God, a pantheon, a divine feminine creative power, a technological civilisation, a simulation operator, or a dreaming consciousness, the move is identical — the inexplicable is rendered explicable by reference to a will that intended it. The question worth pressing is why consciousness reaches for this particular structure so consistently, across such different traditions and centuries. One answer — functional rather than philosophical — is this: a creator-figure stabilises the otherwise destabilising fact of contingency. To find oneself conscious and bewildered in a cosmos one did not choose is already an uncomfortable position. The creator hypothesis converts that discomfort into a situation with a structure — there was a maker, a purpose, a before. What looks like theology is also, at a deeper level, a meaning-making structure: a way of making existence seem intelligible. This does not make creator hypotheses false. It explains why they are cognitively necessary even when they are metaphysically unverifiable. None of these six creator models is adjudicated here. What they share is the pressure they all respond to: existence without authorship is

harder to inhabit than existence with one. Once this is seen, a further question opens that Section I cannot itself answer — not “which creator is real?” but “what happens when the orientation that the creator-figure sustains is destroyed?” The deliberate dismantling of a people’s cosmological framework removes not merely a set of beliefs but the foundations through which their world remained meaningful. That destruction — Psycho-Cosmocide in its direct form — is the subject the survey builds toward. Section I ends, then, not with a verdict on creation, but with a recognition that every creator hypothesis is simultaneously a theory of reality and a strategy for surviving it. The two cannot be cleanly separated, and that entanglement is philosophically important.

Section II: Condition Hypotheses

Even granting some account of how we came to be, a further question presses: what is our condition within the larger order? Are we privileged or enslaved, central or peripheral, loved or merely tolerated? The condition hypotheses address not our origin but our standing. They are often the most viscerally uncomfortable of the existential hypotheses because they must be lived — not merely entertained — as possibilities.

2.1 Farm Animals: The Darkest Reading

The most disturbing condition hypothesis holds that we exist as cultivated livestock for higher beings — that our emotions, labour, or psychic energy constitute a resource harvested by entities who regard us as we regard cattle. In Gnostic thought, the archons — lower divine beings who administer the material world — are described in texts such as the Apocryphon of John as deliberately keeping souls in ignorance to extract their energy. We are not orphans; we are product.

The hypothesis has rigorous secular formulations. Herbert Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse 1964) argues that consumer capitalism keeps human beings in a state of false consciousness, their deeper needs deliberately suppressed in order to extract productive and consumptive labour. Giorgio Agamben’s concept of bare life — drawn from the Roman legal category of *homo sacer*, the person who can be killed but not sacrificed — names the reduction of persons to biological material subject to sovereign management (Agamben 1995). The farm is economic and political rather than metaphysical, but the structure is identical: a system designed to benefit those who run it at the cost of those who live within it.

This hypothesis has particular resonance for colonised peoples, for whom the farm is not a metaphor but a description. The transatlantic slave trade, plantation economies, and colonial extraction systems reduced entire populations to biological resources — labour-generating organisms managed for yield. Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon 1961) documents what happens to human psychology when this condition is imposed and then internalised. The darkest element of the farm hypothesis is not that higher beings exploit lower ones, but that lower beings can be made to cooperate in their own cultivation.

2.2 Mere Life Forms: Earth's Unremarkable Output

A less lurid but equally humbling position holds that we are simply one product among millions that a living, dynamic planet has generated over four billion years. Evolution by natural selection, as Darwin revealed in *On the Origin of Species* (1859), requires no designer and confers no privilege. Humans are a late-arriving, cognitively unusual mammal — remarkable by our own standards, but occupying no special place in the eyes of a cosmos that has no eyes.

“Man is descended from a hairy, tailed quadruped, probably arboreal in its habits.”

Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (1871)

Richard Dawkins extended this into a thoroughgoing naturalism: we are “*survival machines — robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes*” (Dawkins 1976, p. 2). Our deepest loyalties, loves, and moral intuitions are, at the causal level, gene-preservation strategies. This is not nihilism, Dawkins insists — but it does require us to construct meaning in the full knowledge that the universe did not provide it. What this hypothesis handles well — better than any competitor — is the sheer arbitrariness of biological form. We could have been otherwise. We are one experiment among millions, most of which ended in extinction. What it handles poorly is precisely what the hypothesis must treat as epiphenomenal: the fact that one of these biological forms began asking why it existed, and could not stop.

2.3 Cosmic Insignificance: The Ant in the Hurricane

The observable universe spans approximately 93 billion light-years and contains an estimated two trillion galaxies. Against this scale, the entirety of human history — every empire, every war, every work of art, every declaration of love — takes place on a thin film of rock orbiting an unremarkable star in the outer arm of a middling galaxy. Blaise Pascal felt this vertigo acutely:

“The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me.”

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (1670)

Albert Camus identified the confrontation between human beings' hunger for meaning and the universe's silence as the Absurd, and made its navigation the central task of his philosophy (Camus 1942). For Camus, the response to insignificance is not denial but defiance: we must imagine Sisyphus happy. H.P. Lovecraft built an entire aesthetic on what he called “cosmic indifferentism”: the universe is not hostile to human beings — which would at least grant us the dignity of being noticed — it is simply indifferent.

Yet the philosopher Thomas Nagel complicates the picture. In *Mortal Questions* (1979) and *The View from Nowhere* (1986), Nagel argues that the feeling of absurdity arises precisely from our capacity to step back from our own lives and view them *sub specie aeternitatis*. This capacity is itself extraordinary; no other known creature in the universe has it. Moreover, the assumption that spatial

scale determines ontological significance is precisely that — an assumption. A bacterium is spatially smaller than a human; this does not make it less real. Why should the size of a galaxy demote the significance of a question? The insignificance hypothesis smuggles in a metric of importance — size, duration — that no one has defended on its own terms.

2.4 Earth's Children: Indigenous Cosmologies of Belonging

Against the Western tendency to frame humanity as either above nature (as its ruler) or below it (as its victim), many Indigenous cosmologies offer a third position: *within*. We are not owners of the Earth, not products of the Earth, but children of the Earth — born from her body, sustained by her generosity, and eventually reclaimed by her. This is not metaphor but a claim about what is ontologically the case.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, botanist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, articulates this in *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013): the Potawatomi language is animate — plants, animals, rivers, and stones are grammatical persons, not objects. The metaphysics embedded in a language shape what its speakers can think. An animate world is a world of relationships and obligations, not a world of resources. Vine Deloria Jr., in *God Is Red* (1973), made the point with direct force: Indigenous American cosmologies are spatially grounded — they are about particular places, particular relationships, particular responsibilities — in contrast to the temporally grounded cosmologies of Christianity, which orient humanity toward a future redemption and therefore treat the present earth as provisional.

The Andean concept of Pachamama — Earth as a living relational entity to whom reciprocity is owed — and the Māori concept of whakapapa — genealogical connection that extends not merely through human ancestors but through mountains, rivers, stars, and primordial forces — both express what Kimmerer calls “the grammar of animacy”: the world is a community of subjects, not a collection of objects. The philosophical stakes here are high. If this ontology is correct, then the entire tradition of Western environmental ethics — which debates how much “value” to assign to non-human entities — has already made a fatal error in treating value as something that humans assign rather than something that relationships sustain. One asks not what the river is worth, but what the river is owed.

The systematic exclusion of these cosmologies from academic philosophy — which has treated them as mythology, folklore, or “pre-philosophical” thought — is itself a philosophical event, not a neutral taxonomic decision. It narrows the range of available concepts precisely at the moment when the broadest possible range is most needed. (For further reflection on the epistemic consequences of this exclusion, see Section VIII.)

