



FROM SELFHOOD TO SOCIAL SOLIDARITY; FROM A MIND TOWARDS THE COLLECTIVE THINKING AND WORKING BODIES: A MARXIST APPROACH

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What our minds and conceive, our bodies can achieve. I will argue that “the mind is not then an autonomous substance, capable of forming its own states without recourse to what lies beyond it: it states arrive by courtesy of a specific external environment.” It means that, our minds appropriates the contents of the material world and this act in turn forms the other contents of our minds and its various categories. Hence, it is not a “surprising thesis that the very constitution of mind is logically bound up with environment. The geography of the mind depends upon actual geography. Undeniably the content of our minds is influenced by society and the world in general, for the former arises because of the existence of the latter.

This conscious mind, Selfhood must lead to a collective thinking or collective minds that is utterly necessary for the development of the body and this development from further extend to the development of the body politic (Social Solidarity).

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I. THE BRAIN AND THE MIND

What thing or entity is the brain that it can produce both mind and consciousness? Where does it get its power that it can trigger a thought, create and correspondingly retrieve a particular memory by sheer will, if necessary?

What generates or empower its engine?

Nonetheless, it is not only the brain that must manifest itself; the mind must also mind itself. We must mind our minds and aspire always to be fully conscious of our mental states and consciousness, so that in regularly doing so --- we may avoid returning or descending to the clutches of the unconscious, worst of mindlessness.

We can will what we want, for there are things that we can do with the use and the power of our minds. We can willed our will, so as our action; for we have the power to control our minds.

We are what we repeatedly do. Hence, if we will be in constant reflection and thorough introspection of our inner forces, then perhaps one fine day both the mind of the mind and the content of (our) consciousness will reveal itself to the fullness and finally we may attain that sense and sphere of Consciousness in its totality.

Practice makes perfect!

We can will the will. For the simple truth is that: it is not only the body that follows the mind, the mind must also follows and give in to the dictates of the body.

This sense of determined and active awareness, it is hope may lead us to further understanding of our complex and 'mysterious' various inner processes; but the question must be posed: for

what is the brain and so as the mind, without the body and its physical elements specifically the/our hands?

THE HANDS AS THE EXECUTOR AND IMPLEMENTING UTILITY OF OUR MINDS

It is undeniable as Ernst Fischer contends that:

“the pre-human being which developed into man was capable of such development because it has a special organ, the hand, with which it could grasp and hold objects. The hand is the essential organ of culture, the initiator of humanization. This does not mean that it was the hand alone that made man: nature, and particularly organic nature, does not allow of such simple and one-sided sequences of cause and effect. A system of complicated relationships --- a new *quality* --- always comes of a set of diverse reciprocal effects. The passing of certain biological organisms into the tree stage, favouring as it did the development of vision at the expense of the sense of smell; the shrinking of the muzzle, facilitating a change in the position of the eyes; the urge of the creature now equipped with a more acute and more precise sense of vision to look in all directions, and the erect body posture conditioned by this; the release of the front limbs and the enlargement of the brain due to erect body posture; changes in food and various other circumstances acted together to create the conditions necessary for man to become man.”¹

ON THE QUESTION OF THE NECESSITY OF INTENTIONALITY

Intentionality must not be only on the level of the mind or a mere intention; it should lead to the level of action.

What it is on neural mechanisms of our perceptual processes that/which underlie the various domains in our human decision-making and eventual decision? What is the content of those perceptual processes?

¹ Fischer, Ernst, *The Necessity of Art*, translated by Anna Bostock, Penguin Books, 1959, page 16.





Undeniably, “these domains of decision-making can range from simple decisions such as selecting which food to consume to more complex ones such as making a bet on risky lotteries”, but after the complex and sometimes tumultuous internal process, what led us to do to what we eventually do?

For what is the intention, without acting on it? Our corresponding action will undeniably reveal our desired intention.

To me, the content of the mental state or the desire to do or accomplish a thing is important to the question of: what is the content or the basis or the moral of the decision or the action of the person in a given and concrete situation?

Indeed, what the mind can conceive the body can achieve, but I ardently wish to know and understand what is/are the inner relationships between consciousness that animates and characterizes the mind, desires that tickles our soul, intentions that consume us that led ultimately to our actions that we, indeed did or launched?

In a word: why we do what we do?

Both the body and the mind, with the heart must all be willing to unite --- in order to reach the goal or the desired objective, whatever it is.

All these inner elements must concur.

