

STRUCTURE OF MIND AND STRUCTURED MIND

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The primacy of consciousness is a contention debated at various forums starting from neuro-biological to anthropological studies. It is interesting that debates on the primacy/non-primacy of consciousness focus on the immediacy or mediacy of a localised experience with its own contextualised characteristics and not on the ontology of an 'enduring' experiencer. The issue is whether many discrete experiencers contribute to the continuous 'experience' of the I-consciousness or each experiencer is a 'holonic' expression of the I-consciousness.

When I talk about 'consciousness' the first and nearest thing which comes to my mind is my mind. We cannot discuss in depth about 'consciousness' without a discussion on the 'I' who is the owner of it and who is also the choice-maker. We cannot initiate a discussion on my "I-ness" without a discussion on my mind. And, mind can be discussed only on the basis of thoughts and patterns of thinking.

- Do we think based on mental structures?
- Are our thoughts formed from mental structures?
- How are mental structures and thoughts related?

These are pertinent questions to think about.

The 'I', 'You' and 'My-World'

The way we see the world and experience it is based on the interaction between three orders of realities: the 'I', 'You' and 'My-World'. All the three are potentially evolutionary in nature and hence prone to change. The 'I' is the one who experiences the world, makes assessments, acts and lives based on his/her understanding. Where and when does the

“I-ness” originate and does it have an abiding self is an issue which requires yet another discussion.

The ‘You’ is that which is experienced by the ‘I’ as other than or away from him/her. The ‘My-World’ is a repository as well as resource of processed information which the ‘I’ gathers about the ‘You’. The difference between the ‘You’ and the ‘My-world’ is that the relationship between the ‘I’ and the ‘My-World’ is private, and the relationship between the ‘I’ and ‘You’ is directed by objective, public laws and assumptions.

The ‘My-World’ is a private and individualised order of reality accessed and also contributed to be the ‘I’. That which is experienced, that which is thought, and acts of the person all leave a mark in the ‘My-World’, when at the same time originates from the ‘My-World’. The intentionality which causes the person to think, to experience or to act is a product of the (pure) ‘I-ness’ and the ‘My-World’. The importance of the ‘My-World’ in the triangle of three realities is such that the health, sustainability and development of the person is dependent on the stability and nature of his/her ‘My-World’.

Who does the talking : the ‘I’, ‘You’ or ‘My-World’?

Intentionality threads the ‘I’, ‘You’ and ‘My-World’. All the three sides of the triangular reality get connected to each other and generate a total and integral meaning due to intentionality. By intentionality, I mean the basic urge, for instance to open your eyes, to see, to feel or understand the seen and to keep a mark of it. Without intentionality there won’t be a relationship between the seer and the seen. Intentionality is the basic conscious urge which gives and builds up a shape for the subjective ‘I-ness’. Now, if intentionality is that which causes the relationship between the ‘I’, ‘You’, and ‘My-World’, what is that which causes intentionality itself? Or, does it reside in ‘I’, ‘You’ or the ‘My-World’? Who actually does the talking?

Different theories trace ‘intentionality’ to a material, psychological or metaphysical cause, with a parallel definition of what is ‘intentionality’. Let us try to look into the three possibilities: Material is that which is ‘outside’, existing independently available to one and all but which is ruled by certain natural forces. The origin of ‘intentionality’ from that which is material

should either give it the defining characteristics of the cause, such as independent objective existence, availability to one and all etc., or different from the defining characteristics such as dependent subjective existence and restricted availability. Does intentionality originate from the 'You'? I know that something 'inside' me asks me to do something, influences me to think in a certain fashion, talks about what I feel. The 'inside' cogitations of mine become public through my expressions of them by means of my words and deeds. It is also possible to betray my true feelings and thoughts and deceive another person by behaviours which are not associated with my true feelings. Deception would even help me, to get a score in the evolutionary stance and, qualify as intelligent and a sure career of my culture.

Psychological is that which is 'inside', exist independently/dependently, and with restricted availability. My moods, my feelings, my conscious decisions, my unconscious drives, impulses, my thoughts: all of these and more can be said to carry my psychology and define my mind. Is intentionality psychological in origin? Though there could be reliable predictability and assessment about my personality, my states of mind can differ. Therefore intentionality can be a state of my mind or a cumulative result of my states of mind.

Inintentionality if it originates from 'You' then would give 'You' and things 'outside' other than me the power to purchase me. That is not the case. I not only desire for something but also desire not to have something. This double-sided complexity of intentionality can reside only in something which is open-ended and at the same time intimate. My 'soul' cannot be in 'You' and still talking ! The 'other' always has to be away and different from me. If my intentionality springs from 'You' there won't be anything for me to intent. There won't even be the 'me'!

There are many reasons to believe that intentionality originates from the 'My-World' and 'I'. After all it is my mind which intents, or at least it 'feels' so. It is 'I' who feels, who thinks, who acts. But even when there is no feeling, thinking or acting, 'I' exist. 'I' seems to be a harder nut to break by the absence or presence of intentions. Who or what intents the 'I'? We can say that it is the 'I' which intents everything and therefore

intentionality originates from the 'I' and therefore has a psychological cause.