2.5 Lost Voyagers and Cosmic Orphans

Martin Heidegger's concept of *Geworfenheit* — *thrownness* — captures the phenomenological reality of human existence with brutal precision: we find ourselves already here, in a situation we did not

choose, without instructions. We are thrown into existence as one might be thrown into a foreign country without a map, a language, or a return ticket (Heidegger 1927).

The Gnostic tradition develops this into a mythology: the divine spark within each human being has forgotten its origin. We are not at home in the material world because the material world is not our home — we are exiles from a higher pleroma. Valentinus described the human condition as hylic, psychic, or pneumatic (Layton 1987) — material, soulish, or spiritual — with only the pneumatic capable of awakening to their true origin and beginning the return.

The orphan variant is philosophically accurate that not merely lost but abandoned. Nietzsche's declaration that God is dead is not triumphant but terrified — the madman who delivers this news in *The Gay Science* (1882) runs through the marketplace. The orphan stands in an inheritance without a testator, holding values whose foundation has dissolved. This is the peculiar predicament of modernity; to possess moral intuitions — about dignity, suffering, justice — whose metaphysical grounding has been removed. *We carry the furniture of a house that no longer exists.*

2.6 Inside a Living Cosmos: The Macro-Organism Hypothesis

James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis (1979) proposed that Earth's biosphere, atmosphere, and geological systems function as a single self-regulating organism. Initially treated as mysticism and now partially vindicated as Earth System Science, the hypothesis points toward a larger possibility that if planets can be organisms, what prevents the universe from being one? The ancient Greek concept of the World-Soul (*anima mundi*), developed by Plato in the *Timaeus* and later by Plotinus, describes the cosmos as a living, ensouled being of which individual souls are fragments.

If this is so, we are not in the universe — we are of it, as neurons are of a brain. Our individual consciousness may be to cosmic consciousness what a single note is to a symphony: genuinely itself, genuinely part of a larger whole, neither reducible to the whole nor separable from it. Isabelle Stengers, in *Thinking with Whitehead* (2011), extends this ecological perspective into a political and philosophical one: if the cosmos is characterised by creativity and sensitivity, then our destruction of the biosphere is not merely a practical problem but a philosophical one — a violation of the very relational tissue through which reality sustains itself.

2.7 The Populated Cosmos: Animist Ontology

The anthropologist Graham Harvey defines animism not as the primitive belief that objects have souls but as the recognition that the world is a community of persons — only some of whom are human (Harvey 2005). This is not a metaphor but a claim about reality itself: rivers, forests, animals, and ancestors are genuine subjects with their own perspectives, interests, and standing. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's work on Amerindian perspectivism radicalises this further. In *Cannibal Metaphysics* (Viveiros de Castro 2009), he argues that Amazonian peoples operate within a "*multinaturalism*" that inverts Western "*multiculturalism*": where Western thought posits one nature and many cultures,

Amerindian thought posits one culture — a shared perspective called humanity — and many natures. Animals and spirits see themselves as human; they see us as prey, or as spirits, or as something else entirely. Reality is not a fixed stage upon which different cultures perform different interpretations; it is itself perspectival all the way down. There is no view from nowhere.

Bruno Latour, in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), argued that the modernist separation of nature and culture, subjects and objects, is a philosophical fiction that has produced both environmental catastrophe and persistent intellectual incoherence. The world has never actually sorted itself into the categories that modernity imposed upon it. The animist perception of a populated, relational cosmos may be less a primitive error and more an accurate report of what the world is actually like before the categories are imposed.

Psycho-Cosmocide Perspective on Section II: Condition Hypotheses

Where Section I asked who made us, Section II asks something more immediately uncomfortable: *what or who are we within the order that contains us?* The seven condition hypotheses do not compete on the same axis. Some are empirical (evolutionary naturalism), some are political (the farm model), some are phenomenological (thrownness), some are relational (Indigenous cosmologies of belonging), and some are scalar (cosmic insignificance). They are not answering the same question so much as naming different dimensions of the same underlying situation: consciousness trying to understand its place within a cosmos it did not create.

The Indigenous relational cosmologies in Sections 2.4 and 2.7 are not simply two more options among seven. They represent a fundamentally different relationship to the condition question. Where most Western hierarchical frameworks ask, “*what is our position?*” and answer in terms of rank, scale, or origin, the relational cosmologies ask, “*what are our obligations?*” and answer in terms of specific relationships to specific places, species, and ancestors. This is not a different answer to the same question; it is a different question. The Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm holds that the systematic destruction of these relational ontologies — through dispossession, language suppression, and the forced substitution of extractivist worldviews — is not merely a cultural loss but an existential one: it breaks the web of relationships that allowed that world to endure.

Section II ends with the recognition that condition is not merely a philosophical category but a political one — and that the choice of which condition hypothesis a society treats as authoritative has consequences for how it relates to those whose cosmological conditions differ from its own.

Section III: The Epistemological Hypothesis

The Abyss of Unknowing

There is one hypothesis that is not a hypothesis in the ordinary sense — it is a meta-claim about the others. It holds that we do not know, cannot know, and may never know what or who we truly are. This is not merely the empiricist's provisional "*we don't know yet*." It is the deeper claim of structural unknowability: the cognitive apparatus we would use to answer the question is itself part of the thing being questioned, and therefore constitutionally unfit for the task. Immanuel Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy was to argue that the mind does not receive reality passively but actively constitutes it through categories of understanding. We cannot step outside these categories to see the *Ding an sich* — the thing-in-itself. If we are, at our deepest level, something beyond the phenomenal, we cannot know it from within. The knower cannot know itself as a knower without already having deployed the categories that constitute what knowing is. This is not a problem to be solved; it is a feature of the structure of knowledge itself (Kant 1781).

Ludwig Wittgenstein concluded the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) with one of philosophy's most famous sentences: "*Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent*." The mystics of every tradition would agree — not in resignation but in recognition. The *via negativa* of Meister Eckhart, the apophatic theology of Gregory of Nyssa, the Zen master's refusal to answer the student's question about Buddha-nature with anything but a shout or a blow — all acknowledge that language and conceptual thought break down at the limits of the question. Donna Haraway's feminist epistemology adds a crucial dimension here. In *Situated Knowledges* (1988), she argues that the problem of unknowability is partly a product of the false aspiration to a "*view from nowhere*" — the God's-eye perspective that treats the knowing subject as having no body, no history, no position. Situated knowledge does not claim certainty, but it does claim direction: knowing from somewhere, from a particular body and a particular history, is not a defect to be overcome but the only form of knowledge that is not self-deception. What the Kantian tradition treats as a universal limitation may be partly a consequence of the universalising aspiration itself. The philosopher Thomas Ligotti draws the darkest possible conclusion from unknowability: what we are is something that suffers, and the deepest mercy would be not to have been conscious at all (Ligotti 2010). Antinatalist pessimism, developed with analytic rigour by David Benatar in *Better Never to Have Been* (Benatar 2006), argues that bringing conscious beings into existence is always a harm, given the asymmetry between the badness of pain and the non-badness of the absence of pleasure when there is no subject to experience that absence.

Against this, the Buddhist tradition offers a different reading of unknowability. The Buddha famously refused to answer the fourteen unanswerable questions (*avyakata*) — including whether the world is eternal, whether the self survives death, whether the cosmos is finite — not because the questions were unanswerable in principle, but because answering them would not contribute to liberation. The epistemological limit is not a tragedy; it is a teacher. Not-knowing, held with full attention, can itself

become a form of insight — not knowledge of what we are, but direct acquaintance with the process of knowing itself.

