PURSUIT OF A COHERENT TRUTH

by

Jason Cardenas

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Advisor, Wendy Dasler Johnson
Department of Fine Arts

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Abstract

Along with my honors thesis, for the University Scholars Honors Program of Washington State University Vancouver, by means of an artistic representation, I explored the question: how can science and spirituality collaborate in order to find a coherent truth? My research consisted of an investigation of the current division between scientific and spiritual perspectives. Observing methods in the two disciplines’ approach for obtaining truths, including their respective subjective and objective views, was imperative to my research. I utilized distinctions between their respective methods to understand the unique attributes that both disciplines could contribute in the pursuit of a coherent truth. In addition, I also looked at various artists to gain inspiration for techniques and compositions for the artistic representation of my research. The visual part of this project is presented as a triptych to elaborate on the current division and possible convergence of science and spirituality. The artistic representation symbolically conveys science and spirituality’s differences, their methodological similarities, and potential reactions that people might have in response to finding a coherent truth. The project is aesthetically rendered in black and white, visually harmonizing the piece and emphasizing the concept of collaboration between the two perspectives. Obviously, this project presented an unsolvable issue for me in the short allotted time frame, thus my main aim was to raise viewers’ awareness to the current state of division between science and spirituality. My hope is that my work inspires a meaningful discussion among my peers, potentially making progress on the pursuit of a coherent truth.

Keywords: collaboration, objective, scientific, spiritual, subjective, truth
Introduction

Throughout my life I have observed tension between scientific and spiritual perspectives that has resulted in a tendency toward separation which hinders teamwork among the majority of the population. On the other hand, it has become evident that both perspectives share a significant commonality: their search for truth in the world. It is of utmost importance that the current division of these disciplines be thoroughly examined to establish a potential means to improve their collaboration. Pursuit of a Coherent Truth investigates this separation by exploring the research question: how can science and spirituality collaborate in order to find a coherent truth? The culmination of this investigation is elaborated through a visual representation, symbolically depicting science and spirituality’s separation and their potential collaboration.

Background

I’ve always considered myself blessed with my mother’s influence. Like any good parent, she sought to offer my siblings and me the best of what her parents had bestowed upon her. A sense of spirituality was one of the most important things that she was given, and thus I was raised a Catholic as she was. Growing up, every day was preceded with a sense of guidance, protection, and purpose because it had a source. Through faith and whole-hearted belief that my mother’s guidance had introduced me to a higher power, I prayed and experienced otherworldly joy. In one instance, my mom had told me that whatever I pray for I should pray for with all my heart: I experienced a vibration surrounding my heart as if it were singing, an indescribable loving warmth, and an out of body experience that allowed me see myself pray. This experience, among many others, strengthened my beliefs in a higher power, reinforcing the continuance of Catholicism as part of my life.
Being raised within a Catholic community presented a sense of security and belonging, but did not prepare me for the interaction of diverse perspectives that awaited. In light of conflicting views among my own beliefs, I began to question the establishment that raised me—inquiring about the credibility of the Bible and the ‘authority’ of priests and the church at large. Through my higher learning (spiritual and academic in nature) I had begun a process of scrutinizing my old perspective to understand the world more accurately—through my own eyes. That is not to say that a perspective through the church is bad because I have seen and experienced its benefits, but I no longer saw how that lifestyle could advance my education, spiritually and scientifically.

It is important to note that although my presence at church ended, my acknowledgement of a higher power has never ceased; its definition adapts to knowledge I have gained throughout the years. This step in my life emphasized that while the knowledge one gains is important, how one utilizes that knowledge is just as important. Thus, I adopted a healthy sense of skepticism, assimilating information in accordance to my own beliefs, always expressing gratitude for my mother’s influence that initiated my higher learning.

Observing a general tendency through my education to separate science and spirituality, I sought for a means for collaboration between the two disciplines, much like the assimilation of other views into my own perspective. Through research, I deduced a fundamental commonality between the two perspectives: a search for truth. With this fundamental basis in mind, I was inspired to bring awareness to both disciplines’ current state of separation through this honors research, hoping to invoke a means to improve their ability to work together.