The 'I' seems to be falling in a totally different category. It has a presentness which is expressed through intentions. It also has a beyondness embedded in it which is the reason for its non-extinction with the extinction of intentions, its non-absence with the absence of intentions. Here is a reversal of the Cartesian argument. Even if I don't cogitate, I exist. Otherwise who is reporting or 'talking' about the cogitations being there or not being there?

To seek and define the origin and nature of intentionality is to seek and define the nature of the 'I' who intends, the Intentor.

Where does the structure begin?

We all think. Sometimes it is not even wrong to say that we are 'thoughts'. Our own subjective identity as well as 'the big picture' which we see outside *vis a vis* our subjective identity are founded on the way we think and the way our thoughts are. A structure connects and networks the 'I' inside and the world outside, which we call as 'the mind'.

Any kind of thinking involves processes like correlations, associations and conclusions. Any kind of thinking is based on an accepted or assumed notion of causality, which will decide what is created by the thoughts, and what create the thoughts. Thinking takes place as a result of interactions between the 'I' to which everything is reported about the 'You' which is seen, experienced or understood. There is an invariable connection between that which is reported about and that which is reported to. Now, the question 'where does the structure begin' is a question about the reporter. Who does the reporting and to whom?

Patterns of thinking

Let us juxtapose the triangularity of the 'I', 'You' and 'My-World', and thinking, and look at the 'behaviour' of the thinker. When we think, as mentioned earlier, there is a process of thinking, that which is reported to, that which is reported about and that which reports. Thinking is a composite result of all the four processes.

That which is reported about are:

- properties such as shape, size, location, design, color, smell etc. of

physical objects

- qualities such as truth, beauty and goodness
- nature of truth and method of verification

That which is reported to are :

- the analyst
- the experiencer

That which reports is :

- the 'witness'

Processes of thinking are :

- induction and deduction
- judgements and comparisons

The magical world of science and culture

We think about properties such as shape, size, location etc. of an object. The mind, in a pre-reflective state analyses the information which is reported about and generates meanings through correlations and associations. *Analytic thinking* is a part and parcel of our life. Though the information analysed and stored in the 'My-World' need not be always the starting point, analysed data gains some kind of granted validity to lead from.

However intuitive our thinking can be there is a stratum of accepted (culturally or scientifically) laws, theories, perspectives and norms. This stratum can be minimal but cannot be totally absent.

The information which is stored in the 'My-World' as a result of analytic thinking does not remain raw. Instead, it gets associated with other meanings generated as a result of *inter-subjective thinking*. The physical object assumes another form of existence, as a mental object, in the mind. The mental object is judged and compared. Questions about morality and beauty are related to mental objects. Though they are generated in an inter-subjective mental level, so as to prevent instability, they acquire a semi-real status through the formation of cultural practices and beliefs. The idea is akin to Platonic idealism. The 'best' exists somewhere in the

mind. But the representative of it is present in the experienced world.

The mystical world of relationships

Apart from analytic meanings and associative meanings, thinking also generates meanings based on relationships based on love and hatred, like and dislike. The pattern of thinking which creates relationships takes place in the reflective state of mind. In this pattern of *intra-subjective thinking* the thoughts are founded on a common space shared by the thinker's subjective identity and the identity of another person. This pattern of thinking is the main contributing factor to the evolution and development of one's self (and another's self). Intra-subjective thinking is also responsible for our notions and conceptualisations of truth and methods of verifying truth. Interestingly, truth gets a definition which incorporates not only standards of knowledge, but also of feeling. Therefore truth is not only known, but also felt and experienced.

All the three patterns of thinking demand the presence of a thinker. There must be a thinker to make all the thoughts going on coherent and integrate them to contribute to the 'My-World'. The duality between the thinker and that which is thought about is another condition necessary for all the three patterns of thinking. The 'I', 'You' and 'My-World' act as a kind of strainer for the whole person. The information analysed, associative meanings formed and relationships attributed, also, contribute to the development of the 'I', 'You' and 'My-World'. Which is primary: the structure with which one is born, or the world which is known and experienced? is a question asked too often in the history of human civilisation. May be the structure with which we are born itself becomes unstable if it (mind) does not have at least an assumption of that which is prior and that which is later. The notion of causality underlies both the structure and these three patterns of thinking.

In these three patterns of thinking, the thinker takes the form of an analyst and experiencer who are reported to about what is analysed and experienced. Is that which reports, (I call it) 'the witness' also another form of thinker or not is an issue which will bring back the problem of intentionality and the primacy of consciousness for discussion, along with the conjecture of a fourth pattern of thinking called the trans-subjective

thinking.

Another world of transcendences

Thoughts are complex, for two reasons: each pattern of thinking generates meanings and meanings are generated not by a simple association or correlation but directed by the already available 'My-World'. The complexity of thoughts is added to by the occurrence of another pattern of thinking which does not fall within the triangular boundary of the 'I', 'You' and 'My-World'. This non-structural pattern of *trans-subjective thinking* introduces new structures of thinking through images, metaphors, forms and sounds. Trans-subjective thinking transcends the general structure of 'I', 'You' and 'My-World'. It has the quality to go beyond structural thinking. Here, meanings are not created by association or comparisons but as a result of trans-exeriential state/s of happiness.