Psycho-Cosmocide Perspective on Section III

The Epistemological Hypothesis — The Abyss of Unknowing

Section III introduces a different kind of hypothesis — not a claim about what reality is, but a claim about whether we can know what it is. This has specific relevance for the concerns of this inquiry, because the limits of knowledge are not uniformly distributed. The epistemological hypothesis, as formulated by Kant and Wittgenstein, diagnoses a universal structural limit — but it does not follow that all knowledge-producing practices encounter that limit in the same way, or frame it as a limit at all.

Haraway's situated epistemology is the position in Section III that most directly converges with the Paradigm's concerns. Her argument that the aspiration to a "view from nowhere" produces not objectivity but a particular kind of blindness — the erasure of the knower's position from the account — applies with particular force to the colonial situation. A cosmological worldview that treats itself as universal, and therefore treats all particular cosmologies as local, provisional, or pre-scientific, does not merely claim epistemic authority. It enacts the first move of Psycho-Cosmocide: it renders the knowledge systems of others illegible on their own terms. Section III ends, then, not as a counsel of silence but as an opening. If knowledge is always situated, then the epistemological hypothesis does not end inquiry — it redirects it. The question becomes not "*what is the limit of knowledge in general?*" but "*what kinds of knowing have been excluded from the conversation, and what would be recoverable if they were not?*"

Section IV: Evolutionary and Existential Hypotheses

The final cluster of hypotheses does not look backward toward a creator or sideways toward a condition, but forward: toward what we might become, or inward toward the nature of consciousness itself. These are, in many ways, the most distinctively modern answers — and the most unfinished.

4.1 The Self-Creating Species: Existentialism and Transhumanism

Jean-Paul Sartre's most famous philosophical claim is that "*existence precedes essence*" (Sartre 1946). For every made object — a paper knife, a chair — essence precedes existence: the maker has the concept before producing the thing. But human beings exist before we have a defined nature. We are thrown into being without a predetermined purpose and must create ourselves through our choices. This is terrifying — Sartre called it "condemned to be free" — but it is also the ground of radical dignity.

“Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself.”

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946)

Simone de Beauvoir extended this to the social that we are also made by the situations into which we are thrown, and freedom requires transforming those situations. The Ubuntu philosophy of sub-Saharan Africa — “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*”, roughly “*I am because we are*” — offers a relational counterpoint that the self-creating individual of Sartrean existentialism is an abstraction. What actually exists is a self-in-relationship, whose becoming is always entangled with the becoming of others. Self-creation is not a solo project. Thaddeus Metz has argued that Ubuntu grounds a distinctive moral theory in which the promotion of communal relationships — not individual rights — forms the primary ethical category (“Ubuntu as a Moral Theory,” 2011). On this view, the existentialist emphasis on radical individual choice is not merely psychologically implausible but mistaken at a more fundamental level: the relational web precedes and shapes the self that chooses. This Ubuntu insight connects directly to the broader cosmological accounts treated in Section 2.4 (Earth’s Children) and Section 2.7 (Animist Ontology), where self-creation is similarly replaced by self-in-relation — the difference being that Ubuntu extends relational constitution through human community, while those traditions extend it through land, ancestors, and the non-human world. Taken together, these three positions together mount a sustained philosophical challenge to the Western liberal subject that the self-creating species hypothesis presupposes.

Transhumanism takes this self-creation hypothesis to its logical extreme. If we are self-creating beings, why stop at the limits imposed by biology? Ray Kurzweil, Nick Bostrom, and the broader transhumanist movement argue that we are in the early stages of a transition from biological to post-biological intelligence. The Nietzschean *Übermensch* — the being that overcomes the human — is not a fantasy but a developmental project.

4.2 Hard Materialism: Nothing Beyond the Particle

The most parsimonious hypothesis is that we are configurations of matter and energy, that consciousness is an emergent property of sufficiently complex neural organisation, and that when the organisation ceases — death — the configuration disperses and experience ends. Lucretius articulated this with elegant finality in *De Rerum Natura* (c. 60 BCE): “*Death is nothing to us, for when we exist, death is not yet present, and when death is present, then we do not exist.*” Daniel Dennett’s *Consciousness Explained* (1991) and Patricia Churchland’s neurophilosophy argue that the “hard problem of consciousness” is not a genuine problem but a residue of folk-psychological confusion. There is no ghost in the machine; the machine is all there is, and the machine is magnificent. Bertrand Russell, in *A Free Man’s Worship* (1903), offered a kind of secular stoicism that neither denies the cosmic indifference nor collapses before it: to see reality clearly, even in its bleakness, and to find in that clarity a dignity.

The challenge for hard materialism is the hard problem itself. David Chalmers's formulation — why does neural processing give rise to subjective experience at all? — has not been answered by materialist science, only pushed further back. The "*explanatory gap*" identified by Joseph Levine in 1983 remains a gap. Francis Crick and Christof Koch's neural correlates of consciousness research identify the correlates of experience without explaining why there is experience at all. Materialism may be correct — it is certainly parsimonious — but it faces a genuine and unresolved explanatory debt, and intellectual honesty requires acknowledging it.

4.3 Consciousness as Fundamental: Idealism, Neutral Monism, and Panpsychism

If the hard problem of consciousness is genuinely hard — if no amount of physical description will explain why there is something it is like to be a brain — then perhaps the relationship between mind and matter needs to be inverted. Three distinct but frequently conflated positions deserve separate treatment: ontological idealism, neutral monism, and panpsychism.

Ontological idealism holds that consciousness is all that ultimately exists. George Berkeley's "*esse est percipi*" — to be is to be perceived — is the classical formulation; Bernardo Kastrup's analytic idealism argues in our own time that the entire physical universe is the externalised appearance of a transpersonal cosmic consciousness (Kastrup 2014). Individual minds are "dissociated alters" of that cosmic mind — dissociated in the way that multiple personality disorder produces semi-autonomous sub-selves within a single person. The Advaita Vedanta tradition of Adi Shankaracharya (8th century CE) arrived at essentially the same position: Brahman — pure consciousness — is the only reality. The appearance of a multiplicity of separate beings is *maya*, misapprehension. We are not configurations of matter that happen to be conscious; we are consciousness that has temporarily taken the form of apparent matter.

Neutral monism, developed by William James and Bertrand Russell, proposes a third option: neither mind nor matter is fundamental. Both emerge from something more basic — James called it "pure experience" — that is neither mental nor physical but capable of taking either form depending on relational context. This avoids the explanatory debt of both materialism (why is there experience?) and idealism (why does matter appear at all?) by refusing the initial dichotomy.

Panpsychism, revived in recent analytic philosophy by David Chalmers, Philip Goff, and others, holds that consciousness is a fundamental feature of all matter — not that rocks are conscious in the way persons are, but that some form of proto-experiential quality is ubiquitous in the physical world, and what we call consciousness is its highly organised, complex manifestation. Goff's *Galileo's Error* (2019) argues that Galileo's scientific revolution, which made the world mathematically describable by excluding qualitative experience from the physical domain, created the hard problem by mistake — it was a methodological choice, not a metaphysical discovery. The solution is to put experience back in.

“All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream.”

Edgar Allan Poe, “A Dream Within a Dream” (1849)

Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) offers a Western variant of consciousness-primacy that the underlying reality is *Will* — a blind, striving force — and the world of phenomena is its representation. The practical upshot, for Schopenhauer, is Buddhist: since suffering arises from the Will's insatiable striving, liberation requires its denial.