Considering the importance of individual interpretation within each discipline’s approach to truth, and my own artistic background, I realized an artistic representation would be the best
method to bring awareness. Presenting my research findings by artistic means enables individuals to decipher a specific meaning through their own subjective perspectives. In the end, an individual can only rely on their personal experiences—and in that sense, seeing is believing no matter which discipline one abides in; therefore, truth is in the eyes of the beholder. An open-minded perspective is optimal for the pursuit of a coherent truth between science and spirituality, but the fact of the matter is, not everyone will adopt this way of thinking. It is important to acknowledge the breadth of any audience that is likely to see my work and to target the general population as opposed to a specific group. I believe an artistic piece provides its viewers the opportunity to express their individual perspectives and to create a more diverse interpretation of the piece’s concept, thus, diluting my own biased perspective that was initially used to present the need for collaboration between disciplines.

**Process**

**Addressing methodologies**

The tendency to separate science and spirituality is in part due to a difference in methodologies in their approaches to finding truth. At first glance this may appear as a problem, but I beg to differ. Fact of the matter is that every individual relies on their own truths to make sense of the world and guide them on their paths through life. We may have our individual beliefs about how to find truth, or for that matter to define what truth is, but that has not stopped the majority of the population from collaborating thus far. By narrowing down each perspective’s truths, I have been able to examine their methods more easily, more or less controlling for confounding variables. Therefore, to standardize my approach in determining how each discipline approaches truth, I will define the ‘truth’ in question through the Coherence Theory of Truth: “A proposition is true if and only if it coheres with ___.” For example, one
Coherence Theory fills this blank with ‘the beliefs of the majority of persons in one's society.’ Another fills the blank with ‘one's own beliefs,’ and yet another fills it with ‘the beliefs of the intellectuals in one's society’” (Dowden). There are various definitions of truth, and because each perspective will define it with their own vocabulary, I believe this definition will provide a basis from which to build a coherent truth.

In general, spiritual perspectives tend to determine truth through “one’s own beliefs” (Dowden). A group of individuals may have similar beliefs, through a religion for instance, but due to the subjective nature of our individual perspectives, beliefs will never be completely identical. Spiritual beliefs have greatly influenced the world by providing a basis of morality as well as emphasizing a sense of unity among mankind. By speculation, I believe the natural curiosity of humans drove our ancestors to seek causes for why things occurred in the world, eventually giving birth to religions, each consisting of the practice of a culture’s common set of beliefs. God, gods, or spirits were typically given credit for the inexplicable forces that were in question. The most crucial aspect of variance among spiritual beliefs is the culture and environment in which they were developed. Different regions of the world worship different gods or practice different beliefs, resulting in a wide array of spiritual views.

From the scientific perspective, truth is determined through empirical evidence. The conclusions of research at hand may satisfy certain requirements to be deemed ‘true,’ but for a conclusion to be stated as truth, the research process itself must undergo review by its peers. This peer review occurs in response to the goal of objectivity within science: to reduce the chance of biased truth based solely upon one’s individual beliefs. In accordance with the Coherence Theory of Truth, the value of the truth at hand must be considered something that is beneficial to the majority of intellectuals’ beliefs within a field of study. With all due respect, while the main goal
of scientific research is to “achieve truth, they can achieve this goal only approximately, or only to some approximation,” at least within the definition of truth that I have stated (Dowden). In its essence, a scientific perspective’s goal is to be as objective as possible, so that anyone will be able to understand their perspective. However, because this objective truth is highly dependent on the oversight of other individuals, subjectivity is never avoided; it is only reduced. The results may be true according to subjective perspectives of the select individuals that reviewed it though it may not be true to individuals outside of this group. Therefore, it is up to the individuals outside of these groups to decide whether or not to accept the claimed truth because of science’s inability to avoid subjectivity in any research.