Pre-meditative thinking such as prayers, chants, visualisations, art appreciation etc. can cause a transcendence. Yet, even the transcendence experienced cannot escape without leaving a mark in the 'My-World'. That is why we 'express' about the sudden meanings experienced. Trans-subjective thinking not only creates perceptual leaps but also translates them into visions that influence the development of and shifts in our identities.

Possible order of four patterns

At any given time, these four patterns of thinking override each other. Though it cannot be said that each one of these patterns follows a single path of development, each pattern has its own 'ups' 'downs' and 'equilibriums'. Each path's development if seen in segregation will have its starting and finishing points clear in terms of its end result.

At the same time, these four patterns of thinking do not have a hierarchical order of starting with one pattern and reaching another pattern of thinking. In each pattern of thought there are taints of structural rigidity and transcendental openness. It is the structural rigidity which gives a thought contextual meaning and reference. It is the transcendental openness which gives a thought a-contextual beyondness. We not only think within a context. We also think beyond a context.

Where does contextuality give way to transcendence? When do we break the order of structural thinking? Unless there is a hierarchy of orders there won't be different means of knowing and understanding. Sense perception, inference, presumption, formation of theories and laws etc. are the structures through which or tools by which we see, create and defend meanings. We know when one structure or tool is to be replaced by another, and when one structure or tool is to be supplemented by another tool. However, meanings generated are integrated to a larger system called the 'experiencer', which gives coherence to various strands of thoughts, sustains them and in the process develops a self-identity for the thinker.

Forms, images and metaphors; companions to thinking

We think through words. We think through images. We also think through the space between words and images. An instance is our expression "I have no words to express my love for you". Intensity of an emotion overrides words and forms. It is the same principle which acts when we employ a metaphor in order to explain or understand an otherwise complicated and indirect phenomenon. Often meanings are created when quick jumps happen between the four patterns of thinking.

Forms, images and metaphors can alternatively explain the object of experience in a different way such that the explanation itself can influence and lead to the experience of the same object in a different way or intensifying of the original experience. What we are used to collectively call as 'emotions' rest a lot on the usage of metaphors, images and forms in thinking. The main feature of these three companions to thinking is that they can help create new and varied meanings for the same object, the object being redefined every time by the experiencer.

Looking at the structured mind

Mind is a structure or a group of structures, which get modified or newly formed. Can mind be conceived without structures? Can there be states of mind without thoughts? The fourth pattern of trans-subjective thinking is a clue to this question. But, this pattern is not a pattern frequently present. It has to happen. Another structure of thinking cannot create transcendence in order to see gestalt meanings. At the same time a mind

without structures is inconceivable.

The transcendence of the mind from the structures with which it is equipped is not antagonistic to the structures themselves. At the same time the transcendence of the mind from the structures is some what dependent on the structures themselves.

There are two possibilities of non-structuring the structured mind. One way is to introduce another structure and take out the rest of the structures with the new one. The second possibility is to remove all kinds of structures. The second seems to be an impossibility. We cannot cease to think. And as long as we think, we operate with the help of structures. The introduction of another structure to remove the previous structures is theoretically a sound option. The new structure, to remove the previous structures, should itself have a double-sided role. It should functionally be able to remove the previous structures. It should also be able to dissolve its structural nature into itself once its functional role is over.

Looking at the structure of Mind

I will cite an example from the epistemology of Advaita Vedanta.

The closest concept in Advaita to 'structure of thinking' is *vṛtti*. It is the *vṛtti* of an object which is seen, heard, etc. which forms a *pratyaya* and gives the knowledge or experience of that object. Two kinds of *vṛtti* are suggested: The *khandākāravṛtti* is the partite structure which gives any objective knowledge, and *akhandākāravṛtti* is the impartite structure which gives knowledge about one's self. *Akhandākāravṛtti* is a structure which turns its back to other structures by not giving any knowledge about the 'You' or a reference from the 'My-World'.

It is like the proverbial coiled snake which has its tail in its mouth. The beginning of it is also the end. The starting point of the *akhandākāravṛtti* is the Intensor who witnesses the structures. The end point is also the Intensor. *Akhandākāravṛtti* is, according to Advaita epistemology, that which creates the knowledge about the 'identity sentences' like *aham brahmasmi*. When I think, I am the thinker. When I don't think I still exist as the one who differentiates the two acts (of thinking and not-thinking). There is an enduring 'I-ness' all throughout.

Looking for the presence or absence of thoughts are two ways of looking at the 'mind'. Whether thoughts are present or absent is not an important question. The important question is 'who is thinking'. The important question is to 'think about' the thinker who is also the experiencer, the reporter and the witness too. Understanding the structure of mind is a pointer towards the road to pure 'I-ness' and the primacy of consciousness as an irreducible phenomenon.

NOTES

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