

Propaedeutic of a Metaphysics of Thought

Abstract: This is the English version of a propaedeutic study of a Metaphysics of Thinking covering the methodology of a philosophical inquiry of thinking and the analysis of the different forms or manifestations of thinking. In particular, the problem of self-referentiality or self-reflective thought is discussed in detail. A German original text is also available.

Contents

- Conventional Theories of Thought
 - Material Aspects of an Inquiry into Thinking
 - Formal Aspects of an Inquiry into Thinking
 - Critical Metaphysics
 - Secondary Thinking (Exonoesis)
 - Primary Thinking (Hyponoesis)
 - Pure Thinking
 - Self-Reflective Thinking
 - Empirical Thinking
 - Abstract Thinking
 - Philosophical Thinking
 - Self-reflective Statements
 - Perspective of Meta-Thinking
 - Reflection as Self-Diremption of Thought
 - Empathic Thinking
 - Dialectic of Thinking
 - Referential and Reflective Thinking
 - Holistic Thinking
 - Graphical Representation of the Formal Classification of Thinking
 - Logical and Moral Thinking
 - Practical Thinking
 - Analytical and Synthetical Thinking
 - Unifying Thinking
 - Forms and Objectifications of Thought
 - Material and Intellectual Evolution
 - Horizon of Thinking
 - Historical Thinking
 - Conclusion
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Conventional Theories of Thought

For quite a long time I have assigned myself the task of investigating the essence and nature (*Wesen*) of thought and of reflecting upon the faculties of thought. Only when I studied contemporary philosophical and scientific literature, it began to dawn on me, that I plied

uncharted waters, and I realized, that the terms "thought" and "thinking" are used frequently, but seldom understood.

I discovered that to most people "thought" or "thinking" includes sensations, memory, emotions, cognitions, perceptions, that is, different elements of the human mind and consciousness. All these aspects of the human mind are attributed to thought *in toto* or *in parte*. Some thinkers believe that the accumulation of all these elements make up thought or mind, whereas other thinkers hold that those elements represent only partial aspects of our mind and that mind per se is something different.

Modern science and psychology reduce thinking to mere rational functions. Thinking is defined primarily as the capacity of the brain to carry out mathematical operations, deductions, inferences, logical operations, etc. This mechanization of thought strongly constrains the potentiality of our mind and it is therefore no wonder that scientists are engaged in studies of artificial intelligence and of replication of our mind in a computer. This functionalist approach does not explain thought, but only, how thought appears to us, how thought is revealed daily as the functions of our mind. We employ these functions naturally. The brain is conceived as just another organ of the body, one of much greater complexity.

Obviously, thinking is predominantly identified with particular aspects of the human mind or reduced to practical and logical functions, which are inferred from the biological and evolutionary structure of our brain.

Certain facts, however, remain unnoticed, most significantly that there are capacities of thought that not only evade generic attempts at explanation, but far transcend them. Take for instance intuition which enables us to comprehend complexities as a simple structure. This faculty of our mind cannot be explained on a scientific basis. Modern analytical philosophy endeavors to equate thinking with the grammar of language, that is, to render thinking dependent on grammar and therefore is unable to explicate intuition properly. Its method is positivistic: anything evasive of scientific elucidation or exceeding the frame of its theory is rejected as meaningless, because it is not empirically verifiable. These thinkers miss the point in that they do not consider the fact that their thinking and their theory are not verifiable in the sense stipulated by their own theory. In this reductionism - reducing thought to structures and functions - thought itself is made intelligible for science and modern philosophy. It is now possible to talk about thought, to put it into narrowly defined categories and schemata. Unfortunately, the essence of thought is missed in that view.

Furthermore, when perusing the philosophical and scientific literature, I realized that views of thought are always preconceived. Even when a philosopher, such as Kant, chooses reason and understanding as his main subject matter, he nonetheless presupposes the mind's consisting of faculties. Every individual possesses reason, understanding and imaginative powers. Are we really legitimized in our a priori positing of this preconception and its related classification of the human mind into various realms and functions? How do we know these facts about the human mind? From personal experience, a posteriori through empiricism, or merely through speculative metaphysics?

Material Aspects of an Inquiry into Thinking

Next I need to provide a more precise definition of 'thinking', i.e. I will try to determine the subject matter of my inquiry. Thinking consists of all conceivable aspects of the human mind, such as, intellect, reason, volition, memory, sensation, emotion. It is important to understand that I do not attempt to segregate thought into various domains and functions, but I consider thinking as a unity which we are not aware of in our everyday experience.