4.4 Process Cosmology: The Unfinished Universe

Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy offers a vision of reality as fundamentally dynamic rather than static. Reality is not a collection of objects but a flow of events — “*occasions of experience*” — each of which synthesises its past and contributes to its future. On this view, creativity is the ultimate metaphysical category: the universe is not something that was created but something that is creating, continuously, including through and as us (Whitehead 1929). Pierre Teilhard de Chardin synthesised process thought, evolutionary theory, and Christian mysticism in *The Phenomenon of Man* (Teilhard de Chardin 1955). Evolution is not random drift but a directed process of complexification and consciousness: matter becomes life, life becomes mind, and mind is converging toward an Omega Point — a maximum of consciousness and unity. The cosmologist Brian Swimme and cultural historian Thomas Berry extend this further in *The Universe Story* (Swimme and Berry 1992): the universe has a narrative — a “*cosmogensis*” — and human beings are the moment in that narrative when the universe becomes capable of reflecting on itself. Our existential bewilderment is the universe's own bewilderment, encountering itself through the improbable medium of consciousness.

Isabelle Stengers's engagement with Whitehead, developed in *Thinking with Whitehead* (2011), brings process philosophy into direct conversation with contemporary ecology and politics. If the cosmos is characterised by creativity and mutual sensitivity, then what is at stake in environmental destruction is not merely a practical matter of resource management but a philosophical one: the destruction of the very conditions under which any “*occasion of experience*” — and therefore any value — is possible. Process cosmology gives the ecological crisis a weight that purely materialist accounts cannot provide.

Psycho-Cosmocide Perspective on Section IV

Evolutionary and Existential Hypotheses

Section IV shifts the orientation of the survey from retrospective to prospective. The hypotheses gathered here — existentialism, transhumanism, hard materialism, idealism, panpsychism, process cosmology — are less interested in explaining what we came from than in proposing what we might become or what we fundamentally are as processes rather than objects. The Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm reads this shift with a specific concern: *for whom is the future open?*

Sartre's radical freedom presupposes a subject for whom authentic self-creation is a real possibility. Transhumanism presupposes access to the technological platforms through which biological limits are exceeded. Process cosmology's invitation to co-create the universe presupposes that all participants are positioned to participate. These presuppositions are not trivial. Psycho-Cosmocide arose as a concept precisely because the conditions for existential becoming — the cosmological orientations, the ecological relationships, the linguistic inheritance, the ancestral memory that constitute the cultural foundation of a people — can be destroyed faster than they can be reconstructed. When they are destroyed, the "*open future*" is open only for those who did the destroying. The most significant contribution of Section IV to the Paradigm's concerns is process cosmology's insistence that the universe is not a completed structure but an ongoing act of creativity in which every participant contributes. If this is true, then the destruction of a people's worldview is not merely a harm to that people. It is a loss to the larger creative process — a foreclosure of one of the paths along which the universe was knowing itself. Swimme and Berry's "universe story" becomes, in this light, a story that colonialism has been actively curtailing. Wonesis — the concept introduced in the Coda — is the attempt to name and restore what is needed for that creative participation to continue.

Section IV ends not with a theory of what we are becoming, but with a question about the conditions under which becoming remains possible at all — and for whom.

Section V: Cross-Comparative Analysis

Six Dialectical Confrontations

The preceding survey presents eighteen hypotheses in sequence, but does not expose what is most philosophically instructive: the tensions that emerge when these hypotheses are placed in direct confrontation with each other. This section stages six dialectical encounters between the most philosophically antithetical pairs, identifying what is genuinely at stake in each conflict.

5.1 *Hard Materialism versus Analytic Idealism*

This is the foundational philosophical confrontation of our era, and it turns on a single question: *is consciousness a product of matter, or is matter an appearance within consciousness?* Hard materialism (Dennett, Churchland) holds that the universe existed for approximately nine billion years without any experience in it, and that experience emerged when matter organised itself into nervous systems of sufficient complexity. Consciousness is real but derived. Analytic idealism (Kastrup) reverses this: the universe has always been experiential — we exist inside a cosmic consciousness, and what we call the physical world is the externalised appearance of mental processes we cannot directly access. Matter is real but derived.

The decisive battleground is the hard problem. Materialism's failure to explain why neural processing gives rise to subjective experience at all — the explanatory gap — is idealism's strongest argument.

Idealism's failure to explain why a single cosmic consciousness should dissociate into billions of apparently separate individuals who experience themselves as trapped in separate bodies — and who suffer — is materialism's strongest counter-argument. What both positions share, and rarely acknowledge, is their dependence on an analogy: materialism treats mind as analogous to a fire (emergent from but different from its fuel); idealism treats the world as analogous to a dream (the appearance is real within the dreaming, not outside it). Neither analogy is self-evidently correct. The confrontation is unresolved — but it is not a standoff. It reveals that the hard problem is not a technical inconvenience to be mopped up after the main scientific work is done; it is a clue about what kind of thing reality fundamentally is.

5.2 The Singular God versus the Farm Animals Hypothesis

These two hypotheses share a remarkable structural similarity: both claim that we were made deliberately by a more powerful intelligence. Their difference is entirely in what that intelligence wanted from us. The monotheist holds that the creator made us in the divine image, for union with the divine — that our suffering is a temporary condition permitted by the logic of genuine freedom, and that our dignity is ontologically secured by the nature of the creator. The farm-animal hypothesis holds that the creators — whether Gnostic archons, economic systems, or colonial powers — made or manage us for extraction. Our suffering is not a regrettable side-effect; it is the intended yield. Our "*dignity*" is a story told to keep the cattle calm. The philosophical stakes cannot be higher. The two hypotheses generate opposite ethics: the monotheist position grounds universal human dignity in divine origin and calls for a certain disposition of gratitude, obedience, and love; the farm-animal position grounds radical resistance and liberation in the recognition of exploitation, and regards any compliance with the existing order as collaboration with one's own captivity. History suggests that both have been true simultaneously in different contexts: that religious cosmology has functioned both as genuine dignity-conferring ontology and as ideological cover for exploitation, sometimes within the same institution.

5.3 Existentialist Self-Creation versus Animist Belonging

Sartre's existentialism and Indigenous animist cosmologies represent two of the most fully developed answers to the question of what we should do with our existence — and they point in nearly opposite directions. Sartre holds that we are radically free, that this freedom is both our burden and our glory, and that the attempt to escape it into "*bad faith*" — into inherited roles, social expectations, divine mandates — is the primary form of human self-betrayal. We are condemned to create ourselves. The ground beneath us is absence. The animist ontology embedded in traditions from Potawatomi to Māori to Amazonian perspectivism holds that we are not radically free individuals but nodes in a web of relationships that precedes and exceeds us — relationships with land, ancestors, animals, and the living dead. Self-creation is not only impossible but undesirable: the self that tries to create itself outside of these relationships creates a fiction, not a person. The ground beneath us is dense with obligation.

What makes this confrontation genuinely philosophical rather than merely cultural is that each position responds to a real feature of existence. Sartre is right that we cannot choose not to choose — every action implies an orientation, and to act as if one's choices were determined by external forces is itself a choice. Kimmerer and Viveiros de Castro are right that the self that acts is never a bare individual but always already constituted by languages, relationships, and ecological contexts it did not make. The question is not which is true but what follows from holding both simultaneously: radical freedom exercised within constitutive relationships. This is perhaps the most generative philosophical tension in the entire survey.

