SCIENCE, SPIRITUALITY AND PHILOSOPHY

Uncertainty as an Existential Convergence of Science, Philosophy, and Spirituality

Rohit Ekka

Pontifical Athenaeum Jnana Deepa, Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Ramwadi, Nagar Road, Pune, Maharashtra, India

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Abstract

Uncertainty is a concept as old as humanity's attempt to understand itself and the universe. It reflects an existential condition rooted in the human experience of being intelligent yet limited beings. Throughout history, philosophy has searched for the foundational principle of reality, yet without attaining absolute certainty. Religion likewise emerged from the quest for certainty about the divine, but this search has never produced final or complete assurance. Science, despite its methodological and technological advancements, has also not succeeded in absolutising certainty. This research brings together science, philosophy, and religion through their shared encounter with uncertainty. Although their methods differ, uncertainty remains evident in everyday life through experiences such as border conflicts, political polarisation, struggles over power, migration, environmental crises, illness, and human suffering. These situations demonstrate that, despite humanity's persistent attempts to promote certainty, uncertainty remains an unavoidable dimension of existence, revealing itself as a mystery that never fully discloses its nature. Using an analytic method, this study examines how the central ideas from each of the three disciplines contribute to a unifying understanding of the human being as well as the universe; otherwise, we may end up misunderstanding or even acting wrongly toward our own existence.

Keywords: Uncertainty; certainty; exclusion; inclusion; spirituality; philosophy; science

1 Introduction

It is easy to claim that humans are intelligent (sapiens) beings, but how far are we really intellectually advanced? Throughout human history, we find that humans have lived through many forms of uncertainty. Beginning with the Egyptians, who believed that life exists after death and therefore mummified their kings and queens, and continuing with the Terracotta soldiers of China, we see how uncertainty intertwined spirituality, science, and philosophy in the preservation of rulers (Mark, 2017; Su, n.d.).

Even today, although we are more advanced in our understanding of uncertainty, philosophy, science, and spirituality have become separated due to various reasons. Yet, despite our advancement, we find it very difficult to understand the simple, everyday realities clearly, while we have become more equipped to grasp abstract concepts. For example, when we speak about the environmental crisis, we often praise awareness, yet we hardly understand its real causes. Here again, we encounter the uncertainty of nature and the ecological crisis, which Morton (2016) refers to as Dark Ecology.

Similarly, border conflicts are not new phenomena, as seen in Ukraine and Russia, or Palestine and Israel; these arise from our incomprehension of uncertainty. In the name of economic power and politics, instability emerges, leading to polarisation between the West and the East in terms of power and wealth. This is not a recent story but one that has persisted throughout human history. These

issues raise existential questions about how uncertainty has become both a driving force and a dividing factor within philosophy, science, and spirituality.

Uncertainty functions both as a divide and, more importantly, as a driving force, because humans always desire to know something new. Therefore, uncertainty converges all three disciplines not logically or scientifically alone, but as an existential reality of human experience in the world, whether in politics, economics, ecology, or other domains. All these lived experiences show that while certainty may appear close at hand, it is uncertainty that truly drives and brings these disciplines together.

2 Uncertainty as the triadic drive

When we speak about something, we always exclude other things from our daily living, and we name or define it as the best logic of our healthy lifestyle. I mean that when I say "save plants in the forest," we as humans do not really save; rather, we exclude stones, flowers, soil, rivers, etc. We do this unconsciously, and we may call it "that is how our freedom to live our lives." There are multiple things that we as humans do contrary to this. Let us not think that we, as humans, simply do not like to include others in our circle or in our life dealings; rather, we make this exclusion into an ethics and an aesthetic of our moral spirituality. Yes, we do not act this way in practice, but rather more in the form of the afterlife, or in heaven, or after Moksha, etc. There can be many reasons for excluding some things from others, and in this very way, we also exclude the epistemic search of our sciences, spirituality, and philosophy. It is very much true that even here I am trying to exclude. This truly makes the human brain think: Is it possible to capture our vast epistemic search as a whole? And here, uncertainty comes into play, encompassing the separate epistemic branches of humans, such as science, spirituality, and philosophy.