We learn to learn. We learn through thinking. We learn for our own experiences and the experiences of others. We learned through our past mistakes by acting on what we suppose initially thought as correct. We learn to correct, adapt, modify and further develop our mental states and present ethical beliefs and moral disposition. There must be a conscious mind to both apprehend and

appreciate it. In all of these, consciousness is the key. Consciousness must be tackle in relation to intentionality, not mere desires and wishes. Intentionality as a primary mental state is utterly necessary and an indispensable element for one’s introspection and realization which are needed for critical thinking and internal deliberations!

For the development of the mind involves not only accepting new facts and truths, but also our right act of discarding false consciousness and unwise knowledge.

We have the power to change our minds, for further development, for rectification and self-correction; our admission of our limitations --- based on our momentous discovery and realization of what is true, pure, the sublime, the just, the good and the beautiful...

Still, the pertinent question must be asked: what is the very content of the willing side of the mind?

What compel us to do the things that we wishes to do?

What power or empowers an actor to do what he or she intends or wills to do?

It is our inner desire or our sheer will that generates these whole complicated phenomenon? I say that this is complicated phenomenon by virtue of that fact that, more often than not, we merely evaluate or judge the final outcome of the whole thing; what I am referring to is the action of the said individual.

I say that this is utterly an incomplete reading of the whole process. For in truth and in fact, we also have to put into consideration the turbulence, the dilemma, the internal hardship and the burning inner deliberation and brutal introspection





done or underwent by the actor before he or she finally decided to pursue the object of his or her desire that led to the accomplishment or consummation of the said action.

Indeed, “the role of the will is not to understand the world but to change it²; not to represent the world as it is, but to make it conformable with what the agent wants. Because of this the will is by nature active...”³

The pertinent question here is: what makes the will active and what is the content of our will? It is my belief and so hold that the content of our beliefs and so as our will is not fixed, not merely by what is true of us, but also by the environment in which we are placed.

Same with culture, our beliefs and will is dynamic. They change as time and society and the world for that matter change.

Nothing is ever remains the same. We change as time change. All in gradual terms will experience their respective maturity and further development. It is hope that this development will lead into Enlightenment. Nonetheless when I say that we changed, it does not mean that we are no longer the same person; what I am saying is that: we remain who we are but a better version of our former (mental) selves!⁴

ON CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE CONTENT OF MENTAL PHENOMENA

Indeed, the dawn of consciousness gave us our first taste of experience, but the question is: when

² I overwhelmingly concur with Professor Colin McGinn here and this is also in line with the Eleventh Thesis of Karl Marx: “Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; that is not the point, the point however is to change it.” See his Eleventh Theses on Feuerbach, 1845.

³ Professor Colin McGinn, *The Character of the Mind*, Oxford University Press, 1996, page 116.

⁴ My discussion on this particular portion is influenced by the debate between two ancient Greek philosophers, namely Heraclitus and Parmenides. See, *Early Greek Philosophy*, Penguin Classics, translated and edited by Jonathan Barnes, Second Revised Edition, 2001, pages 190-191.

was the exact time or period in human evolution and/or history does consciousness arises?

When was “the sudden switching on of a light, narrow as the original shaft must have been” occurs?

Undeniably, consciousness is a very peculiar thing. It cannot be seen or touched, or studied under a microscope; yet it is for each of us the most obvious reality in the world.

How could it be? How could something be so obvious be so puzzling?

Put or ask it in another way, how could something that we know that is so evident, for that matter be so elusive?

It’s there, we are aware, yet we keep on pursuing it, so to speak. Is that our way of validating something that is beyond validation?

Indeed, “there must be *some* truth of the matter about consciousness and its relation to the brain.”⁵

How could the brain which is a material entity able to produce consciousness and experience and how that experience strikes me is a function of how it represents the world.

Further, I agree that it is content that fixes consciousness, and vice versa --- the two cannot be pulled apart.

As Professor Colin McGinn stated:

“...that consciousness is a deep mystery: is intentionality then also a mystery, in the light of its intimate connexion with consciousness; or is it that the mystery of consciousness can be reduced by approaching it through the topic of intentionality? I inclined to view that the mystery of consciousness gets

⁵ Professor Colin McGinn, *The Character of the Mind*, Oxford University Press, 1996, page 41.





transferred to intentionality --- the having of content on the part of mental states partakes of the mystery of consciousness. We may be able to say under what circumstances a given content will become attached to a conscious state --- it may be a certain pattern of causal relations that brings this about --- but that is not yet to explain what having such a content consist in. and there is something very special about this: the content of my experience is presented to me in a peculiarly intimate way, with which we are all familiar. The content is for me, part of my consciousness; and it is this that is puzzling and unique.”⁶

Our objective is to capture this “special relation between the conscious subject and the content of his mental states.”