Thus, I am concerned with the question of what thinking is for itself and in itself. The various forms of thought such as intellect, volition are not of interest to me, but that which is the underlying ground and substance of all these thought objectifications. These thought

objectifications are only manifestations of a primordial and unified 'thing' that I do not want to designate as 'substance', or 'matter', or 'form', but will simply refer to as 'THINKING'.

Formal Aspects of an Inquiry into Thinking

We are now facing an aporetic problem: we try to understand thinking by means of thinking. The question is whether or not it is possible for thinking to reflect upon itself. The ancient philosophers often replied to such a question with a counterquestion: is the eye capable of seeing itself? No, the eye is only a means to an end, it is not an end in itself. It is not a self-constituted purpose. Is thinking an end in itself? Does thinking exist for and in itself? Is it a means to an end? Does it fulfill both functions?

It is the task of a philosophy of thought to attempt to answer these questions, or at least, to examine a few of these questions more closely. The problem of such an enterprise lies in the self-reflective procedure of thought. While such a method initially seems questionable, it can be established convincingly by logical ratiocination.

In our investigation of thought it is important that we do not start with any assumptions or a priori principles. If we assume even the simplest faculty of mind we are doomed to fail.

I have now demarcated roughly the domain of my investigation, but the reader might have noticed that this domain of study is quite comprehensive and complex. Such an inquiry, however, needs a special method that can overcome the inherent problems of self-reflection. Therefore, this aporetic situation must be resolved in order to continue our study, otherwise any method would just become inane and purely speculative.

Critical Metaphysics

One criticism of my approach is that I regress from today's prevailing critical realism to metaphysics or speculative idealism. I reply by stating that modern philosophy has become reductionistic by simplifying complex structures in an artificial manner and consequently by trying to understand these complexities in terms of scientific methodology. Linguistic or analytical philosophy does not provide solutions for understanding our consciousness, since consciousness and thought are presupposed. A physicalist approach is similarly inappropriate because it starts from matter and proceeds analytically. The view of the whole gets lost.

Metaphysics, although disdained by academic philosophy, is and remains the foundation of genuine philosophy and, eventually, of all science. Metaphysical questions are elementary questions of philosophy and they are an essential part of the nature of our world and ourselves as human beings. Speculative philosophy provides a grasp of interrelations and interlaces them into a great systematic whole. I am, however, not a proponent of a metaphysical dogmatism or an absolute metaphysics, which improperly transcends all boundaries of human thinking. My goal is to suggest a critical metaphysics, which is the synthetical union of 2000 years of thinking. The current disrepute of metaphysics can be overcome by rediscovering and acknowledging its power and scientific role. To speed up this process it would be advantageous to eliminate the worn-out and misconceived term 'metaphysics' and to choose a concept that unites aspects both of philosophy and natural science.

Secondary Thinking (Exonoesis)

Our method abstracts from all forms of thought and, implicitly, from all objects of thought. An object of thinking, or a single thought, is insignificant because it is not a solid basis for starting our inquiry. The single thought is eternally changing and transient, relative and subjective. Therefore, we can infer laws of thought from single thoughts, but not thought itself from single thoughts.

Although single thoughts might be conceived as manifestations of thinking, they represent only a small part or section of thinking per se. The single thought does not reflect the whole of thinking, but it is a schematized and derivative expression of thinking through the medium of corporeality that consists in the interlaced union of body, soul and mind.

Whenever thinking manifests itself, single thoughts are produced as phenomenal and particular modes of thinking. Since single thoughts are particular and do not reflect the whole of thinking, we have to refrain from using thoughts as the starting point for our inquiry. Single thoughts are not only the thoughts of an individual but imply rational thinking as such, which we apply everyday unconsciously. This everyday thinking is called secondary thinking and manifests itself as individual and subjective thinking within the materiality of the human being and the world.

In conclusion, we assert that we cannot start from objects of thought or secondary thinking, which is directed either towards a single or generic (abstract) object, but that we need to abstract from the objects of thought, i.e. exclude them from our inquiry.

It should be evident that we need to abstract from forms of thinking, too, since these are nothing but different aspects of secondary thinking, which are finally rooted in thinking per se. Notice that I say 'rooted' and not 'attributed to' or 'deducted from' thinking per se. Thinking per se is the ground and not the cause of secondary thinking.

Neither induction nor deduction can be employed as methods for our inquiry. Induction leads from single thoughts, that is from functions of secondary thinking, to thinking per se. Deduction starts from an undefined and unknown thinking 'substance' and infers secondary thinking step-by-step. Since secondary thinking is the usual way we think, we would infer indirectly and inductively thinking per se from secondary thinking, i.e. we would assume absolute and common principles of thinking by virtue of our experience and knowledge with secondary thinking. Thus we would attempt to understand thinking per se by means of secondary thinking, which is impossible, as I will demonstrate later.