The triadic relationship of these three disciplines is deeply existential because all of them come into existence only because we humans exist. At the same time, there is uncertainty, as we have been seeing and interpreting the universe according to the methods and principles of each discipline, which are built upon human-based knowledge. In doing so, we have excluded a large part of the universe, such as non-living things and abstract realities. Here, then, comes the convergence of the three, though not in a pure sense. For academic purposes, we may define it as the triadic drive of human progress; however, existentially, when we look at our spirituality, science, and philosophy, they operate within a human-centred approach known as androcentrism. Within this framework, these three become a major driving force in our resource-nationalist world, often in a negative sense. Yet, in a positive sense, these three also allow humans to rethink the "unthoughts" (that we exclude). This means that science cannot be science, philosophy cannot be philosophy, and spirituality cannot be spirituality without the others. Thus, when we speak of these three, they together drive humans to cognise beyond the fences of disciplines, without infringing upon one another's methods and boundaries.

Sometimes it may be hard to accept the triadic drive within academic disciplines, and I agree with this. However, when it comes to the common person's understanding, science may be considered the search for a better version of knowledge; philosophy as the critical search for daily interaction with the world, its possibilities, and its impossibilities; and spirituality as a deeper search for peace and love within a community or an individual. But this is not always true. Reality itself remains a mystery. We find that science is not an independent body that grows by itself; rather, it is driven by various "unthoughts," through which science itself becomes a driving force for other domains, such as social

and political agendas. For example, India wanted to become a nuclear power and therefore sponsored scientists to conduct nuclear tests (Perkovich, 1999). On the other hand, in Jaduguda, the uranium mines have affected the tribal communities of Jharkhand, causing significant environmental as well as social and biological disruption (McLaughlin, 2018; D'Mello, 2023; Majumdar et al., 2025). Can we call our nation a nuclear power in the face of this irony? Although there has been scientific advancement in addressing nuclear radiation challenges, the Indian scientific community often fears governmental power, while tribal people feel that science lacks proper guidance in addressing their issues, even though it remains a powerful driving force.

Similarly, the scientific community speaks of global warming but has never achieved complete certainty about it. Scientists exist, but political leaders pursue resource nationalism, leaving the scientific world in uncertainty. Although the whole world knows that global warming is an issue, no nation fully commits to addressing it. Thus, as Harari (2018) states in 21 Lessons for the 21st Century, global cooperation is required, yet it remains uncertain. In this way, our so-called scientific, spiritual, and philosophical pursuits remain uncertain, yet they continue to converge as a powerful driving force. So here this triadic drive pushes all three, but at the close of the day, we, as humans, realise that our definitions and our discoveries remain very much uncertain. Here, I do not mean that we are absolutely not certain; rather, like Descartes' "I think, therefore I exist," I want to bring out that our certainty lies only in thinking in the present moment (Descartes, 2008). We are not even sure that this thinking of certainty will exist tomorrow or for generations to come. As rightly described by Harari, whenever we perceive problems, we create new solutions, and through these very solutions, we unknowingly become enslaved (Harari, 2015, p. 90). For example, religion was created to keep people together, but later it became a means to eliminate the other, and thus we find that even today this idea governs human society in different parts of the world.

3 Exclusion: The birth of uncertainty

Uncertainty does not mean that we humans do not have logical certainty to act or search for it. But here's what I mean by uncertainty: we humans are so bold as to claim to be so sure of certain certainty, but we have arrived at this concept or phenomenon of certainty by excluding many other factors. Thus, it becomes a limited epistemic reach, but without denying the pragmatic use of our day-to-day living. Of course, what uncertainty I am explaining here is knowing beyond our reach, even though we humans are limited in time and space. When we look at nature, we find the trees, stones, rivers, birds, etc.; we conclude that they are of a lower degree than the human species. When we look at the rich man, consider that it was his hard work, and the poor man is poor because he or she did not work hard, and this way we humans go on, creating exclusion in our own human species' existence; it is a harsh reality from the beginning of human history to exclude in the different names of social structures: religion, colour, race, education, occupation, etc. The irony is that our exclusion is an existential reality. As humans, we excluded animals, plants, etc. But the more alarming irony is that humans have started excluding their own species in the name of migration, national border, terrorism, economic development. And this concept is very vividly explained by Harari: how, in the name of nationalism, bitter exclusion is taking place (Harari, 2018, pp. 129–150). The so-called certainty remains to be explored to move towards uncertainty or what is yet to be known.

Exclusion, therefore, is the mother of our existential uncertainty. The more we exclude, the less we come to know ultimate certainty. Thus, in this process, Heidegger would agree that philosophy began its search for ultimate truth. Still, we have forgotten that this search itself started through separation

and exclusion, which we practised vividly (Heidegger, 1927/2010). Today, philosophy, science, and spirituality are also following the same path, not toward integration, but toward separation, and all three have failed to arrive at certainty. The moment any one of them discovers a form of certainty, another uncertainty emerges that drives further inquiry in search of certainty. Therefore, all three converge at this point: they are human experiences at different levels, each striving to attain certainty within the realm of uncertainty. This is rightly expressed in religious terms by Kierkegaard as the "leap of faith," and this very experience of existence is articulated by Heidegger as "thrownness (*Ge-worfenheit*)." We, humans, are thrown into our everydayness, wherein human society becomes merely a product of its community, leaving little space for new thinking (Carlisle, 2019; Puthenpurackal, 1987). Thus, if we do not exclude in our search for reality within philosophy, science, and spirituality, we may approach ultimate reality through a more holistic mode of inquiry.