In the words of David Weissman:

“My own mental states are directly inspectable, with no gap between them and me. There is no reason then for commending or inflating the evidence which might justify my claims, for I say of my mind exactly what mind shows itself to be, not more or less. Still, my verbal reports about my mental life are only the expression of my self-knowledge, not that knowing itself. My self-knowledge is not essentially linguistic or even propositional. I know my mind because I am immediately available to self-inspection. The judgments made about me are true, and known to be so because the mind knowing is identical with the mind known.”⁷

Question:

Does the possession or the process of experiencing content innate or is it environmentally generated?

Critical Discussion/Adumbration:

Will I have an idea or a thought of what does it feel to be a father if I will not have a girlfriend and/or wife?

Assuming that I already have a girlfriend and/or a wife, does it make me already a father?

⁶ Professor Colin McGinn, *The Character of the Mind*, Oxford University Press, 1996, page 81.

⁷ Weissman, David, *Intuition and Ideality*, State University of New York Press, Chapter Two: The Dialectical Cycles of Intuitionist Method, 1987, page 53.

My point on the matter is that: thinking and desiring to have a girlfriend or a wife is not enough for the realization of a desired actuality. Having a girlfriend or a wife for that matter is still not enough to fulfill that dream of fatherhood.

The two selves must decide⁸ to make love and unite and hope that their joint efforts may bear fruit.

It is not merely wishing, dreaming, aspiring and deciding, in all of this intentionality must lead to an action.

Is there a way for us to know in its entirety the contents of the content of our mental states?

Question:

Indeed, we have our privilege access to our minds and thoughts, but what criteria are we going to choose in order for us to choose the most appropriate and reasonable sets or type of thoughts that hopefully may help us to decide on the most just action?

To think for ourselves and to act independently based on the categories that we ourselves legislated and constructed, to pursue our own rules, norms and regulations that we; the inner us crafted and deliberated will lead undeniably to a firm and constitutive structure of our own mental criterion.

The aim is to harmonize these various mental infrastructures, categories and concepts and to clarify their interrelationship with each other.

My point is that: there are so many thoughts going on in our thoughts/minds. Of course, we must be aware of this and be fully conscious,

⁸ The Greeks call this as Kairos or the moment of decision or the momentous event.





before we can begin the process of reflecting and deliberating. Incontestably, introspection is the key. Nonetheless, there are times when introspection is also not enough. Perhaps the other side or halves of our minds is undecided or lazy or not into it. How are we going to activate the active or willing side or halves of our minds?

Can there be content in the complete absence of consciousness?

The answer is a definite no!

To reiterate, it is content that fixes consciousness, and vice versa --- the two cannot be pulled apart. Further, to answer the question squarely: how could there any content of the mind, how could we have any mental states, if there is a complete absence of consciousness?

Nonetheless, one can have a narrow content if that creature is not aware and/or unconscious. Consciousness is an extreme necessary element for an individual to be conscious, aware, alive and active. For in truth and in fact “consciousness is the touchstone of what it is of having a conscious mind.”

If one is not aware, then there is not content, because there is no consciousness that will generate awareness and content which is then stored in our memory. It is as simple as that!

To quote our Professor on this:

“The very notion of consciousness it seems is available only to those who already know what it is to be conscious by virtue of being conscious: that is, if you are conscious you know what it is to be so (if you are capable of knowledge at all); but if you are not you will never learn.”⁹

Can there be a theory on content in that is neutral with respect to the mind-body problem?

The answer is no!

Not only that that theory shall be shallow, but undeniably myopic, to say the least.

One must have consciousness and intentionality in order for that person to have content. The content of our minds is developed and cultivated by our various experiences, experiences that were possible for us to appreciate, experienced, harness and cherish, etc. because of our action through intentionality.

Consciousness and content generates and complement each other through what I may call as an integrative and dialectical process. The “inner” and the “outer” do have a harmonious and special relationship!

Our present consciousness and the actual contents of our minds will indubitably reveal the state not only of our mental states, but also the extent, range and level of our intellectual development and inner maturity. Said states shall also shows beauty of our selfhood/personhood and the content of our character.

Incontestably, the development of our rationality is also in direct proportion and undeniable relation to the development of our morality. Hence, the state of our humanity can be measure or gauge in a certain extent to the level and/or state of our intellectual and ethical maturity are persons and beings.