Primary Thinking (Hyponoesis)

In order to prevent a misconception I substitute a more adequate concept for 'thinking per se' or 'thinking in itself'. The suffix 'in itself' reminds one of the controversial notion of the Kantian 'thing-in-itself'.

The assumption that original thinking constitutes empiric or secondary thought corresponds mostly to Kant's notion of the 'thing-in-itself'. Kant, however, believed that it is not possible to have experience and knowledge of the thing-in-itself. My view is different insofar as it states that thinking-in-itself can be experienced and known, although by different means than those available to secondary thinking. This is due to the difference in nature between thinking-in-itself and secondary thinking.

From now on I will call thinking-in-itself 'primary thinking'. This term is derived logically from the concept of secondary thinking. The nature and possibility of primary thinking are the subject of our inquiry.

Pure Thinking

The product of the above-mentioned stipulation for an abstraction of all thought forms, that is, the product of this methodological approach, is pure thinking. Pure thought is the intermediary between secondary and primary thinking. As with empirical thinking, we can access pure thinking directly, only with the necessary abstraction from all thought forms.

The concept of "pure" means: existing in itself, being in itself, being for itself, without relation to or dependence on something exterior to thinking. This kind of thought has itself as its sole

object, not the sensuous world as it is with empirical or secondary thinking. Thinking that is free from experience, sensations and feelings is pure thinking. Kant defined pure reason as being free from sensibility. Pure thinking can be found in the works of Hegel, Fichte and Schelling, too. These philosophers mention thinking of thinking, that is, self-reflective, self-directed thought, that leads us again to the initial paradox of self-reflection. This paradox needs to be resolved now if our inquiry is to make sense at all.

Self-Reflective Thinking (Autonoesis)

When studying the history of philosophy, it appears as if the ability of the human mind, to reflect upon itself and upon the structure and nature of thinking, has always been presupposed. The existence of philosophy implies reflection. Philosophical thinking was always held to be superior, more profound and more insightful than common everyday thinking. True knowledge was only possible through pure thinking that abstracts from the senses.

What seems to be evident to us, can be viewed with skepticism. Why can't we imagine being able to reflect upon thinking itself? Is this thinking about thinking not simply abstract thinking, as opposed to concrete thinking, which we use in our daily life? A scientist or mathematician dealing with formulas and laws, theories and models, can be said to think abstractly. This kind of abstract thinking, however, is not the same as that applied in philosophy, although formally, the object of thought is generic in both fields of study. Science keeps up an indirect reference to the empirical world, to a concrete object. The objects of mathematics are not empirical, though, but purely mental or logical.

The philosopher or the speculative philosopher in particular transcends the limitations of rational thought and the reference to thinghood. She leaves behind the objectivity of science, reaches out for truth itself, and seeks for metaphysical principles and ultimate causes. Is this approach what can be called self-reflective thinking (Autonoesis) and if so, is it possible and legitimate at all?

We face severe philosophical problems when attempting to determine what thinking about thinking is, and behind these problems are even more fundamental questions that need to be examined. In order to understand and resolve the above-mentioned paradox, we need to confront all the questions that might be encountered on our way to the goal. For, if we eschew a question because we think of it as irrelevant, or if we presuppose a generally received answer without reviewing it critically, we might arrive somewhere, but not where we intended. Our inquiry would be structurally unsound, because a few keystones could be missing. Each question that arises in addition to our main questions must be carefully addressed so as not to incur the accusation of inconsistency or contradiction due to negligence of method.

Empirical Thinking

We assume now that self-reflective thinking might not be possible. What is the result of this thesis? What would the nature of our thinking look like?

We first examine our everyday empirical thinking. Clearly, this thinking is not reflective thinking, but rather unconscious thinking. It is unconscious insofar as we are not conscious of the thought processes and because this is not necessary in our everyday use of intellect. On the contrary, if we tried, while thinking, to reflect upon the process of thought, we would hardly be able to act reasonably or to communicate with each other.

Thinking can be compared with the involuntary body functions. If we, e.g. eat something, we don't take care of the digestion in the stomach and intestines. We take in food and it is digested automatically and given to our body as vital substance for survival. Neither do we take care of the functions of other organs such as the heart. It would be impossible for us to live if we had to monitor our heartbeats. Nevertheless, there is the possibility of influencing the heartbeat with our will. If we concentrate intensely on it, we can override this routine function.

