

Exploring the Limitations of Mind

The conventional, scientific model says that mind arises from the brain, and the brain consists of matter through which electrochemical signals flow, producing what we call thought. There is nothing wrong with that model as a basis for understanding the normal and abnormal functioning of mental processes. As Bernardo Kastrup says: “neurons are what our thoughts, emotions and perceptions look like when another person experiences them. They aren’t the *cause* of subjective experience, but simply the *outside image* of it”.¹

But where do our thoughts come from? In this dialogue, Francis discusses different possible models:

Q: Do thoughts come from the brain? Do they come from the mind? Is the mind independent of the brain? When the body dies, can thoughts continue?

FL: We have to wait a little longer to know! We are not in a hurry. It’s not an urgent question! But a priori, why not? Why limit this extraordinary reality to that which is physical? We have no reason to believe that mind is subject to matter. We have no reason to believe that matter is subject to mind. It is possible that they are both subject to a higher reality.

The metaphor I use about mind and matter is this: imagine you have a cat in a room and you have two cameras in the room filming the movements of the cat. These cameras are at a 90° angle to each other. And the cat moves. So each camera has a different image of the cat. However, between camera number 1 and camera number 2 we can observe correlation. For instance, if the cat stops, it stops on both cameras. Now we have two scientists and they are given the videos from the two cameras. (They never see the room or the cat.) They have to give their interpretation. One says ‘what we see on camera 1 is the reality, and these movements create what we see on camera 2’. That would be the materialist view, because one camera is called ‘matter’ and the other camera is called ‘mind’. So the materialist says ‘my camera, the “matter” camera, is the one that created everything, and what you see on camera 2 is created by camera 1. And I can prove it, because when on my camera, the cat stops, it stops also on the other one.’ Now the philosopher, the idealist, says ‘wait a minute, that’s not true. It is my camera, my “mind” camera, that creates all the rest, for the same reason. When the cat stops on mine, it also stops on yours.’ They both miss the cat.

Q: Well, where does thought come from then?

FL: Ask yourself what mind and matter have in common. When they both appear, what is the intersection? Consciousness or reality. We have two different words, one for consciousness and one for reality, but if we take a closer look, based solely on our experience we discover they are in fact synonyms. They refer to the same experience. How do you know there is reality without consciousness? You can’t. ...

Q: So where do thoughts come in?

FL: They are also ‘mind’. You can choose to say thoughts are created by the brain. That’s the option of camera 1, of the scientist. You can say the opposite, that the entire world is only mind. Or you can say neither – there is the reality that co-creates both. The fact that they are co-created – reality is the cat in my metaphor – explains the correlation between mind and matter, between thought and matter. It would be bad if this reality were external to us, because then we

¹ Bernardo Kastrup: *Brief Peeks Beyond*, section 2.6

would be like robots, our thoughts wouldn't be our thoughts, it would be the thoughts of this reality which is not us. But fortunately, there is only one reality, which means that this reality is our reality. So in that sense, our thoughts are truly our thoughts because they are the thoughts of our reality.

Q: So when I had a thought and I stopped it, what stopped it?

FL: That which created it, stopped it. It's business as usual. You create and you stop creating or you create a stop. It's a cosmic event just as a shooting star in the sky is a cosmic event.

Q: So I'm not controlling them?

FL: As a separate mind, as a separate body we don't. But as the real perceiver of these thoughts, we do. Perceiving and creating are simultaneous. The reason why we are miserable is because we are wearing shoes and clothes that are way too small for us. And that's not comfortable. They are this body-mind – way too narrow for what we are. That's why we don't feel comfortable as such. We have to stop wearing these ridiculously small garments.

[Francis Lucille: [Self-Inquiry 12 of 16: Does the Mind Continue After Death](#)]

So does mind really exist, or is it just a superimposition, a model used to describe the 'place' where experience occurs? Here is Rupert's answer:

Taking our stand as this ever-present Consciousness, we can look again at our experience and see that we never actually experience the mind, the body or the world in the way that we usually conceive them.

The mind consists of this current thought or image, whatever it is we are thinking or imagining in this moment. There is no container called 'the mind' in which all our memories, hopes, fears and desires are stored. Whenever a memory, hope, fear or desire appears, it appears as a current thought.

The idea that there is a mind which contains memories, hopes, fears and desires is itself simply a thought that appears from time to time, like any other thought, in Consciousness.

There is no mind as such. The existence of a mind is simply an idea, a concept. It is a useful concept, but it is not a fact of experience.

[Rupert Spira: *The Transparency of Things, Our True Body*]

It's often when we come to look at choice and free will that the mind rebels against the consciousness-only model. We want to feel that we have freedom to choose. Before considering freedom, let's first look at the process of choosing:

RS: Just take a very simple example of choice. It's breakfast time and somebody says to you 'would you like tea or coffee?' You just hear the question 'would you like tea or coffee?' You pause. The thought appears 'I would like tea'. The thought appears, like all thoughts. The thought is not chosen. No thought is chosen – all thoughts just appear. So first of all you hear the question 'would you like tea or coffee?' Next thought: 'I'd like tea'. Next thought: 'I chose to have tea'. The separate self is created with that third thought: 'I chose to have tea'. That thought *is* the separate self, the chooser, in this case. But actually, between the question 'would you like tea or coffee?' and the next thought which was 'I would like tea', what happened? Was there a process? No. It was the space between two thoughts. There was no thought there. So 'choice' is always for thought – it's an *after-thought*. Nothing actually chooses the thought 'I would like tea'. So 'choice' is an interpretation of an experience in which there is actually no choice. If the

thought had occurred to you 'I would like coffee' you would have got coffee. Nothing you can do about it! We are at the mercy of whichever thought appears – 'I would like tea' or 'I would like coffee'.
[Rupert Spira, YouTube: [What is Choice?](#)]

That's the process from the perspective of the separate self. In the following extract, Rupert discusses choice and causality from the perspective of awareness:

RS: The whole idea of time, causality, choice is the mind's childish way of trying to make sense of something that it cannot know about. There is no choice or cause in eternity.