Again to quote our Professor McGinn:

“Perceptions, beliefs and memories carry propositional content, and mental processes consist in transitions

⁹ Professor Colin McGinn, *The Character of the Mind*, Oxford University Press, 1996, page 13.





of content --- as when a perception causes a belief whose content is then stored in memory. Conscious states are bearers of content and are defined by the content they bear.”¹⁰

THE THREE (3) MOMENTS OR STAGES OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS¹¹

- a. Primitive self-awareness
- b. Self-alienation¹²
- c. Self-realization

In the first stage, nature dominates man. In the second, which is the current stage private property grows and nature merely an object for man. While in the third stage, the private property is abolished and man realizes himself fully.

Indeed, “it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.”¹³

On Personal Identity and Memory

If consciousness is the touchstone of what it is of having a conscious mind, and content is its chief bearer; then the question of personal identity must be tackled in relation to intentionality and undeniably that of memory.

As David Hume lucidly stated:

“To begin with *resemblance*; suppose we could see clearly into the breast of another, and observe that succession of perceptions, which constitutes his mind or thinking principle, and suppose that he always preserves the memory of a considerable part

of past perceptions; ‘tis evident that nothing could more contribute to the bestowing a relation on this succession amidst all its variations. For what is the memory but a faculty, by which we raise up the images of past perceptions? And as an image necessarily resembles its objects, must not the frequent placing of these resembling perceptions in the chain of thought, convey the imagination more easily from one link to another, and make the whole seem like the continuance of one object? In this particular, then, the memory not only discovers the identity, but also contributes to its production, by producing the relation of resemblance among the perceptions. The case is the same whether we consider ourselves or others.”¹⁴

It is my contention that there is a great possibility that we humans have some genetic material memory transmitted to us by our ancestor innately embedded in our DNA bequeathed to us through intergenerational transmission. All of these learned information and inherited collective and historical experiences form part of what we have now as our memory. Hence, when we speak of our memory, it is not only our very own, because a great part of them were from our forefathers.

In the moving words of the Polish exiled, Eva Hoffman:

“One that fundamental level, a culture does not exist independently of us but within us. It is inscribed in the psyche, and it gives form and focus to our mental and emotional lives. **We could hardly acquire a human identity outside it, just as we could hardly think or perceive outside language. In a way, we are nothing more --- or less --- than an encoded memory of our heritage.**

“It is because these things go so deep, because they are not only passed on us but are *us*...”¹⁵

¹⁰ Professor Colin McGinn, *The Character of the Mind*, Oxford University Press, 1996, page 115.

¹¹ See Richard Osborne’s *Philosophy for Beginners*, Illustrated by Ralph Edney, Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc., New York, 1991, pages 122.

¹² I shall discuss this further at the last section of this work.

¹³ Karl Marx’s *Preface, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 1859.

¹⁴ David Hume from his *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part IV, Section VI (1739).

¹⁵ Eva Hoffman, *The New Nomads from Letters of Transit Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss* Andre Aciman, Eva Hoffman Bharati Mukherjee Edward Said Charles Simic, Edited by Andre Aciman, Published in collaboration with The New York Public Library, 1999, page 50. My emphasis.





All this makes us who we are. Of course, such a position need not hold that we are just 'stamped out' by society or that we are just creatures of our body politic. We are participants in our own construction and exercise some autonomy in the face of the forces of socialization. Nevertheless, on such view, the influence of social forces is the paramount determinant in the shaping of our identity and in our relation to our fellows.

In the beautiful demonstration of Frederick Copleston:

"Let us suppose that a man has seen a certain landscape many times, so that it has become familiar to him. If he wants to see beautiful scenery he takes his car and makes a journey into the next country. Then one day he suddenly notices or adverts to or realizes the beauty of the familiar landscape. Again, a man may have seen another person acting in a certain manner on several or perhaps on many occasions. Then one day he notices or adverts to or realizes the significance of this way of acting; that is to say, he adverts to the relation between this way of acting and the person's character, he notices for the first time how it reveals the person's character. In both cases the man sees what he has seen before, a certain landscape in the first case and certain actions in the second, but he notices what he has not noticed before."¹⁶

Indeed, memory contributes in the production, acquisition and further construction of our identity. While identity is the very pillar of what it is to be; to have a self.