The brain, as medium and expression of the intellectual functions, also works for the most part autonomously. We are not aware of our intellectual functions while 'using' them. The application of the intellect above all serves the mastery of our daily life and our survival. It is practical and pragmatic thinking which does not need to be reflective. Therefore, this biological and evolutionary description of secondary thinking defines human nature, i.e. the human being as a scientific object of study. Common thinking is only a means for an end, it fulfils its task and demonstrates its effectiveness in everyday life.

Abstract Thinking

A higher level of thinking is the abstract thinking of the scientist or simply abstract thinking, inasmuch as it is directed towards a generic that is rooted in the empirical.

If we take a general-purpose term such as "truth" or "love", we immediately understand that there is no direct reference to a sensuous object, as for instance in the case of the term "house", which evokes a distinct representation in our mind and to which we can point. The relation of a term such as "love" to the objective world is only indirect. Love belongs to our common experience even if it remains an inexplicable phenomenon. Nobody who once felt love doubts that love itself is a reality.

"Truth", too, can be related indirectly to the external real world whenever we understand truth to be an agreement of a thought or concept with a verifiable object of the physical world.

Or take the notion of "justice". Every human being intuitively knows when an injustice has occurred. Although the definition of "justice" is often very subjective and different, practical examples can always be given for what is personally believed to be just or unfair. Justice can be understood only in relation to a practical and intentional world, to a social community of individuals.

Concepts that have unambiguous relevancy to a perceivable object are operationalized i.e. they can be made generally amenable at any time by providing an instance. We deal with these concepts mostly in empirical thinking. Concepts of abstract thinking, however, are causal constructs which have no direct relevancy and can only be operationalized by reference to observable phenomena, i.e. they can only be determined by an explanation or an idiosyncratic description.

However, this abstract thinking is not yet philosophical thinking that represents the third level on our way towards self-reflective thinking.

Philosophical Thinking

First I will explain more precisely what I mean by philosophical thinking. I do not mean the thinking of all philosophers. There are many philosophers and thinkers in mankind's history that predominantly employed the thinking of the second level (abstract thinking) and that have never or only partially reached the third level.

The philosophical pure thinking is the thinking of the great metaphysicians as for example Plato, Leibniz, Spinoza, Schelling, etc. The thinking of these philosophers might be called meta-thinking because it is not about objective entities or about something that refers to an object in the abstract sense, but about abstract thinking and its structure. These thinkers reflect upon the structure of our thought and consciousness, upon the world as a totality, upon the cosmos as an organic unit. Their thinking is far above everyday pragmatics.

While routine thinking is embedded in practical values and therein has its nature, characteristic and existence, abstract thinking is, as a middle term, a combining and mediating thinking between reality and ideality, between being and thinking. Therefore, the greatest part of

the philosophical activity can be found within abstract thinking. Abstract thought provides us an objective knowledge that attempts to unite theory and practice.

Abstract thinking, when considered to be cut off from everyday routine thinking for the average person, still refers to the practical, even though mostly by indirect means. Science eventually results in technology that benefits the human being. It facilitates our life. Pure basic research is often regarded by people as a waste of money and time: what is the use of thinking about the origin of the universe at a time when we have so many social problems here on our planet. Nevertheless, this scientific thinking can be designated as practical because the theoretician refers to a given fact, to an observable event, as an object in the attempt to explain it.

Philosophical thinking is not without an object, but the object is rather ideal than actual, a pure object of thought. For example: Kant attempted in his transcendental philosophy to examine the conditions of human thinking. He abstracted from every content because it belongs to the subject field of psychology and so he was only concerned with the formal conditions of human knowledge.

Our empirical and abstract thinking is never aware of this cognitive structure since we always move within this structure and presuppose it. Moreover, we commit a fatal mistake by ignoring this structure, explaining it away and believing our thinking is able to perceive things directly and unfiltered. We believe that our explanations, whether empirical or abstract-theoretical, might be elementary ontological definitions and therefore true and real.

The philosopher boldly dares to place himself beyond the human consciousness and outside of the frame of human thinking and knowledge, in order to view our thinking and our world in an integrative way. It is understandable that this point of view of metaphysics and of speculative idealism is dismissed as pure speculation and senseless prattle by scientific and positivist thinkers. As long as philosophical thinking is grasped from the point of view of abstract or even empirical thinking, it will always be misconceived. This hermeneutic problem can be bypassed by attempting to determine through critical contemplation whether such a meta-view of thinking is possible at all.

Philosophical thinking is the only clue that points to the possibility that self-reflective thinking might be possible. For philosophical thinking does not deal with objects but with the thinking of objects. This is finally nothing other than the Aristotelian and Hegelian "thinking of thinking", self-reflective thinking.