Science has always sought to understand how nature worked though it has not always maintained its same method of objectivity. Before its transition to modern science in the Renaissance era, such research was referred to as natural philosophy. Natural philosophy is classified as the thorough examination of subjects that “undergo change and are independent of human beings,” traditionally encompassing a “wide range of subjects which Aristotle included in the physical sciences” (Del Soldato). One interpretation of natural philosophy regards it as consisting of objective disciplines that studied the natural world, including but not limited to alchemy, astrology, and magic (Del Soldato). Another view simply regards “natural philosophy as a ‘precursor’ of modern science, even at the cost of ignoring or removing its connections to” supernatural ideology (Del Soldato). I exert personal preference for the first interpretation because I am a strong believer in acknowledgment of the past as a great teacher. The essence of science is to propose a question of the world and seek to answer it, and that is exactly what these so-called ‘pseudo-sciences’ did. Perhaps these early practices were not as relevant to the modern science as we understand it now though it led to its initiation nonetheless.
Natural philosophy coincides with modern science’s methodology through its observations of the natural world. For example, “disciplines like zoology […] depended on the collection of material, information, and drawings” (Del Soldato). In order to obtain more material from which to learn, wealthy patrons commissioned artists. With patrons’ funding, artists were enabled to venture out into various regions to observe different species of animals as well as different plant life.

Drawings were not simply ornaments to a text, but a necessity for accurate classification of plants and animals…. Nevertheless, the nature of medieval universities was such that teaching was heavily controlled by authorities, and both metaphysics and theology exercised a strong influence, limiting the number of directions in which scientific theorization could advance. (Del Soldato)

It is under these limiting circumstances that we begin to see the separation of spiritual influences and rising scientific perspectives.

Perhaps the authorities at the time controlled the subject matter taught in universities, but that did not stop scholars from proposing new theories in opposition to old views. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), for instance, proposed the heliocentric model as a theory of the structure of our universe (Arny, 50). This theory directly opposed the geocentric model that was being taught in universities, demonstrating that every planet, including Earth, was revolving around the sun, as opposed to everything revolving around the earth (Arny, 51). With advancement in technology, Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) later reinforced the heliocentric model through his use of the telescope by studying the night sky, discovering that the moon’s surface was not perfect, as previous beliefs had claimed, and that Venus had similar phases to the moon’s (Arny, 55). He attempted to make a model of Venus’s phases using the geocentric
model, and it did not work (Arny, 55). Considering the angle at which the sun’s light hit Venus in order to cause its phases, the only model that would work was Copernicus’s heliocentric model (Arny, 55). Unfortunately, due to the stubbornness of the authorities, as well as of the universities, there was no change in what was being taught until much later, despite the evidence. With time, the heliocentric model was adopted by the scientific community and has helped our knowledge of the universe expand ten-fold. It is important to recognize that the authorities, the universities, and these opposing views of the cosmos were all attempting to understand the world on their own terms. Due to the separation of these views we were paradoxically able to establish a new understanding of our place in the universe, but in the end, it would have been impossible to confirm without the consensus of the majority of the population. Thus, establishing a consensus will also be essential for making a change to the division between science and spirituality for the improvement of their collaboration.

The differences between spirituality and science have outweighed their collaboration in the recent past, but they are intertwined through the practice of alchemy during the Renaissance. While “alchemy can be credited with the development of the science of chemistry, a keystone of modern science” ("Alchemy," 2), it still maintains a spiritual aspect in its practice. In fact, “prayer and meditation were part of the alchemist’s lab work,” openly using their subjective perspectives for objective means (Hauck, 78). It was believed that through the spiritual connection they incorporated in their studies, alchemists were able to transform the substances at hand (Hauck, 78). Alchemy is best known for its search for the philosopher’s stone which is “supposed [to have the] ability to transform base metals into precious ones, especially gold and silver… [; it was] also believed that an elixir of life could be derived from it” ("Philosopher’s stone"). It is important to acknowledge that there is variation within alchemy and its practices
among different cultures, some attempting to be more objective than others, but these scientific methods with spiritual beliefs were widely implemented throughout the various alchemic perspectives.