5.4 The Simulation Argument versus the Cosmic Dream

These two hypotheses are structurally similar — both claim that what we take to be physical reality is a kind of representation produced by something external to it — but they generate radically different implications for agency, meaning, and ethics. The simulation argument (Bostrom) is a probabilistic, computational claim. The simulators are post-human beings running computations; the simulation is a product of technology. If true, our lives have the status of data — sophisticated, perhaps infinitely complex data, but data nonetheless. What the simulators intend for us, whether they monitor us, whether they can intervene, whether our deaths matter — these are entirely unknown. The simulation argument produces maximum uncertainty about existence paired with minimum ethical guidance. The cosmic dream hypothesis (Hindu cosmology, Zhuangzi, Alan Watts) is an experiential, relational claim. The dreamer is not a technology company but consciousness itself — and we are not external to it but expressions of it. If true, our lives have the status of experience within experience: real, felt, and mattering to the dreaming from within. The ethical implications are very different: if all beings are dreams of the same dreamer, then harming another is harming oneself. Compassion becomes the natural consequence of the cosmological position.

The decisive difference is the status of the observer. In the simulation argument, the observer is external and possibly indifferent. In the cosmic dream, the observer is the dream itself — there is no outside. The second position, structurally, is more philosophically coherent precisely because it does not produce the infinite regress of who is running the simulation. If consciousness dreams the world, the question of who made the dreamer is not a problem but a category error.

5.5 The Epistemological Hypothesis versus All Others

The epistemological hypothesis — we do not and cannot know what we or who are — has a special logical relationship to every other hypothesis in this survey. It does not compete with them on the same level; it questions whether any of them can be known to be true. If Kant is right that the thing-in-itself is forever beyond the categories of understanding, then the monotheist's God, the materialist's matter, the idealist's consciousness, and the animist's community of persons are all constructs of understanding, not reports of the thing-in-itself. None of them can claim to have stepped outside the limits of cognition that Kant identified. If Wittgenstein is right that the limits of language are the limits

of the world, then any hypothesis expressible in language is, for that very reason, not the thing it is trying to name. The question outstrips the instrument with which it is asked.

And yet — as the Buddhist tradition recognises — this does not mean the hypotheses are equal or without value. They are ways of inhabiting existence, not truth-reports. The animist who relates to a river as a person, even without metaphysical certainty that the river is a person, lives in a world of richer obligations and more careful attention. The materialist who knows there is no cosmic significance to suffering may respond with greater urgency to practical alleviation precisely because there is no divine plan to delegate the problem to. Haraway's situated knowledge makes the point epistemologically: knowing from within a particular relationship, without claiming a view from nowhere, is the only form of knowledge available to creatures like us. The epistemological hypothesis, properly understood, does not recommend silence — it recommends a different quality of attention.

5.6 Cosmic Insignificance versus Process Cosmology

These represent opposite answers to a single question that does the universe care about what happens within it? The cosmic insignificance position (Pascal, Camus, Lovecraft) holds that the universe is vast, ancient, and indifferent — not hostile, merely silent. Human values, loves, and meanings are genuine, but they are local products of biological evolution, and the cosmos does not register them. When the sun expands in five billion years, there will be no record that this species existed or asked this question. Process cosmology (Whitehead, Teilhard, Swimme-Berry) holds that the universe is not a passive stage on which life happens but an active process of creativity, complexification, and — increasingly — self-reflection. We are not insignificant visitors to an indifferent cosmos; we are the cosmos in the phase of its own awakening. The question "*What the fuck is this?*" is not an anomaly on the surface of a meaningless universe — it is the universe asking itself what it is.

The confrontation between these positions cannot be resolved by empirical evidence alone, because the question is not empirical but interpretive: given the same physical facts, do they constitute a tragedy of meaninglessness or a drama of emerging self-consciousness? This is precisely the kind of question where the existentialist insight — that we must choose an orientation even without certainty — is most directly applicable. The choice of orientation is itself a philosophical act, with real consequences for how one lives

Psycho-Cosmocide Perspective on Section V: Cross-Comparative Analysis

Six Dialectical Confrontations

The six dialectical confrontations in Section V do something the sequential survey cannot: they show what is actually at stake when cosmologies are forced into direct contact. Each pairing is not merely an intellectual exercise; it maps a genuine tension that human beings and communities have had to navigate in practice. The confrontation between the Singular God and the Farm Animals hypothesis is, among other things, a description of the experience of colonised peoples who were simultaneously

told that their creator was the God of their colonisers and that they were being managed as a productive resource. These are not separate problems. They are the same problem at two levels of description.

What emerges from these six dialectical confrontations is not synthesis but diagnosis. Each confrontation exposes a fault line in human consciousness and reveals how different cosmological systems organise perception, value, and behaviour. From a Psycho-Cosmocide perspective, the most significant question is not which side of a confrontation is philosophically correct. The more important question is what each worldview permits its adherents to see, and what it prevents them from seeing.

The confrontation between existentialist self-creation and animist belonging illustrates this clearly. The existentialist model foregrounds autonomy, choice, and personal responsibility. The animist model foregrounds relationship, reciprocity, and participation within a larger living world. Both illuminate aspects of human existence. Yet each also generates characteristic blind spots. A consciousness organised primarily around self-creation can gradually lose sight of the relationships that make existence possible. When embedded within larger structures of power, this blindness can become destructive, severing people from land, memory, ancestors, language, community, and the wider cosmological structures through which meaning is sustained.

Psycho-Cosmocide becomes relevant when these tensions are embedded within systems of power. Colonial systems did not simply promote one philosophical position over another. They selectively amplified forms of consciousness that weakened Indigenous (cosmobian) relationships to land, memory, ancestors, language, and community. What appears as a debate about autonomy and belonging therefore becomes, under colonial conditions, a struggle over the survival of entire worlds.

A similar dynamic appears in the confrontation between cosmic insignificance and process cosmology. The disagreement is not merely about the size of the universe or humanity's place within it. It concerns whether participation itself possesses significance. If consciousness is understood as a meaningful participant in reality, then the destruction of a people's capacity to participate in their world represents more than a social or political loss. It becomes a cosmological loss. Psycho-Cosmocide therefore interprets the destruction of languages, memories, relationships, and cosmologies not simply as cultural change but as the contraction of reality's own field of participation.

Seen in this way, the six confrontations function as diagnostic instruments. They reveal the forms of consciousness different cosmologies cultivate, the worlds they make possible, and the worlds they render invisible. The central question is not which hypothesis wins the debate. The central question is what survives, what disappears, and what becomes impossible to perceive once a particular cosmology achieves dominance.

Section V therefore demonstrates something the survey could not show in any other way: that the choice between cosmological worldviews is never merely intellectual. Each worldview, when inhabited fully, generates different moral perceptions, different political orientations, and different relationships to the people and places one lives among. One implication this analysis insists on is that these consequences are asymmetrically distributed — and that understanding how they are distributed is a philosophical task, not only a political one. Each framework stabilises a different relationship between

consciousness, world, and value — and each becomes compelling precisely where it suppresses the alternatives.

Section V ends with the recognition that philosophical conflict is not accidental noise in the search for truth. It is structural — and the structure has a history. What counts as a serious hypothesis, which confrontations get staged, and whose cosmologies are represented in the six pairings are not neutral editorial decisions. The survey has attempted to include non-Western and Indigenous traditions; the dialectical section engages with them directly. That engagement is itself a methodological commitment: that philosophy conducted without these voices is not merely incomplete, but produces a systematically distorted picture of what the question *"What the fuck is this?"* actually looks like when asked from within the full range of human experience.