In the words of Professor Alasdair McIntyre:

"In many pre-modern, traditional societies it is through his or her membership in a variety of social groups that the individual identifies himself or herself and is identified by others. I am brother, cousin and grandson. Member of this household, that village, this tribe. These are not characteristics that belongs to human beings accidentally, to be stripped away in order to discover 'the real me'. They are part of my substance, defining partially at least and sometimes

¹⁶ Copleston, Frederick, S. J., *Contemporary Philosophy Studies of Logical Positivism and Existentialism*, Burns and Oates, London, Third Edition, 1963, page 83.

wholly my obligations and my duties. Individuals inherit a particular space within an interlocking set of social relationships; lacking that space, they are nobody, or a least a stranger or an outcast. To know oneself as such a social person is however not to occupy a static and fixed position. It is to find oneself placed at a certain point on a journey with set goals; to move through life is to make progress --- or to fail to make progress --- toward a given end. Thus a completed and fulfilled life is an achievement and death is the point at which someone can be judged happy or unhappy. Hence the ancient Greek proverb: 'Call no man happy until he is dead.'¹⁷

Hence, it follows that if we will lose our memories, we may also lose our sense of identity, including our very selves.

On the Doctrine of Externalism

If we vary the environment, then we vary the belief content: purely subjective or internal facts are not sufficient to entail specific content. In a slogan: beliefs aren't in the head --- or are not wholly so. This doctrine is known as externalism, since it holds that the contents of the mind can be determined by factors external to the subject. The mind is not then an autonomous substance, capable of forming its own states without recourse to what lies beyond it: it states arrive by courtesy of a specific external environment.

Meaning, our minds appropriates the contents of the material world and this act in turn forms the (other) contents of our minds.¹⁸

...it is the much surprising thesis that the very constitution of mind is logically bound up with environment. The geography of the mind depends upon actual geography.¹⁹

¹⁷ McIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue A Study in Moral Theory* Third Edition, University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 2010, pages 33-34.

¹⁸ My discussion on this particular portion is influenced by the ancient Greek natural philosopher Anaxagoras. See, *The Greek Philosophers From Thales to Aristotle* by W. K.C. Guthrie, Methuen & Company, London, 1950, pages 54-55.

¹⁹ Professor Colin McGinn, *The Character of the Mind*, Oxford University Press, 1996, page 74.





Undeniably the content of our minds is influenced by society and the world in general, for the former arises because of the existence of the latter.

Critical commentaries

If that is the case, does it mean that the contents of our minds are determined in a large sense by the environment? Or to put in in another way: does it logically follows that our mental states are in a sense govern and/or control by the prevailing circumstance we are in?

I am not saying that our minds **is only** determined by our environment, we also have to put into consideration the inner content of our mental content.

What I am saying is that, there should be a holistic approach: the inner content of our minds and our actual environment must concur in order for us to arrive to a certain degree of knowledge and understanding, in the end hope of further enlarging the scope and power of our consciousness.

To quote Professor Colin McGinn:

“One thing is clear at once: the knowing and willing halves of a mind do not operate independently of each other. What a creature knows its dispositions to act, and what a creature does affects what it knows. Thus perceiving as predator will prompt the will of an agent, and the resulting action (fleeting, etc.) will change what is perceived, which in turn will lead to appropriate action. There is evidently an interplay between the two halves of a mind; and this for a good reason. Evolved creatures are intent upon preserving their lives, and bodily action is (for many of them) essential to their survival; but actions need to be guided by information about the world if they are to serve the end of survival. From this point of view action would be useless without knowledge, and knowledge would be pointless without action. Indeed, it begins to seem that the active side of the creature’s mind is primary²⁰, since it is the function of perception and knowledge to guide and control action: cognitive phenomena

²⁰ Is the active side of our minds, the most active among the halves --- the source of our will?

can be properly understood only in the light of their role in informing action --- creatures can think only because they must act. These considerations certainly demonstrate a tight bond between knowledge and action...²¹

On the Two-Fold Aspects of Reality

It is my contention no matter how controversial it is that, indeed there exist two realities: the reality within us and the reality without. We are both man and product of nature. As man, we are endowed by nature a human brain (which is material and has an inner life) that is material which has the capacity and power to create and generate consciousness (not material but utterly essential in our lives) that is necessary to feel, collate and collect experiences. This experiences in turn taken as a whole through the years forms our very conception of our selves by virtue of our collective mental banks which we stored in our memories.

Hence, there is the constant interaction between the mental, non-mental and again back to the mental.

As man seeks to further understand himself/his being and others; and the world in general, it is not only his mind, his consciousness that is at work, but undeniably is/their actions.