Narrowing our view to western philosophy, it is believed that some recipes for creating gold and silver used in this region make references to Greek alchemy (“Alchemy”). In turn, an important book in Greek alchemy, *Physica et mystica*, “was bestowed by the Arabs on a different work, the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistos, the reputed Hellenistic author of various alchemic, occultic, and theological works…. Hermes ‘the thrice great’ (Trismegistos) was a Greek version of the Egyptian god Thoth and the supposed founder of an astrological philosophy that is first noted in 150 BC” (“Alchemy”). Thoth is also recognized to have written a different version of the Emerald Tablets, presenting in them his autobiography which includes talk of magic and metaphysical beliefs (Mcenroe). Within Thoth’s fourth tablet, The Star Born, he mentions leaving his earthly body and “flash[ing] through the night” (Mcenroe). Reminiscing on this journey he states, “Forth then, my soul sped, through the Cosmos, seeing ever, new things and old; learning that man is truly space-born, a Sun of the Sun, a child of the Stars. Know ye, O man, whatever from ye inhabit, surely it is one with the stars. Thy bodies are nothing but planets revolving around their central suns” (Mcenroe, The Star Born). Acknowledging that the alchemic origin partly derived from ancient Egyptian tablets is fascinating in itself, it is also remarkable that this passage clearly makes a reference to the heliocentric model which was not established until hundreds of years later, as well as in a different region of the world. Furthermore, this ancient text speaks of a human being, “a child of the Stars,” which directly correlates with another later established theory concerning the formation of our solar system. It is widely believed within the scientific field that our solar system was formed from a rotating interstellar
cloud which contained the raw materials necessary to form everything within our solar system, including ourselves— we truly are children of the stars (Arny, 209). This insight from an ancient alchemic perspective emphasizes the importance of retrospection. Perhaps the theory of the formation of our solar system could have been established earlier if scientists were not so quick to separate science and spirituality, dismissing esoteric beliefs in the process. Taking the scientific perspective, I suppose I too would question the credibility of these alchemic sources, but is arriving at the same conclusion not evidence enough to, at the very least, further examine these ancient texts?

Aside from credibility of sources, another reason for the division of the two perspectives is the inquiry into humanity’s origin. To reiterate the concept of each perspective’s subjectivity, it becomes evident that even spiritual perspectives can debate among themselves. The various Christian-based religions, for instance, all read some version of the Bible as their source of truth though each interprets it differently. One common debate among Christians concerns the book of Genesis and God’s creation of the “heavens and the earth” in six days (Basinger). Some interpret this span of time to be the equivalent of our twenty-four-hour period days while others “maintain the fact that ‘a day is to the Lord as a thousand years’” (Basinger). Others do not focus on the specificity of the events and settle for the notion that they were created, and end it at that (Basinger). On the other hand, there are those who adopt a more modern, scientific perspective and intertwine science with their belief, claiming that God directly caused the Big Bang (Basinger). This is an example of one of the more open-minded spiritual perspectives, due to the recognition of both science and spirituality. I appreciate this view the most because it not only acknowledges the fact that both perspectives are searching for an origin, but also emphasizes that it is the origin of all the people who derive from both perspectives that is in question.
Within the scientific perspective, the evolutionary theory is proposed to explain humanity’s origin. In general, students are taught Darwin’s evolutionary theory, if not some variation of it. Lectures on ‘Darwin’s Darwinism’ revolve around the central concept of his theory known as natural selection: whenever a beneficial variation in some aspect of the structure of a species occurs, it will be genetically favored; this new trait will then be passed on through the generations to come (Lennox). Darwin claims that introduction of the beneficial variation into the species would enable the species to survive their environment better than those without the trait, thus allowing them to produce more offspring, passing on the new trait in the process (Lennox). According to the theory, full adaptation occurs over a long duration of time through a gradual process, resulting in slight variations within the same species (Lennox). During Darwin’s initial publication there were many critics of his theory, and still are, mostly because it relies heavily on chance (Lennox). It is implied that an external factor within the environment would initiate the variation in traits; for example the necessity of safety from a predator or a change in a species’ respective environment, though the type of factor, as well as its intensity, is not discussed. Even if there were new traits introduced into a species, this would not assume that only the benefited individuals would continue to survive; it is not as though the environment itself would automatically favor the benefited individuals having the new trait (Lennox). Due to criticism, there have been many revisions to Darwin’s theory for it to be more applicable to new findings. Thus, much like the transition from the geocentric model to the heliocentric, it is evident with the theory of evolution that scientific truths are subject to change. I believe this is not a flaw of a scientific perspective, but its greatest asset because it is willing to acknowledge that it was incorrect to make the necessary changes.