Section VI: Comparative Analysis Table

The following table summarises all eighteen hypotheses across four axes: their basis for knowledge (what grounds them and whether they could be refuted), their primary ethical implication, their account of suffering, and their view of reality (origin, condition, and/or purpose). A final row applies the same four axes to the Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm itself, which functions throughout the survey as an organising lens rather than a competing hypothesis; it is included here in the spirit of methodological consistency. This is not a ranking but a diagnostic instrument.

Hypothesis	Epistemological Status	Ethical Entailment	Response to Suffering	Cosmological Scope
Singular God (1.1)	Non-falsifiable; argued a priori and from design	Absolute moral duties grounded in divine nature	Purposive; suffering tests, refines, or is permitted by free will	Origin, condition, and purpose
Polytheism (1.2)	Non-falsifiable; historically narrative	Contested; varies by deity and tradition	Suffering as product of divine conflict or fate	Origin and condition
Divine Feminine (1.3)	Non-falsifiable; grounded in mythological, archaeological, and phenomenological evidence	Reverence for generative power; reciprocity with the natural world; restoration of suppressed cosmological authority	Suffering as separation from the generative ground; healed through return to the feminine creative principle	Origin, condition, and purpose
Extraterrestrial Engineers (1.4)	Speculative; in principle falsifiable by evidence	Dependent on engineers' intentions — unknown	Incidental by-product of engineering	Origin primarily

Simulation Argument (1.5)	Probabilistic; unfalsifiable from within	Radically uncertain — simulator's values unknown	Suffering may be programmed, purposive, or arbitrary	Origin and condition
Cosmic Dream/Story (1.6)	Metaphysical; non-falsifiable	Compassion; all beings share one dreamer	Suffering as narrative necessity or illusion	Origin, condition, and purpose
Farm Animals (2.1)	Non-falsifiable; critical-theoretical	Liberation and resistance as primary duties	Suffering is the intended product of exploitation	Condition only
Mere Life Forms (2.2)	Scientifically well-supported; empirically robust	Ethics constructed, not discovered	Suffering is evolutionary signal without cosmic meaning	Condition only
Cosmic Insignificance (2.3)	Empirically supported by scale	Defiance or Absurdist construction	Suffering is arbitrary — universe indifferent	Condition only
Earth's Children (2.4)	Relational; verified through practice and kinship	Reciprocal obligations to all living persons	Suffering as relational rupture; healed through return	Condition and purpose
Lost Voyagers / Orphans (2.5)	Phenomenological; grounded in lived experience	Authenticity; radical self-creation	Suffering as the cost of thrownness and freedom	Condition only
Living Cosmos / Gaia (2.6)	Partially empirical; partially speculative	Ecological responsibility; we are neurons of Earth	Suffering as systemic imbalance in a living whole	Condition and purpose
Animist / Cosmobian Ontology (2.7)*	Relational; verified through ancestral practice	Obligations to all persons, human and non-human	Suffering as relational failure; healed by restored relationship	Condition and purpose
Radical Unknowing (III)	Structurally irrefutable — self-grounding	Epistemic humility; caution before all strong claims	Suffering cannot be assigned final meaning or meaninglessness	None: meta-claim only
Self-Creating Species (4.1)	Philosophical; empirically informed	Radical freedom entails radical responsibility	Suffering as condition of becoming; overcome through will	Purpose only
Hard Materialism (4.2)	Empirically best-supported; hard problem remains	Ethics constructed from reason and social contract	Suffering is neurological; real but without cosmic significance	Condition only

Consciousness as Fundamental (4.3)	Metaphysical; responds to hard problem	Compassion; harming another is harming the one mind	Suffering as dissociation within cosmic consciousness	Origin, condition, and purpose
Process Cosmology (4.4)	Speculative metaphysics; philosophically rigorous	Co-creative responsibility; we shape what cosmos becomes	Suffering as the cost of genuine creativity	Origin, condition, and purpose
Meta-Framework — Not A Hypothesis Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm (Interpretive Lens)	Meta-theoretical; grounded in Indigenous and comparative philosophical analysis; not falsifiable in the conventional sense, but internally consistent and empirically responsive to documented instances of cosmological destruction under colonial conditions.	Preservation of cosmological orientation systems; resistance to their systematic destruction; restoration through Wonesis	Suffering as the product of cosmological destruction; most acute when orientation systems are collapsed by colonial force rather than transformed from within	Meta-scope: addresses the conditions under which all other cosmological scopes (origin, condition, purpose) become possible or are destroyed

The table contains nineteen rows but surveys eighteen hypotheses. The final row applies the same four analytical axes to the Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm — not because it constitutes a nineteenth hypothesis, but precisely because it does not. Where the eighteen hypotheses are direct answers to the question "What is this reality?", the Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm asks what conditions make any such answer possible, and what is lost when those conditions are destroyed. Its inclusion in the table is an act of methodological transparency, not taxonomic expansion. The count remains eighteen.

"*Cosmobian*" is introduced within the Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm studies and used here as a descriptive extension of relational cosmologies. See the Wonesis Framework Paper and companion studies in the Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series (<https://philarchive.org/s/Yamin%20Kogoya>).

Section VII: Toward a Theory of Existential Orientation

The preceding pages have surveyed an extraordinary range of answers to one of humanity's oldest and most persistent questions: What is this reality in which we find ourselves? Yet an equally important question emerges from this survey: why do human beings continually generate explanations for existence in the first place? The persistence of existential hypotheses suggests that human beings are not merely curious creatures seeking information. Rather, they are beings who require orientation. Human life unfolds within a condition of radical uncertainty. We arrive in a world we did not create, inherit languages we did not invent, inhabit bodies we did not design, and participate in histories that began long before our birth. We find ourselves surrounded by realities that exceed our comprehension: birth, consciousness, suffering, death, time, memory, nature, and the cosmos itself. Confronted by such realities, human beings seek ways of making existence intelligible. Religions, philosophies, mythologies, ideologies, scientific models, and cosmological narratives can all be understood as attempts to orient human beings within an otherwise overwhelming reality. They provide maps through which individuals and societies locate themselves within the larger structure of existence. The history of human thought can therefore be interpreted not merely as a history of competing truths but

also as a history of how human beings have tried to find their footing in existence. This possibility points toward a deeper level of inquiry. Human beings do not generate existential hypotheses from nowhere. Every explanation emerges from within particular historical, ecological, cultural, biological, psychological, and symbolic conditions. The thinker is never entirely outside the world being explained. The observer remains situated within the reality being observed.

The wider research programme developed elsewhere by the author begins from this recognition, and is sketched briefly here for orientation. Rather than asking only what human beings believe about existence, it asks how human existence itself conditions the production of belief. The Eight Atlases of Human Existence refer to the fundamental domains through which human reality is experienced, inhabited, and organised. The Seven Cages of Existence refer to the structural limits, constraints, and conditions within which human perception, knowledge, imagination, and action occur.

Together they illuminate not merely particular hypotheses about existence, but the existential situation from which such hypotheses arise. Within this broader perspective, religions, ideologies, civilisations, scientific paradigms, and technological visions can be interpreted as worldviews that arose within specific historical and existential conditions. Some may illuminate reality. Some may obscure it. Some may preserve memory, dignity, and belonging. Others may contribute to forms of disorientation, displacement, or what companion studies describe as Psycho-Cosmocide — the systematic destruction of the relationships through which individuals and societies remain oriented within reality. When a cosmology is destroyed, it is not merely a set of beliefs that is lost; it is the worldview through which an entire people located themselves within existence. This is, among all forms of loss, one of the most total.

The task of philosophy, therefore, may not be limited to choosing between competing explanations of existence. It may also involve understanding the conditions that generate explanations, the structures that shape perception, and the consequences that follow when orientation itself is disrupted.