Q: OK, let me sit with that for a while. Thank you.

RS: I know what you want to do. You want to sit with it for a while and think about it. But thinking about it is just going to make it worse! You have to hear it and get it. Or not. You have to hear, and say 'Oh yes, that's it'. But it's also OK to think about it, because in the process of thinking about it there can be this 'Ah, yes, of course'. But you have to just get it. It's not very helpful my saying that!

Q: I don't get it yet. I'm hopeful. Primarily because in my experience of my life, it seems that things are linked. To think of thoughts as separate events from each other, I get that. But to see that there's no connection is difficult for me to grasp. So what I was thinking was that the connection is awareness.

RS: You're right. Exactly. The connection between things is awareness. Because the finite mind cannot know awareness, it conceives the connection between things as time. The finite mind thinks that things are connected in time, and that each thing causes the other. But what the finite mind doesn't realise is that the time which it imagines to be true, is a reflection of its own limitations. In reality there is no time, and therefore there is no real causation in time or choice in time between objects or events. Because the finite mind is looking at reality through its own limitations, and projecting its own limitations onto reality. Time doesn't really exist. Time is like the glasses that the mind wears through which it looks at the world. Time is in the glasses, not in the world. Time is in the mind's limitations. It is the limitation of mind. It's not really there in reality. What is really there in reality is consciousness. But when the mind looks through its own limitations, it sees eternity as time. And having superimposed time onto eternity, it then imagines causality, duration, choice etc. So causality, choice, duration – they belong to the dream. But the dream all takes place in an instant in Mary's mind.² ...

So through the filter of thought – thought has a single dimension – time is superimposed onto reality. And through the filter of perception, space, or three-dimensions, are superimposed onto reality. So it's the filters of thought and perception that bring time and space out of the eternal, infinite nature of consciousness into apparent existence. So the time and space that we seem to see or experience, are reflections of the limitations of our mind, not what's really there.

[Rupert Spira. YouTube: [There is No Choice in Eternity](#)]

Based on those two dialogues, we might imagine there is no freedom, that free will doesn't exist. But as Francis explains, that's not the case:

Q: Consciousness does not have free will because free will only applies to an illusion? It doesn't exist. Is that correct?

² See Rupert's essay [Love is a Place](#) for a description of the Mary and Jane metaphor

FL: Well not completely, because if I take free will and I decompose it into freedom and will, it's a will that comes from freedom. Consciousness is freedom itself and wills everything that happens. So we could say that on the level of consciousness, there is free will. In other words, there is freedom, and out of this freedom, willing happens, willing materialises. ...

The notion of choosing implies there is something external to the chooser, and there are pre-existing things among which the chooser can choose. So the concept is this: I have a basket full of fruit – apples, oranges, grapes etc. and today I feel like eating an apple and tomorrow I feel like eating a peach. So I pick stuff out of the basket. But then I have to be a separate chooser, separate from the basket. And everything that I pick up has to pre-exist my choosing. Whereas in consciousness, choosing is creating, willing is creating. What is, is willed at every moment. It only exists because it is willed.

[Francis Lucille, YouTube: [Consciousness, Time & Free Will](#)]

Finally, we come to a question almost all of us encounter at some point during self-enquiry:

A question that is commonly asked after encountering this approach is, 'If everything appears in the same consciousness, and I am essentially that consciousness, why am I not aware of everybody else's thoughts and feelings?'

Although each finite mind experiences only its own contents, it is at the same time precipitated within the shared medium of infinite consciousness, of which it is a cross-section or partial view. Each of our finite minds brings a segment of infinite consciousness's potential into actuality. As such, each of our minds could be considered a sphere or field that emerges in a shared, self-aware space, focusing the potential that exists unmanifest within it.

When two spheres overlap they share the overlapping part of their content; that part of each sphere that does not overlap with the other is particular to that sphere alone and is experienced as its own private content. Thus it is possible for all minds to be precipitated within the same field of consciousness and for some of their content to be shared – what we call the world – and some of it to be private – that is, thoughts and feelings.

Just as each of our thoughts, sensations and perceptions is the product of a single mind, there is nothing to suggest that each of our minds is not itself the product of a single consciousness. In other words, just as there is a consistency to all our own thoughts, sensations and perceptions precisely because they are all a product of the same finite mind, it is not unreasonable to expect that there will be a consistency across finite minds – the experience of a shared world – simply because they are all the product of the same infinite consciousness. That is, it is the fact that consciousness is shared between minds that accounts for our experience of a shared world. The world is shared because consciousness is shared!"

[Rupert Spira: *The Nature of Consciousness*: ch 15 The Shared Medium of Mind]

Contemplation

Matter, mind and Awareness are not three different realities. They are three different ways of seeing one Reality.