Artistic Representation
**Introduction.** Traditional artists draw from their observations to gain an understanding of the natural world, to gain inspiration for subject matter, and perhaps to manipulate their observations so the images elaborate their own perspectives. It is important to recognize that in any art form, an individual will view whatever subject matter at hand, at least in part, through the perspective of the artist. In other words, all art is overtly subjective even though some artists have represented realistic subjects that would be considered objective, such as early classification of plants within the Renaissance and today’s drawings of nude models. Therefore, *Pursuit of a Coherent Truth* demonstrates my own subjective understanding of my observations of a division between scientific and spiritual perspectives through an artistic lens.

**Composition.** *Pursuit of a Coherent Truth* is presented as a triptych, presenting scientific and spiritual perspectives on the left and right panels respectively. The center piece represents a coherent truth, implicitly referencing religious altarpieces; in any triptych the center panel is regarded as the most important of all three panels. Through this triptych as a whole, I was able to demonstrate the existing distance between science and spirituality as well as their potential collaboration. The panels are cut to represent each perspective unto itself, but their proximity to one another will allow for interpretation of each panel working harmoniously with the other two: placing each concept—science, spirituality, and their collaboration—along a visual spectrum, separate, yet coexisting. This visual spectrum requires, then, each viewer’s individual subjectivity to use their own truths to interpret what each panel’s perspective presents. Thus, the piece can be read as three separate pieces, or as one unified piece. Any one interpretation is dependent on the viewer though I have implemented other visual cues to encourage a unified perspective.
Aside from the triptych composition, another method of encouraging a unified perspective is the overlap of a strong shape. Mimicking Botticini’s technique of using an elliptical shape within his painting *The Assumption of the Virgin Mary* (figure 1) to emphasize an opening in the sky, I referenced a Venn diagram shape, so the center piece could be read as the intersection of both seemingly disparate perspectives. This Venn diagram shape is demonstrated through the contours of the trees placed in each panel, for their branches, roots, and trunks encompass both the outer edge of the shape, in addition to implied lines in between.

In opposition to Botticini, who uses a gradation of colors to create his elliptical shape, I limited myself to rendering the piece in black and white because I believe the reference of the Venn diagram shape will suffice to bring the viewers’ attention in towards the central panel. Along with the intersection presented through the Venn diagram, I wanted to emphasize the sense of duality that this form implies. Such a duality presents the idea that either perspective could not exist without the other. This is evident in human history because those who did not find satisfaction in religion as a means to find truth sought other methods. The Venn diagram shape is one method implemented to emphasize one of the main meanings of the art piece: science and spirituality are both looking for the same truth but through different methods.

In addition to the Venn diagram shape, a repetition of features throughout each panel also encourages interpretation of a unified piece. This is most evident through the use of trees in all of the panels, along with the repetition of circles that move inwards from each panel. The placement of the trees within each panel introduces a sense of symmetry and distribution of visual weight, yet there is obvious asymmetry in the placement of other features which is best viewed close up. Symmetry is further enhanced through a radial composition of the repetition of circles. This approach is replicated in response to Gustave Doré’s *Dante’s Divine Comedy* print,
The Empyrean (134) (figure 2), in which he uses varied line work to bring attention to the center of the piece (The Doré Illustrations...). Because I chose the limitation of only using black and white, a variety of shapes and thickness of lines was implemented to encourage movement of the viewer’s eye, most specifically again towards the work’s center. Looking at Dante’s Divine Comedy print Marco the Lombard (98-99) (figures 3&4), I was inspired to use line variety to give form to the trees by varying the dark and light values of the lines used (The Doré Illustrations...). The trees on the outer panels in combination with the radial composition of the circles guide the viewer’s eye inwards or outwards, depending on where the viewer’s gaze begins. The mass number of circles symbolize everyone’s truth and therefore each one’s contribution to a coherent truth.