Self-reflective Statements

We have to examine now whether this philosophical self-reflective thinking is in fact the thinking it asserts to be or whether it is only illusory thinking that believes with the aid of imagination to be self-reflective.

Let us take such a meta-noetic statement from Hegel: "What is real is rational and what is rational is real". This sentence attempts to make a statement about the relationship of being and thought.

Hardly anybody will doubt that a relationship exists between the reality we perceive sensuously and the manner in which we think this perception. It is an empirical fact for our thinking that the word or the concept and the actual object existing physically are not the same. Therefore, it would be only a Carnapian pseudo-statement. How then must Hegel be understood? Certainly not from the point of view of empirical thinking.

What about abstract, scientific-theoretical thinking? Let us take for example the model of the atom. This model is only a theoretical construct for the physicist. He knows that the real atom, if there is such a thing at all, does not match the model. For nobody has ever seen an atom with his

eyes. The rational, the theoretical is not the real in this case, but only an approximative description of reality with generic, objective concepts. A natural law cannot be perceived empirically like a tree. It is a theoretical construct that helps us to explain observable processes in nature. Thus, abstract thinking too would judge Hegel's statement as wrong.

Which view is necessary in order to make the above sentence meaningful or does it seem to be really meaningless? We still do not have achieved the level of philosophical thinking. And Hegel's statement was indeed set up right there. Consequently, this sentence must represent something that is stated about the relationship of thinking and reality. It is not a question of comparison between reality and thinking as it is the case in empirical and abstract thinking, or a question of an investigation of these two structures. Hegel attempts to state something about the entire systematic and integrated complex of reality and thinking. He does not consider thinking and reality to be something separate, facing each other, but as being an organic unit whose two momenta merge in the whole, i.e. the structure of thinking and the structure of reality are in themselves two different and opposite momenta which, however, unite in synthesis and determine each other.

Perspective of Meta-Thinking

From this higher point of view results meta-thinking. The following can serve as an analogy: if we consider only a single atom for itself, we do not understand how the world is built up. Only the combination of the atom into greater units and more complex structures enables a more comprehensive understanding. We may consider an organic cell as an autonomous entity and gain a certain understanding of biological phenomena. However, our knowledge of it always remains fragmentary because it lacks the viewpoint of the whole organism, the human body for example. For, the cell subsists in interaction and communication with other cells. However, the cell compound or the organism is a higher unit that again has a different structure that was not recognizable in the single cells.

Similarly, in the reductionistic and analytical view of empirical and abstract thinking we find only partial aspects, sections of a higher and more comprehensive reality. Even if abstract thinking has already achieved a high level of unification, it never accomplishes the width and depth of philosophical thinking of the great system thinkers. It may be said that philosophical thinking leads abstract thinking upon a higher level, into a higher dimension just as abstract thinking advanced empirical thinking, which led to the development of the sciences.

Consequently, since philosophical thinking is a unifying thinking, this unification establishes self-reflection. If we want to transcend the bare understanding of conceptual thinking, we need to think this conceptual thinking.

Even though philosophical thinking might obtain a certain vindication through this, it is still not proven that it is self-reflective. For, this higher union of philosophical thinking is difficult to grasp and it cannot be learned as it is the case with abstract thinking. Anybody who so far dwelled on the level of empirical thinking can ascend to abstract thinking through the process of learning. This is not possible if you want to ascend from abstract thinking.

Abstract thinking seems to constitute the horizon of human thinking. What exceeds this horizon becomes questionable. While abstract thinking generally obtains and is not questioned seriously by anybody, philosophical thinking is highly controversial. The mentioning of the fact that for 2000 years this thinking runs like a red thread through the intellectual evolution of humanity, does not seem to impress any skeptic.

Next, we want to examine the transition from abstract to philosophical thinking more closely.

Reflection as Self-diremption of Thought

The basic question is: what is reflection and is it possible at all? We can only think about something if it faces us, if it can be recognized as an object. This process of objectification seems to constitute the nature of our thinking. Reflection's initial act of thought creates an object that was one in perception, in intuition. Intuition and the object of intuition are one in direct intuition. However, intuition allows no conceptual knowledge of the intuited, therefore, the unity of the intuited is dissolved in thought into a conceptual idealistic part and a real part which has reality outside of thinking.

