

Maintenance, Debugging, and the Care and Feeding of the Tree of Knowledge

The Tree of Knowledge is our common knowledge base that separates us from the animals. It is like a software source code tree where billions of people contribute to it every day. And like a software source tree, new knowledge is always being added and old knowledge is being reexamined, corrected, and updated. The maintenance, debugging, and growth of the Tree of Knowledge is the dharma of the Church of Reality.

Maintenance and debugging is very important as old beliefs are replaced by new and more accurate information and understanding. Our worldview must be purified by scrutiny and doubt so that we can be confident in our worldview because our worldview has been tested. Most religions are sworn to hold onto their worldview no matter how ridiculous the belief is. The Church of Reality take the opposite view that when information is determined to be inaccurate, it should be replaced by more accurate information. Bad information adds chaos to the Tree of Knowledge and we grow the tree and make it stronger by replacing chaos with understanding.

One of the reasons we chose a fractal to represent the Tree of Knowledge is that a fractal has a finite size and infinite edges. The edges are both in the inner and outer regions symbolizing that the frontier of knowledge includes both new discoveries and exploring what we already know - or think we know. As you zoom in on a fractal image the zoomed image is as complex and intricate as the original image. Fractals have infinite detail and are infinitely complex. Because of this I think that fractals make a good symbolic representation of the concept of a Tree of Knowledge.

Thousands of years ago the concept of "Up" and "Down" were clearly understood. Up was towards the sky and down was towards the ground. We had gravity and straight up and down could be accurately measured. God was up - Satan was down. And when the mythical Tower of Babel was built - it was so high that God got nervous that it would reach heaven and he'd have Jehovah's Witness's knocking at his door trying to leave him copies of the Watchtower. God couldn't have that so he changed the languages so they couldn't communicate. The Tower of Babel was abandoned and God maintained a gated community. And this story was written into the Bible and is still being believed today.

But we now live in a new world view with a much bigger Tree of Knowledge. The concept of Up and Down are nearly meaningless except in a very local context. We now know that the world is round and that it orbits the sun which orbits the milky way galaxy. Not only have we built far larger buildings that could possibly have been built in ancient times but we have gone to the moon. When we fly in airplanes we go above the clouds and when we look down - there are no cities with golden streets. It is now obvious to free thinking people that this Babel story is just a story and never really happened. But from a more scientific perspective, a concept as absolute as up and down became almost totally meaningless in the context of today's knowledge.

The Tree of Knowledge is very much like software development. There are times when you add new features to allow the program to do new things. Then there are times when you go into the old code and upgrade the core technology, fixing bugs, and finding new and better ways to do things. Debugging and strengthening the core is a necessary part of programming because you often can't add those new features if your core program has flaws. Likewise - if the Tree of Knowledge contains false information, or the information is outdated, then the Tree of Knowledge becomes polluted and it becomes more difficult to explore new knowledge in the context of false information.

For example - people used to believe that there were four elements - earth, air, fire, and water. We now know this isn't true and, with few exceptions, the human species has given up on that description. We now have modern chemistry which could not have been added to the Tree of Knowledge if the four element model hadn't been updated. At some point in the future we will have new knowledge that will replace things we believe to be true today - or will add details to our knowledge in order to build on those principles.