Establishing a connection between the panels’ surrounding environment, through the use of trees, acts as a unifying feature but also contains symbolic meaning because of the trees themselves. The tree trunk in the center panel references the Tree of Life within the Bible’s book of Genesis whose fruits supposedly gave immortal life to those who ate it, as well as also referencing the Bodhi tree under which Buddha found enlightenment (“Religions: The Buddha”).

In the scientific panel, the tree is a means to portray the steps of human evolution: first as tree dwellers, gradually making our way onto land. Within the spiritual panel, the tree represents the biblical Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, setting up a space to portray Adam and Eve’s first sin. In general, the use of trees establishes a common environment in which we all interact, and they symbolize a common base from which every perspective starts. We all share a common origin and positioning in the universe, that is certain; it is the manner in which we ponder these certainties that differentiates each discipline. Given our common origin we must consider the concept of Nature vs. Nurture: although we share the earth we live upon, there are various
cultures that influence how we perceive and use the information we gain. Thus, while each panel incorporates a tree in its composition, it is important to note that each panel will also have different interpretations according to the viewers’ respective perspectives.

Supplementary to a unifying an environment, I also presented a common theme of people in various interactions. Both the scientific and spiritual perspectives’ panels incorporate an authority figure(s) speaking towards a crowd of people. The authority figure for the scientific perspective is giving a lecture while the authority figure on the spiritual side is preaching with a Bible in hand. Crowds consist of people with a variety of expressions: some are intrigued by what the authority figures are saying, others disinterested, and others yelling in anger—overall representing our subjective nature. This method of involving various numbers of people in the art work is intended as a response to Bosch’s *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (figure 5). In his piece, Bosch portrays a great sense of linear perspective as figures’ sizes are diminished while the scenery recedes. Mimicking this diminution effect adds to the illusion of the imaginary space presented in my piece.

In addition to a variety of people with different expressions, I also included abstractions of famous icons, such as Jesus, Adam, Eve, and Buddha. The first three are within the spiritual panel: Jesus spreading the word of God, Adam and Eve picking a fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. A Buddha-like figure is placed under the Tree of Life, symbolically portraying that he has found enlightenment under the tree, as in his stories, though within this work’s context he represents enlightenment achieved through both perspectives (“Religions: The Buddha”). References to these famous icons will remind viewers where our past has led us. I hope the general range of depicted people will allow viewers to relate to the
piece in a more direct manner, especially in consideration of the human figures’ various expressions.

The center piece consists of the most diverse expressions among people in the triptych to demonstrate a hypothetical controversy that could arise when discovering a coherent truth. In order to emphasize this hypothetical conflict, some of the same figures portrayed on the scientific and spiritual panels reappear in the central panel. The central panel itself consists of a larger crowd of people compared to the outer panels. Some are in discussion with one another; some in awe point to the coherent truth. Others are pointing back to their respective panel, representing how some people will not change their minds when presented with a coherent truth—even though this coherent truth would, theoretically, be beneficial to every perspective.

**Discussion**

**Implications**

**Community.** Despite differences between scientific and spiritual perspectives, there has always been progress in each field’s search for truth. It is through the very opposition that once divided the perspectives that each gains inspiration to build on their own view. Through debating and dialogue, both perspectives have been able to push each other forward as well as to learn from one another. That is one thing of importance that I would like to demonstrate with this project: differences do not necessarily have to bring one another down; they can build each other up as well. This constructive concept can be clearly observed in opposing spiritual views. There are some radical believers in any perspective that go to extremes to claim their path is superior, “or at least closer to the truth” than other perspectives (Basinger). In a debate among spiritual and scientific perspectives, those who claim this extreme perspective are typically referred to as exclusivists. Concepts such as these set up the debate as a competition as if to say, “My truth is
better than yours”; but that is not the case, at least from my perspective. Corresponding to the Coherence Theory of Truth, everyone has their own right to truth, and thus I believe that there is no hierarchy among beliefs, as well as that all systems of belief are “considered equally close to the truth,” aligning with religious pluralist beliefs (Basinger). Unfortunately, in order to pursue a coherent truth, subjectivity must somehow be reduced in order to discover something that would be applicable to both science and spirituality. Both perspectives must be willing to compromise their beliefs to improve humanity’s progress in the search for a coherent truth in the world.