I call this division the 'self-diremption of thinking'. The term diremption, which Hegel already used to designate the division of the spirit into its momenta, derives from Latin "diremptus" = division and from the verb "dirimo" = dismantle, separate, part. The word is composed of the prefix "dis-" (= apart, off-, dis-) and the verb "emo" = buy, acquire, appropriate. Therefore, we can also translate "diremptus" as expropriation, as a process of alienation, dissolution, and division of the primary unity. Thinking therefore, is a continuous self-diremptive process that makes reflection possible as a result, that is it establishes the conditions of a possibility of self-reflection of thinking.

In reflection thinking objectifies itself, makes itself the object of its own thinking. As a result, it produces an extraneous reality, because the object of thinking is of a different nature than thinking itself. The object is particularized and transient. It is posited in time and space and only therein exists as a knowable object. The categoricity of this object is prerequisite for its being known.

Thinking in general is neither subject to time nor space. Thinking is infinite whereas the object of thinking is finite. We see now how self-reflection causes a self-contradiction, an immanent antagonism of thinking that splits our consciousness. This polarity of thinking, however, is necessary if we want to obtain knowledge, and if secondary thinking should be possible at all. Objectification is also necessary for non-empirical thinking. Empirical thinking is rooted in self-diremption. Without it, empirical and abstract thinking is not possible. Only self-diremption constitutes secondary thinking. However, even in philosophical thinking, although it always aspires towards unity, the division of thinking is vital for the act of self-reflection.

The unity in philosophy is always unity of the object of thought and not unity of thinking. We cannot think a unity of thinking because otherwise the unity itself would become an object again, which would be absurd.

We can distinguish three stages of self-diremption:

- I. The primary unity of being and thinking, of primary and secondary thinking.
- II. In the act of thinking, thinking dirempts itself and creates a dynamic, triadic process:
 - A. thinking as such (secondary thinking)
 - B. beingness, the reality which is thought by thinking
 - C. the identity of A) and B) (but not the unity that only exists initially)
- III. The reunion in the primordial unity. The transcendence of self-diremption results in a return into the unity of thinking and being. This transcendence of dualism of thinking will be discussed later.

The three stages succeed each other cyclically i.e. stage one is not the beginning of a process and stage three not the end but the end is only the beginning of the next cyclical process and the beginning is the end of a preceding process.

Therefore, the nature of secondary thinking can be determined as follows: individuation of the primary thinking is caused by self-diremption of primary thinking which creates secondary thinking. The duality of being and thinking is the individuated secondary thinking. This state is the state of the homo sapiens, of the living being endowed with reason.

In the higher-educated person the self-reflection of philosophical thinking causes the urge to overcome the immanent dividedness of the human mind. This de-individuation is only possible by means of thinking and not by means of acting. Action is always an external act directed towards

an objectified and confronting world. Action is a confirmation of the self-diremption of thinking and of the divided nature of the human being, and therefore, action - even if it be morally noble - cannot bring us back to unity.

This aspiration to reunion is not necessarily something human. For most people do not feel as if their dividedness is a state to be surmounted or to be removed. Only those few thinkers who advanced into the deep, infinite space of thinking by way of self-reflection can understand the necessity of a deindividuation of the human mind. Therefore, this dissolution can only occur in thought, that is in a higher form of thinking that I call 'transrational thinking' (Paranoesis).

Our theory is not very satisfactory or convincing insofar as there are still open questions: how can the human mind or thinking itself objectify itself? How can I by the act of thinking objectify thinking? Why is there a self-diremption of the primary unity of thinking at all? What is the meaning of this cycle of division and reunion? These questions are extremely complex and cannot be answered easily.

I definitely reject a dogmatism of absolute theses and prefer to approach the subject matter with open-mindedness and critical thinking. Each step should be examined meticulously, concepts clarified and traditional or obsolete values reconsidered or impugned as questionable. Even if at this moment a few of the above-mentioned issues may appear to be still fuzzy or not clearly defined, I would like to note that in the process of my further investigation these aspects and concepts will occur again and again and will be illuminated from different angles so that a consistent whole entails from that.

Empathic Thinking

After this short excursion to the concept of reflection, back now to our task of examining the transition from abstract to philosophical thinking.

This transition does not occur frequently and does not seem to correspond to any of the typical abilities of human beings. Although most people are capable of accomplishing abstract thinking, the transcending of abstract thinking is reserved for a few great thinkers and philosophers. What distinguishes their thinking from the thinking of a scientist for example? The philosopher attempts in the first place to think about the whole, about beingness as such, about the world and its interconnections, etc. But why and how does he do this? Obviously the thinker is incited by an inner drive such curiosity or thirst of knowledge to examine the things that he perceives and experiences.