Section VIII: Language, Cosmology, and the Limits of the Question

An additional complication arises when considering the role of language in the formation of existential inquiry itself. Throughout this paper, questions such as "What is this?", "Why are we here?" or "Who are we?", and "What is reality?" have been treated as fundamental expressions of human curiosity. Yet these questions are not entirely universal: they emerge, at least in part, from the particular linguistic and cultural worlds through which human beings perceive and interpret existence. Every language carries its own assumptions, distinctions, categories, and orientations toward reality. Concepts that appear self-evident in one language may not exist in another. The Potawatomi grammar of animacy, discussed in Section 2.4, makes it grammatically impossible to refer to a river as "it" — the river is already, in the structure of the language, a person. A speaker of Potawatomi asking "what is this?" about a river is asking a different question than an English speaker using the same words, because the river is already, linguistically, a who. The question is shaped before it is asked. Many modern existential inquiries have emerged through linguistic traditions shaped by literate philosophy,

monotheist theology, and post-Enlightenment science. However, thousands of Indigenous, tribal, and cosmopolitan societies have historically related to existence through different modes of understanding — through relationship, through ceremony, through practice, through the accumulated wisdom of specific places. Within such societies, the question may not be "What is reality?" but rather "How should one live within it?" The emphasis shifts from explanation to participation, from abstraction to relationship, from detached observation to lived belonging.

Consequently, the existential hypotheses surveyed throughout this paper should not be interpreted as the complete range of human responses to existence. They may instead represent a particular family of responses emerging from specific linguistic, civilisational, and philosophical traditions. The recognition introduces an important element of epistemic humility into the entire enterprise.

The mystery is not only whether our answers are correct. It is also whether our questions are complete

Section IX: Conclusion

Living the Question

What emerges from this survey is not a winner. The hypotheses examined here are not merely competing theories awaiting adjudication by some neutral tribunal. They are different ways of inhabiting reality — different phenomenologies, different ethics, different relationships to suffering, death, nature, and each other. Choosing among them is not a theoretical act; it is a way of living.

Several tensions run through all of them and constitute the genuine philosophical frontier. *First:* the tension between meaningfulness and truthfulness. The hypotheses that generate the richest human meaning — the imago Dei, the animated cosmos, the process universe reaching toward the Omega Point — are not obviously supported by the evidence available to us. The hypothesis most consistent with current science — hard materialism — provides the least scaffolding for meaning. This is the sharpest horn of the modern dilemma, and it has not been resolved — only variously navigated. *Second:* the tension between knowing and living. The epistemological hypothesis is almost certainly correct in at least a weak form: we do not know, with certainty, what we are. But human beings cannot suspend judgment indefinitely. Every action implies a cosmology. Every cosmology implies an ontology — a claim about what kinds of things are real and what relations hold between them. Every ontology implies an ethics — a structure of obligations, permissions, and prohibitions that follows from what one takes reality to be. This three-step chain is not merely theoretical: it describes what is actually at stake in the choice between the hypotheses surveyed here. The person who treats others as persons-who-matter acts as if the animist or theist ontology has some truth; the person who treats nature as a resource acts as if the materialist-extractivist ontology is true. And crucially, when a cosmology is destroyed — not merely questioned but systematically dismantled — the ethics that depended upon it is destroyed with it. This is not the loss of a set of beliefs. It is the annihilation of the

conditions of moral orientation. We are all, whether we acknowledge it or not, already living as some answer to the question — not deriving our existence from a cosmology we have chosen, but embodying one through every act, relationship, and silence. The practical and theoretical tasks cannot be separated. *Third*: the tension between scale and intimacy. The cosmos that modern science reveals — vast, ancient, indifferent — is not the cosmos that human beings actually inhabit. We inhabit a world of faces, voices, seasons, losses, and loves. Philosophies that do justice to the cosmic scale while remaining possible to live within are rare and precious. Process cosmology and animist ontology are, in different ways, attempts to build such philosophies. So is Camus's Absurdism. Their differences are enormous; their shared ambition deserves recognition. *Fourth, and perhaps most urgently*: the tension between the dominant traditions and the suppressed ones. This survey has been able to include only gestures toward the cosmological traditions of Africa, Oceania, the Americas, and West Papua. The systematic exclusion of these traditions from academic philosophy has not been neutral: it has narrowed the conceptual range available to the species precisely at the moment of its greatest existential crisis. The disappearance of a cosmology is not merely the loss of beliefs but the loss of a way in which reality becomes intelligible — the destruction of an entire horizon within which questions could be asked and answers could be received. If process cosmology and animist ontology point in similar directions — toward a relational, sensitive, creative cosmos in which human beings are participants rather than masters — this convergence may be philosophically significant. It may be that the Western philosophical tradition and the world's oral traditions, approached without hierarchy, are arriving at the same territory from opposite sides.

What do these four tensions tell us, taken together? They do not describe four separate problems awaiting four separate solutions. They are four expressions of a single predicament: that consciousness is a meaning-requiring being inhabiting a reality that does not supply meaning automatically. The first tension — between meaningfulness and truthfulness — shows that the hypotheses most adequate to the cosmos as science describes it are least adequate to the life that consciousness must actually live. The second — between knowing and living — shows that cosmological uncertainty cannot be suspended: every act already embodies a cosmological commitment, whether acknowledged or not. The third — between scale and intimacy — shows that the world we inhabit and the universe science reveals are not the same world, and that philosophical maturity requires holding both without collapsing either into the other. The fourth — between dominant and suppressed traditions — shows that what counts as philosophical knowledge is itself a political question, and that the recovery of suppressed cosmologies is not merely a matter of intellectual diversity but of cognitive survival. These four tensions are not peculiarities of our historical moment. They are structural features of being a meaning-making species inside a cosmos that pre-existed us and will continue without us. Every major tradition in this survey has grappled with at least one of them; none has resolved all four. The measure of a cosmological tradition is not whether it eliminates these tensions but whether it provides resources for inhabiting them without disintegration. That is what the eighteen hypotheses, taken together, actually demonstrate: not a progress toward a single answer, but the cumulative cartography of a predicament that will not go away.

The survey presented here has examined humanity's answers to existence. Yet the deeper question may concern the conditions under which answers become possible at all. Every cosmology emerges within a language, a landscape, a history, and a mode of life. Every action implies a cosmology; every cosmology implies an ontology; every ontology implies an ethics. To understand existential hypotheses fully may therefore require understanding the worlds that produce them — and attending to what is lost when those worlds are destroyed. The task ahead is not merely to compare answers, but to investigate the structures of orientation from which answers arise, and to recognise that the destruction of those structures is among the most consequential forms of harm one world can inflict upon another. That investigation — of the Eight Atlases of Human Existence, the Seven Cages of Existence, the conditions of Psycho-Cosmocide, and the possibility of Wonesis as an antidote — is the work to which this survey points.

The title of this inquiry remains the most philosophically honest thing that can be said: What the fuck is this? The sophistication of the answers accumulated across five thousand years of recorded thought is genuinely impressive. None of them are stupid; several are brilliant; all of them are insufficient. The question does not resolve — it deepens. And in that deepening, something essential about the human condition is revealed: we are the beings for whom the question itself will not go away. That may be the most important thing about us.