In regard to deciphering a coherent truth among different perspectives, we must logically acknowledge that “no more than one among a set of incompatible truth claims can be true” (Basinger). Thus, scientific and spiritual views must modify their perspectives to consider others’ points of view. They do not, however, have to completely disregard their own perspective in doing so. This would nevertheless require that they obtain a level of open-mindedness to understand another’s perspective. At the very least, they must consider the possibility of another belief system being correct and theirs being wrong, more or less adopting a healthy sense of skepticism. Due to the lack of objective evidence to deduce any one system of belief to be correct, this would be the most reasonable thing to do for the sake of discussing pursuit of a coherent truth between science and spirituality. Consequentially, this shift of perspective would affect exclusivists the most. While it may be impossible to persuade exclusivists, as well as some others, that all perspectives are equal because that would infringe on their freedom of beliefs, we can still teach the good that each perspective contributes (Basinger). Therefore, there is no direct way to convince anyone to modify their beliefs; they must choose to do so of their own will. Yet teaching others the good of each perspective will, at the very least, expose seekers to the
opportunity to reconsider their own perspectives, and, one may hope, create a more open-minded society.

**Personal.** *Pursuit of a Coherent Truth* not only demonstrates my hopes for the collaboration of science and spirituality, but also an ongoing spiritual theme that I plan to explore through my art work. This theme will inform the future subject matter of my work, visually and conceptually. One piece that exemplifies this spiritual theme is a self-portrait, an acrylic painting I created in the midst of my honors work during the fall of 2016 titled *Higher-Self*. This painting depicts myself demonstrating hand gestures: my right hand is reminiscent of a gesture commonly seen in traditional Renaissance depictions of Jesus; my left hand conveys a hand mudra representing the concept of grounding. In combination, these hand gestures imply that the knowledge of my connection to a higher source is what grounds and motivates me. Therefore, *Pursuit of a Coherent Truth* acts as a stepping stone within my development as an artist, challenging my technical skills and my ability to elaborate the concept of my work and artistic decisions.

Despite the struggles that I faced through my work on this piece, I found therapeutic value throughout its process. This effort proved to be the greatest test of patience in my life, having spent approximately 70 hours total on the repetitive circles alone. I lost myself in the process, instinctively inducing a meditative state while gazing at the circles’ as I drew them. All in all, *Pursuit of a Coherent Truth* gave me the opportunity to reflect on my higher learning thus far and reminded me of my goals for the future, consequentially providing my life with purpose. As a psychology major with an interest in art, I will further my education through graduate school and become a certified Art Therapist: a field of psychology that emphasizes the process of creating art as a means of therapy. Working in this field will allow me to introduce the
therapeutic aspect of art to my local community and make therapy more accessible because of art’s low cost to those who cannot afford counseling.

Conclusion. My hope through this artistic representation is to create a narrative that speaks to individuals’ beliefs, enacting some sort of perplexed state in which they question the fragmented reality that we are all faced with today. I would like viewers to think and ask themselves the same question that I have been exploring: how can science and spirituality collaborate in order to find a coherent truth? A picture is worth a thousand words, but words, by themselves, will not change the division between spiritual and scientific perspectives; actions will. Yet it is through thoughts that the necessary actions will be invoked. While I am certain that I will not be able to find some single absolute method by which to improve collaboration between science and spirituality to find a coherent truth, I will at the very least bring that hope into viewers’ awareness. I am aware that a majority will view this concept and dismiss it, but those who embrace it will serve as a model to others—demonstrating the benefits of an open-minded perspective and so increase the likelihood that others will embrace it as well. I acknowledge that finding a coherent truth for science and spirituality will be a lifelong pursuit, but I am glad that I have put some effort towards it through this project because I truly believe that it will one day make a difference in how people work together. It is important that we, as a society, acknowledge the current limitations we have placed upon ourselves and challenge them in order to progress as a whole, instead of alone and for ourselves.
Bibliography


Figure 2. Doré, Gustave. *The Empyrean. The Doré Illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy* 136

Figure 3. Doré, Gustave. *Marco the Lombard. The Doré Illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy*

Figure 4. Doré, Gustave. *Marco the Lombard. The Doré Illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy*


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