However, the scientist does this, too. While the scientist examines the thing in abstract thinking as an exterior one, he does not inquire into the nature of the thing or why this thing is at all and rather is not, but he only studies the qualitative and quantitative makeup, the surface of the thing, and not the "soul", from which he abstracts or which he negates a priori.

This materialistic-reductionistic attitude of the modern scientist does not resolve the nagging questions occurring repeatedly. These questions disclose themselves only to someone who is open-minded and has intellectual depth and sensitivity. It is the philosopher who displays this inner sensitivity for these questions.

Questions are in reciprocal proportion to answers, that is, questions are initiated by answers, questions can only be verbalized if they are moved by answers. How could I be able to formulate a question if the answer were not already latent within it. Questions always imply answers. It is the task of the philosopher to continue thinking about a question until this question guides him to the answer. As a result, the problem of language confronts the philosopher. For even if he has insight into an answer intuitively and understands it, he has still trouble translating this insight into language so that it becomes intelligible to all.

The most profound and most comprehensive questions cannot be expressed with language. The philosopher needs to apply metaphors, analogies or neologisms in order to give expression - though inadequately - , to his deep insights. Like an artist who expresses his deep inner feelings, e.g. through a painting, similarly, the philosopher is able by a brilliant use of the possibilities of language to express himself, although not always generally intelligible. Herein lies the problem of philosophical language and hermeneutics. Like the painting of an artist that is open to different interpretations, - because the observer always sees in the painting what constitutes his own subjective nature - likewise the subjective language of the philosopher is understood and interpreted in different ways.

Philosophical hermeneutics studies this problem in detail and an approximation to a thinker cannot be achieved by an academic study of philosophy, but rather through an intuitive empathy of the language and the entire environment of the thinker. Therefore, it is a question of understanding another person's thought. I call this 'empathic thinking'. This thinking represents the key difference between abstract and philosophical thinking. Whereas we have usually no problems of understanding another mind's abstract thinking, we cannot say that of the philosophical ideas. On the contrary, it is not sufficient to have the same knowledge and to know a lot of facts, but factual knowledge must be exceeded by means of the inner self-accomplished understanding of empathic thinking. That makes understanding possible. If I would set my factual knowledge like a stencil upon the statements of a philosopher, not only do I obtain a completely contorted view of his thinking but moreover I will never be really capable of understanding his thinking and his language. I cannot understand philosophical thinking by applying abstract thinking, as little as I would be able to grasp abstract thinking by means of empirical thinking.

We have now realized that the nature of philosophical thinking is of a different nature than that of abstract thinking and that philosophical thinking can be understood only through transcending abstract thinking. The method of transcendence was found in empathic thinking.

Dialectic of Thinking

When abstract thinking is left behind or is exceeded by a conscious act of thought and an intensive effort, it is generally believed that we thereby become mystical, unscientific, non-objective, contrafactual, speculative, esoteric, etc. This only demonstrates the incapacity of most people to egress out of standardized, limited, and acquired common thinking and to use the higher abilities of thinking which are available in every human being. It is due to the one-sided rational development of our intellectual abilities that we jump to rash conclusions regarding a higher thinking. That this is a prejudice is proven by the fact that we, as long as we are rooted in abstract thinking, cannot look beyond this horizon. By clinging to secondary thinking we limit ourselves. We constrain our thinking by our limited thought.

Another misapprehension is the opinion that we do not think abstractly in transcendental thinking, i.e. all advantages and preferences of abstract thinking, e.g. the laws of logic, would be abandoned and we would move purely speculatively in heavenly spheres which are not only irrational and inconsistent but lack any kind of reality. That this is mendacious can be seen from the study of the statements of philosophers. They use the same methods of abstract thinking, but they apply them to another subject matter.

Abstract thinking is dissolved in the higher unity of philosophical thinking. Abstract thinking forms a negative momentum within philosophical thinking. Negative insofar as the laws of abstract thinking are not positively and absolutely valid, but only negatively, that is, applied as guidelines as long as they are reasonable and useful. The philosopher might be forced to dissolve the laws of logic into a higher law. The laws of logic of abstract thinking, however, are not annulled as a result or declared invalid, but only subjected to relativity. These laws appertain to the domain of abstract and empirical thinking, that is, secondary thinking within which they have absolute validity.

Since there have always been areas outside the narrow limited field of facticity and objectivity of human knowledge, there has to be a possibility to investigate them. This is the very assignment of the true philosopher. Evidence for the existence of such areas is found in questions that are evoked in us referring to those areas. We would not be able to inquire into being as such if it existed only in our imagination. An explanation of how it entered into our imagination would be needed, since it is not empirically comprehensible, i.e. it has no sensuous source except for itself.