I vehemently disagree with George Berkeley’s contention²² that we do not experience material objects, nor are our ideas caused by objects existing independently of minds.

How could it be logically possible when we ourselves are material products and our very brains are material themselves?

²¹ Professor Colin McGinn, *The Character of the Mind*, Oxford University Press, 1996, page 117.

²² See Berkeley’s *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Critical Studies, Edited by Gale W. Engle and Gabriele Taylor, Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1968, Introduction, page 5. See also, Berkeley’s *Two Concepts of Mind* by C. M. Turbayne of the same book on page 29.





It is impertinent and idiotic to state that: the chair exists because I am perceiving it! Whether one perceives it or not, that bloody chair will continue to exist, because it has a material reality independent of that perceiver. It is not only the perceiver that gives or create reality; for in truth and in fact, a lot of the things that we wish or failed to perceive have an existence and reality independent of our perception.

There is the reality outside that we can comprehend using our sense-perception and reason, and the reality that it within us, by way of reflection and introspection, utilizing the inner life of our brain in order for us to experienced experience(s) and indeed, consciousness itself.

Perhaps, it is only after we successfully merged, united and/or combined these external and internal elements that we may speak that we have minds and that we are now beginning to think consciously. For in truth and in fact, it is consciousness that animates the mind and consciousness it is foundational touchstone.

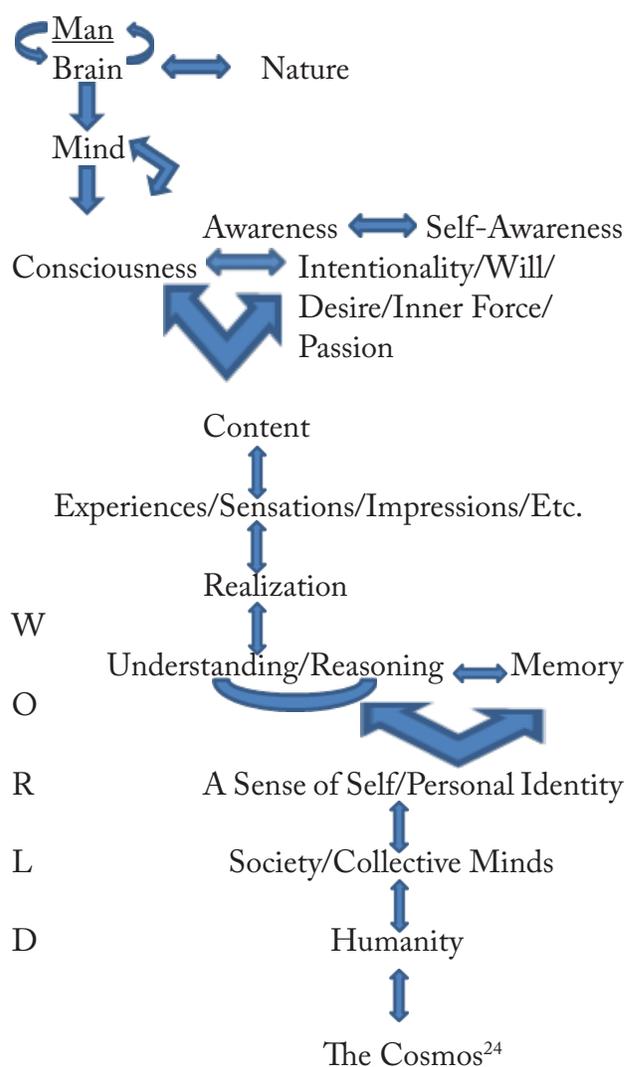
Hence, the perceiver who has a mind and consciousness that acts on that idea or sensation or desire in order to have an experience and so as the thing that we need or wishes to perceive forge a dialectical relationship.

This is in-line with Marx and Engels, when they written that:

“That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness,

thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. **Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.** In the first method of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness.”²³

Theoretical Illustration



²³ Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich, *The German Ideology*, edited by R. Pascal, International Publishers, New York, 1963, pages 13-14. My emphasis.

²⁴ De Vega, Jose Mario, D., *The Dialectics of Inner and Material Reality*, April, 2018.





Critique of Professor Collin McGinn's central contention

I disagree with our author that we cannot overcome the conceptual limitations that make the mind-body problem so hard.

That in my view is like giving up on the cause and the overall enterprise. Though I concede that our concept-forming and even our overall ability or capability to know ourselves, as of the moment is limited or perhaps primitive, nonetheless it is my belief that that state or naivete of ours is not final. To reiterate, we learn to learn.