The significance of this survey lies not in establishing which hypothesis is true but in revealing the extraordinary range of ways human consciousness has attempted to orient itself within existence. Whether we are created, evolved, dreamed, simulated, relational, self-creating, or fundamentally unknowing, the persistence of the question itself may be the most revealing fact of all. Every tradition gathered in these pages — from Augustine's restless heart to Zhuangzi's dreaming butterfly, from the Potawatomi grammar of animacy to Bostrom's probabilistic cosmos — is, beneath its surface, an attempt to make existence bearable by making it legible. That attempt has never succeeded completely. It has also never stopped. Humanity's greatest common inheritance may not be any answer, but the shared bewilderment from which all answers arise — and the irreversible need to keep asking, which is perhaps the most human thing of all.

Section X: Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm Synthesis

Read through the lens of Psycho-Cosmocide, the entire survey can now be seen not as a catalogue of metaphysical theories, but as an ecology of worldviews produced by a consciousness living within uncertainty, finitude, and the need to make sense of things. Across Sections I–IV, what appeared as distinct hypothesis families (creator, condition, epistemological, evolutionary) progressively revealed a deeper recursive structure: every attempt to explain reality simultaneously reconfigures the position of the explainer within reality. Origin theories externalise agency into creators; condition theories distribute or localise power within cosmological hierarchies; epistemological theory collapses certainty into structural limitation; evolutionary theory re-opens futurity as unfinished becoming.

Together, they do not form a linear argument, but a continuous spiral of meaning-making in the face of questions that remain open.

Sections V and VI then expose the hidden architecture of this spiral: hypotheses do not simply differ — they interfere, collide, and mutually deform each other under comparative pressure, revealing that no single cosmology can maintain stability across all axes of explanation (origin, condition, knowledge, and futurity) without producing compensatory blind spots. The comparative table formalises this insight: every worldview is a partial closure of an otherwise non-closure reality.

Sections VII and VIII finally shift the axis of analysis from *truth-content* to *orientation-function*. Here, something decisive becomes clear: human beings do not merely produce cosmologies to explain existence — they generate them to survive existential disorientation within existence. Cosmologies are therefore not optional intellectual constructions but survival structures, rooted in language, ecology, history, and relational life-worlds.

From this standpoint, the destruction of a cosmology is not primarily the falsification of beliefs, but the collapse of a worldview— a loss of the relational, linguistic, ecological, and symbolic systems through which a world becomes livable. This is what Psycho-Cosmocide names in its strongest sense: not intellectual disagreement, but the systemic breakdown of meaning-bearing structures that allow life to locate itself within reality at all.

Two conclusions follow. First: no cosmology survives total integration without fragmentation. Each system of explanation gains coherence by excluding dimensions that others emphasise. What appears as philosophical disagreement is, at a deeper level, the unavoidable consequence of finite cognition distributing attention across an over-rich ontological field. Second: taking a position is more fundamental than explaining one. Human beings cannot suspend cosmological positioning; even radical doubt, nihilism, or epistemic humility are themselves stances toward existence. To live is already to be situated within a tacit cosmology, even if that cosmology is implicit, unstable, or unacknowledged.

From these two conclusions, Psycho-Cosmocide articulates its central synthesis: Reality, as we actually experience it, does not present itself as a single knowable structure. It arrives as an irreducibly plural field of pressures — historical, ecological, relational, existential — that generate competing but necessary worldviews. These worldviews are neither fully true nor fully false; they are ways of surviving and inhabiting existence under conditions that exceed what any single account can contain. Seen this way, philosophy is no longer the pursuit of a final answer to “*what is this?*”, but the continuous study of how beings like us construct, inhabit, lose, and reconstruct the conditions under which the question itself can continue to be asked. Thus, the concluding stance of Psycho-Cosmocide is neither certainty nor scepticism, neither belief nor disbelief, neither optimism nor pessimism. It is something more structurally constrained:

We are orientation-producing beings inside a reality that exceeds any single orientation, and the history of thought is the record of our attempts to prevent that excess from becoming disintegration.

The final question — “*What the fuck is this?*” — therefore does not resolve into an answer. It stabilises into its true function: not a request for closure, but the enduring signature of a species that cannot cease trying to locate itself within what cannot be fully located. And in that persistence — not in the answers, but in the irreversible necessity of orientation itself — the Psycho-Cosmocide Paradigm finds both its limit and its beginning.

Psycho-Cosmocide and Wonesis

Against this background, Wonesis can be understood not as a competing worldview, but as the pre-conditions that make any worldview possible in the first place: land, food, water, air, fire, home, family, memory, and the relationships that sustain them. These are not explanations of reality. They are the minimal conditions through which reality becomes inhabitable for conscious beings. If Psycho-Cosmocide maps the destruction, erosion, and conflict of worlds, Wonesis names what must endure if any world is to remain possible at all. It is not an answer to existence, but the ground upon which the question of existence can continue to be asked. Before religion, philosophy, science, politics, or cosmology can emerge, there must first be beings capable of living, remembering, relating, and surviving. In this sense, the work does not end with a theory of everything, but with a responsibility: to preserve the conditions of orientation within which thinking, meaning, and life remain possible. No cosmology surveyed in this book is complete, and none can claim possession of the full truth of what this reality is. Yet every human being must still live, choose, remember, create, love, suffer, and die within it. Everything else is interpretation.

The question “*What the fuck is this?*” may never receive a final answer. Yet the inability to answer it has not prevented humanity from building religions, philosophies, sciences, cosmologies, civilisations, and entire worlds around it. Perhaps the deepest significance of the question lies not in its resolution but in its persistence. To be human may be to inhabit reality without final certainty while continuing to seek orientation within it. The question remains unanswered. We remain within it.

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About the Author

Yamin Kogoya is a Papuan philosopher, writer, and independent researcher from the Central Highlands of New Guinea (West Papua), currently based in Australia.

His work investigates one of the most enduring questions of human existence: how worlds are created, transformed, and destroyed. He is the originator of the Psycho-Cosmocide paradigm, an interdisciplinary philosophical framework that examines the destruction of human worlds not only through physical violence, occupation, or ecological devastation, but through the systematic reorganisation of perception, memory, meaning, and reality itself. Within this framework, he argues that words, images, symbols, signs, colours, institutions, and technologies do not merely represent the world—they participate in creating, reorganising, and erasing the conditions through which human beings inhabit it.

Kogoya introduced the concepts of the Cosmobian World and the Synthobian World to distinguish two fundamentally different modes of human existence. The Cosmobian World refers to forms of life constituted through reciprocal relationships with land, ancestry, kinship, memory, ecology, language, and the cosmos. The Synthobian World refers to synthetic, engineered systems of existence organised through abstraction, institutions, technology, production, and civilisational processes. The relationship between these two worlds forms the central philosophical architecture of his research.

Drawing upon Indigenous cosmologies together with philosophy, anthropology, history, religion, mythology, and civilisation studies, Kogoya develops original conceptual frameworks for interpreting the contemporary human condition. His work re-examines humanity's foundational myths, epics, tragedies, religions, and philosophical traditions as enduring civilisational architectures through which societies organise reality, negotiate meaning, confront mortality, remember the past, imagine the future, and participate in their own survival or extinction. Although grounded in the historical experience of West Papua, his research addresses broader philosophical questions concerning civilisation, consciousness, memory, belonging, power, and the future of human worlds.

He holds a Master of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development from the Australian National University. His academic background also includes Religious Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Asia-Pacific Studies, and he undertook advanced study in epistemology at the University of Oxford. His research and commentary have appeared in *SBS News*, *RNZ Pacific*, *Asia Pacific Report*, *The Fiji Times*, and *The Jakarta Post*.

Kogoya is the founder of the NATAKA Research Institute, an independent research institute dedicated to the philosophical and historical study of human worlds and the conditions under which societies survive, transform, or become extinct.

Published by Wone Press | An imprint of the NATAKA Research Institute

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