

**SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CONCEPTIONS OF COSMIC FORCE**  
**IN**  
**AFRICAN, CHINESE, AND NEWTONIAN PHILOSOPHIES**  
**AND**  
**THE FICTION OF K.J. PARKER AND PHILIP PULLMAN**

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At the interface of metaphysics and epistemology, in which metaphysics is understood as the study of the characteristics that define being in and of itself and of the distinctive identities of forms of being, and epistemology is described as the exploration of the characteristics of and relationships between ways of arriving at knowledge, is an idea that unifies conceptions developed within African and Chinese thought and practices and the magical fantasy of Philip Pullman and K.J.Parker. This conception can be described as that of a cosmic force correlating energy, matter and consciousness.

This conception is understood as *ase* in classical Yoruba/Orisa thought, being similar to an idea described by John Mbiti in his *African Religions and Philosophy* as pervasive in classical African thought and practices. A similar conception is described as *ike* in Chinua Achebe's account of Igbo philosophy in his "The Igbo World and its Art". A related idea is described as *chi* or *qi* in Chinese thought. A similar conception emerges in the motif of *Dust* in *His Dark Materials*, the novelistic trilogy by Philip Pullman, presented first, I think, in the second volume *The Subtle Knife* and summed up in the Wikipedia article on *Dust*. Interestingly, dust is evocatively used in the Buddhist Avatamsaka Sutra as a metaphor for possibilities of consciousness, and, in terms of charcoal and white chalk dust or powder, is representative of cosmic personalities and principles in the Yoruba/Orisa tradition.

This idea of a cosmic force is also evocatively described at length in K.J.Parker's *The Fencer Trilogy*. It has some relationship to Isaac Newton's summative understanding of a force enabling activity in nature, including motion in the human body, a force of which gravity is a subset, presented as a speculative conception, unsubstantiated by scientific analysis, in the conclusion of his *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. Newton might have got or developed this idea through his studies in Hermeticism as seems to be argued by Richard Westfall in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* 1992 essay on Newton that sums up Westfall's Newton biography, *Never at Rest*, its abbreviated book presentation and his book on force in Newton's work, and perhaps presented by Rob Luffe in his *Newton: A Very Short Introduction*, drawing on current Newton scholarship.

These conceptions, from different civilizations, originating in different periods of time, and expressed in terms of disciplines with different ontological presuppositions, such as the relationships between truth and fiction, between animate and inanimate forms of being, could be understood as a continuum along an incline formed by a related core of ideas. Taken collectively, these various conceptions include the notion of a force that pervades the cosmos and is describable in terms of imbuing various forms of matter, human, plant, animal, geological and aquatic, among others, with consciousness. It is used as a summative description of human possibility, in terms of the ability to create change as demonstrated in human cognitive capacity and action, from intellectual mentation to imagination and psychic perception. All these characteristics do not emerge in all the examples I have given. The notion of a cosmic force, however, unifies all of them.

My practical, personal exploration of a range of cognitive possibilities, from reasoning to extra-sensory perception, convinces me that this conception, understood in terms of the integration of the various related presentations, is more inclusive of relationships between consciousness, life and matter as demonstrated in human beings and animate and non-animate forms of nature, than any other conception I have come across so far in my general as well as more carefully investigated exposure to ideas of relationships between energy, matter and consciousness.

This understanding of relationships between all forms of being is marked by conceptions of mobility and mediation, understood in terms of transformation of forms of being from one state to another and of human cognition as traversing and integrating various ways of knowing and realms of being.

Recent research in animism, complexity theory and sacred landscape, including Watkin's conception of ley lines as patterns of energy running across landscape, could provide further correlations and insights.

I hope to organize this growing understanding of mine and present it sooner or later.

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