4 Dasein as the mode of inclusion

We very much like to call ourselves social animals, but are we truly faithful to this sense of being social? In our daily lives, we find that we often exclude and segregate for practical purposes, and this becomes an existential issue of our being. When we try to become observers, we simultaneously exclude ourselves; so how can we be sure of claims that are said to be certain – not absolute certainty, but pragmatically helpful certainty? Thus, spirituality also attempts to include, because today we are not merely myth-driven; we also keep track of science and philosophy. Similarly, science should not only exclude but also include philosophy and spirituality in order to understand uncertainty. In the same way, philosophy must include spirituality and science if it is to reach and move toward an understanding of uncertainty. As Heidegger rightly points out, we are beings-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) and are thrown into the world. There exists a significant gap in the epistemic search of our being-in-the-world, which is oriented toward the search for possibility (Puthenpurackal, 1987). Here, Dasein denotes that we cannot segregate ourselves from the world as humans; rather, we must include it. Likewise, spirituality, philosophy, and science are in the world and not outside of it. Therefore, inclusion brings us closer to possibilities, which we sometimes name uncertainty.

5 The problems of convergence

When we speak about individual freedom, we humans tend to move away from the vastness of reality because we are not very clear about our existential uncertainty, and we begin to think of the individual as the sole superior of the universe. In the twenty-first century, we are all well attuned to electronic gadgets and are mostly driven by science, its pragmatic approach, and its discoveries; as a result, spirituality and philosophy often appear less important to the younger generation. Further, as I have argued, exclusion does not allow convergence, and when convergence does not happen, uncertainty becomes more difficult to comprehend. Another problem is the independent growth of each discipline, which makes it difficult to study or research uncertainty without exclusion. Because humans are limited beings, they cannot engage in perennial research on their own; rather, knowledge is passed on from one generation to another. Yet another problem is that science cannot absolutely define its norms and definitions of reality, and the same holds true for philosophy and spirituality. A major issue in this regard is that reality itself is pluralistic and in a state of continuous becoming, similar to the idea of *rationes seminales* (Encyclopedia.com, n.d.). What ultimately differentiates these three disciplines from one another is the uncertainty surrounding the certainties they have discovered, which are always conditioned by time, space, and history.

6 New insights into convergence

We humans are greatly blessed with the desire to know what lies beyond, and this desire is rightly described by St. Augustine when he says, "Lord, our hearts are restless until they find rest in you" (Augustine, 1963). This may appear to be a purely spiritual explanation of reality, but within this very statement, we can see that although we reach subjective experiences of reality, we often try to exclude them and label them as uncertain. Yet, even when we call them uncertain, human experience does not cease its search for reality. Essentially, the insight here is not new; it has always been present. In our search for reality, we tend to exclude because of our limitations. However, this uncertainty is not merely a logical convergence of the three disciplines; rather, it is an existential uncertainty that drives and converges science, philosophy, and spirituality as constant seekers of reality. Thus, exclusion does not lead us to understand uncertainty; inclusion does.

7 Conclusion

No matter how these three disciplines converge at the point of existential uncertainty, there is also an existential reality that whatever exists is never the same; it is always in the process of becoming, like the *élan vital* of Bergson (1907/2013). Many traditions define this uncertainty in different ways: Buddhism speaks of anicca or impermanence; Darwin refers to the survival of the fittest; Hinduism speaks of karma; science refers to the Big Bang; and Aristotle speaks of the uncaused cause. All these explanations show that reality is vast, not fixed or fully certain, but deeply pluralistic in its origin and existence. Thus, as humans or as Dasein, we understand not strictly on an individual basis but through a community-based understanding, and we eventually realise that all three disciplines are products of the human species. Therefore, it becomes evident that we need not be stubborn but rather cultivate humility and accept one another's limitations in understanding uncertainty. As Heidegger suggests, Dasein must be a being-in-the-world, not outside the world (Heidegger, 2010). Hence, as a human community, we must move toward greater inclusion of the living, the non-living, and even the invisible in order to come closer to the uncertainty of the universe.

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