We have it upon and within ourselves the capacity, nay the power to unlock all the 'mysteries' of our beings; both within and without.

Equally, let it be recorded and duly noted that I also strongly disagree with his theory of the so-called "new mysterianism". That is "the idea that the human mind is not equipped to solve the problem of consciousness."

We may still be young, amateur, naïve or primitive in reference to the continuing evolution of our species, but man's mind is not fixed, but rather dynamic and progressive. We have been given by nature the curiosity and the unlimited desire to know things. We will keep on thinking and working about this. Knowing man, we will not stop nor cease from pursuing this thought and project! We shall not fail! Man will succeed!

Indeed, man's mind always sets itself only such tasks or problems as it can solve. Now, looking at the matter more closely, "we will always find that the task itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation." We will reach eventually the end of the tunnel and finally see the light.

To quote the utterly futuristic and revolutionary forecast of the French philosopher Antoine Nicolas de Condorcet:

"If man can, with almost complete assurance, predict phenomena when he knows their laws, and if, even when he does not, he can still, with great expectation of success, forecast the future on the basis of his experience of the past, why, then, should it be regarded as a fantastic undertaking to sketch, with some pretense to truth, the future destiny of man on the basis of his history? The sole foundation for belief in the natural sciences is this idea that the general laws directing the phenomena of the universe, known or unknown, are necessary and constant. Why this principle be any less true for the development of the intellectual and moral faculties of man than for the other operations of nature? Since beliefs founded on past experiences of like conditions provide the only rule of conduct for the wisest of men, why should the philosopher be forbidden to base his conjectures on these same foundations, so long as he does not attribute to them a certainty superior to that warranted by the number, the constancy, and the accuracy of his observations?...

"The time will therefore come when the sun will shine only on free men who know no other master but their reason; when tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid hypocritical instruments will exist only in works of history and on the stage; and when we shall think of them only to pity their victims and their dupes; to maintain ourselves in a state of vigilance by thinking on their excesses; and to learn how to recognize and so to destroy, by force of reason, the first seeds of tyranny and superstition, should they ever dare to reappear among us."²⁵

Without the slightest iota of doubt, whatsoever, we have the power to overcome this so-called primitivism of ours and our so-called conceptual limitations. There is nothing that we cannot transcend.

To paraphrase the novelist Dan Brown²⁶, one day, it will dawn upon us.

²⁵ Antoine Nicolas de Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (1793). See also, Gloria K. Fiero's *The Humanistic Tradition The Early Modern World to the Present*, Sixth Edition, Volume II, McGraw-Hill, New York, 2011, pages 145-146.

²⁶ From his novel, *"The Vinci Code"*, 2003.





Question:

Who the bloody hell is the one who stipulated this so-called limitation in the first place?

In my view, this is not only a defeatist attitude, but undeniably a slander to the capacity, the power and the limitless potential of the human spirit.

We have all the necessary tools, skills and power to unravel, demystify, unlock, learn and consequently understand the inner general operations and overall principles which govern the way thought acquires its content, and the way correspondingly these contents manifested and highlighted in our judgments and actions.

The fight goes on... The March of Reason continues...

II. THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM AND ITS RELATION TO THE CAMPS BETWEEN IDEALISM AND MATERIALISM

Friedrich Engels succinctly narrated the following:

“The great basic question of all philosophy, especially of more recent philosophy, is that concerning the relation of thinking and being. From the very early times when men, still completely ignorant of the structure of their own bodies, under the stimulus of dream apparitions came to believe that their thinking and sensation were not activities of their bodies, but of a distinct soul which inhabits the body and leaves it at death — from this time men have been driven to reflect about the relation between this soul and the outside world. If, upon death, it took leave of the body and lived on, there was no occasion to invent yet another distinct death for it. Thus arose the idea of immortality, which at that stage of development appeared not at all as a consolation but as a fate against which it was no use fighting,

and often enough, as among the Greeks, as a positive misfortune. The quandary arising from the common universal ignorance of what to do with this soul, once its existence had been accepted, after the death of the body, and not religious desire for consolation, led in a general way to the tedious notion of personal immortality. In an exactly similar manner, the first gods arose through the personification of natural forces. And these gods in the further development of religions assumed more and more extramundane form, until finally by a process of abstraction, I might almost say of distillation, occurring naturally in the course of man's intellectual development, out of the many more or less limited and mutually limiting gods there arose in the minds of men the idea of the one exclusive God of the monotheistic religions.

“Thus the question of the relation of thinking to being, the relation of the spirit to nature — the paramount question of the whole of philosophy — has, no less than all religion, its roots in the narrow-minded and ignorant notions of savagery. But this question could for the first time be put forward in its whole acuteness, could achieve its full significance, only after humanity in Europe had awakened from the long hibernation of the Christian Middle Ages. The question of the position of thinking in relation to being, a question which, by the way, had played a great part also in the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, the question: which is primary, spirit or nature — that question, in relation to the church, was sharpened into this: **Did God create the world or has the world been in existence eternally?**

“**The answers which the philosophers gave to this question split them into two great camps. Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature and, therefore, in the last instance, assumed world creation in some form or other — and among the philosophers, Hegel, for example, this creation often becomes still more intricate and impossible than in Christianity — comprised the camp of idealism. The others, who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism.**”²⁷

As early as in the spring of 1845, Marx had written in his Theses II and III on Feuerbach that:

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but

²⁷ Engels, Friedrich, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Progress Publishers edition, translated by Progress Publishers, 1946, first page of Part II on Materialism. My emphases.





is a practical question. Man must prove the truth — i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question.

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.

The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*.²⁸

Meaning, theory without practice is dead or subjective. Theory must be put into the furnace of practice, to the everyday struggle of man in his society and the whole world.

As Marx brutally and wittily stated in the *Paris Manuscripts*:

“You see, therefore, that even physically man owes his existence to man. Therefore you must not only keep sight of the one aspect – the infinite progression which leads you further to inquire: Who begot my father? Who his grandfather? *etc.* You must also hold on to the circular movement sensuously perceptible in that progress by which man repeats himself in procreation, man thus always remaining the subject. You will reply, however: I grant you this circular movement; now grant me the progress which drives me ever further until I ask: Who begot the first man, and nature as a whole? I can only answer you: Your question is itself a product of abstraction. Ask yourself how you arrived at that question. **Ask yourself whether your question is not posed from a standpoint to which I cannot reply, because it is wrongly put. Ask yourself whether that progress as such exists for a reasonable mind.** When you ask about the creation of nature and man, you are abstracting, in so doing, from man and nature. You postulate them as non-existent, and yet you want me to prove them to you as existing. **Now I say to you: Give up your abstraction and you will also give up your question. Or if you want to hold on to your abstraction, then be consistent, and if you think of man and nature as non-existent, then**

think of yourself as non-existent, for you too are surely nature and man. Don't think, don't ask me, for as soon as you think and ask, your abstraction from the existence of nature and man has no meaning. Or are you such an egotist that you conceive everything as nothing, and yet want yourself to exist?”²⁹

I begin this paper by a quote from Ernst Fischer, I believe it is but appropriate to end this by citing him again by way of my conclusion:

“reality is never an accumulation of separate units existing side by side without connexion. Every material ‘something’ is interconnected with every material ‘something’; between objects there exists a vast variety of relationships. These relationships are as real as the material objects. And only in their relationships to each other do objects constitutes reality. The richer and more complex these relationships become, the richer and more complex is the nature of reality. Let us take an object produced by work. What is it? In terms of mechanical reality it is nothing other than a ‘mass’ gravitating towards other ‘masses’ (‘mass’ itself also being the term for a relationship). In terms of physico-chemical reality it is a fragment of concrete matter composed in a certain way of certain atoms and molecules and subject to certain rules peculiar to those particles. In terms of human and social reality it is a tool, an object of utilitarian value. Man's new relationships with nature and with his fellow-men **have penetrated this fragment of matter and endowed it with a new content and quality previously did not possess. And so man, the working being, is the creator of a new reality, a super-nature, whose most extraordinary product is the mind. The working being elevates itself, by work, into a thinking being; thought --- i.e., mind --- is the necessary result of man's mediated metabolism with nature.**

“By his work, man transforms the world like a magician: a piece of wood, a bone, a flint is fashioned to resemble a model and thereby transformed into that very model; material objects are transformed into signs, names, and concepts; man himself is transformed from an animal into man.”³⁰

²⁸ Marx/Engels *Selected Works*, Volume One, Progress Publishers, Moscow, USSR, 1969, pages 13 – 15.

²⁹ Marx, Karl, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, the Foreign Languages Publishing House (now Progress Publishers), Moscow, translated by Martin Milligan, 1959, pages 49-49. My emphases.

³⁰ Fischer, Ernst, *The Necessity of Art*, translated by Anna Bostock, Penguin Books, 1959, pages 32-33. My emphases.





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