We understand now that a transition is possible from abstract thinking to a higher thinking, although it appears to be controversial, which is not a question of fact but of understanding, consequently a hermeneutic problem. Nevertheless we cannot deny the possibility and reality of philosophical thinking without limiting our own thinking and nature artificially and therefore eventually negating it. For by denying the possibility of a higher thinking nothing is explained but only explained away. However, by a reductionistic procedure we do not explain anything and above all not how philosophical ideas, which undeniably constitutes a great part of the history of mankind, are possible or are to be only apparent knowledge.

Referential and Reflective Thinking

We must now examine philosophical thinking more closely in order to find out whether self-reflective thinking is established in it.

For the sake of conceptual clarity I designate the empirical and abstract thinking as referential thinking. I would like to express in this way that these two modes of thinking always refer to something objective. Empirical thinking refers directly to sensuous and physical objects of our experience world.

Our objects are of idealistic nature in abstract thinking. They are categorial concepts that are related indirectly again to empirical objects of thought. In contrast to referential thinking, philosophical thinking is reflective thinking or meta-thinking because it reflects upon the structure and the essence of referential thinking.

"Reflection" is derived from Latin "reflecto" which means "turn back", "bend back". We imagine the following analogy: If we direct our thinking towards an object, we enter into a relationship with an object of real or ideal nature. Likewise, we can now think of reflective thinking as follows: instead of directing our attention towards an object we "bend" our attention away from the object and back towards its source, that is, to thinking itself. That does not mean that reflective thinking has no objects. For as long as there is a movement of thought, this movement must always be directed towards something. Thinking as a movement and as a process is always intentional, teleological. Therefore, the object of focusing in reflective thinking is thinking itself.

We can examine thinking as such through the recursive act of thought. We can infer for example that thinking is intentional, always directed towards an object. This is a phenomenological fact that is only possible in reflective thinking (Autonoesis).

Holistic Thinking

If a philosopher thinks about being as such, he thinks reflectively. Can we sustain this claim? Let's consider the process of reflective thought: at first we have the concept of being which has no clear and unambiguously referential meaning. No doubt, this concept possesses a clear and evident meaning in philosophical insight and knowledge, but taken as a word it is only an empty concept and may mean many things.

On the one hand, the meaning of this concept is dependent on the context of its use and on the other hand on the thinking of the philosopher. This reveals the entire complexity of philosophical thinking. The concept of being therefore is not a concept that can be reduced to a

sensuous fact; it is not a sensuous or scientifically abstract concept at all but a metaphysical concept that transcends the narrow boundaries of language.

Our language is the language of referential thinking and therefore problems arise when philosophers attempt to translate personally experienced, cognized and intuited concepts into the straitjacket of a rational and limited language.

Since the concepts of philosophical language are not empirically referential, they can only be understood as existing by itself and for itself, that is, reflectively.

They are homogeneous concepts because they attempt to subsume everything under themselves. The totality of the philosophical concept indicates the unity of philosophical thinking. Philosophical thinking as self-reflection is holistic thinking. It attempts to apprehend the holistic structures of consciousness and of the world and to represent them in a comprehensive and consistent system. Holistic thinking represents itself as link between philosophical and transrational thinking (Paranoesis), similarly as empathic thinking is a link between abstract and philosophical thinking. Self-reflective thinking endeavors to comprehend the ultimate and the first principles, the laws and structures of beingness, of the world and of the human being.

That may smack rather speculatively and it does for the ears of people who try to understand this from the point of view of abstract or empirical thinking. I have to stress that the understanding of philosophical thinking is possible and reasonable only from the standpoint of philosophical thinking. I need to raise myself upon the level of the philosopher in order to be able to understand his philosophy. Our discussion of the different levels of thinking is actually not philosophical but holistic thinking. For we reflect upon philosophical thinking itself.

Holistic thinking enables us to intuit the whole, the unity of thinking, of the world, and of beingness. We still cannot apprehend the whole and the unity as a living and fulfilling insight that manifests to us with supreme evidence and truth - this will be only possible in transrational thinking.

The higher we rise in thinking, the greater the unity of being and concept, the more comprehensive, the broader and more profound becomes the significance of our statements and thoughts and the more problematic the general intelligibility and communicability of our thinking. Higher thinking is farther away from the actual, particular, and objectified world of the sensuous experience. Corporeality and materiality are always particular and never unitary. Here we encounter the multiplicity and the individuality, while in the higher degrees of thinking we attempt to abstract increasingly from the multiplicity in order to attain unity.

This aspiration towards unity is the intellectual urge of the human being, the thirst for knowledge. Knowledge means essentially unification of the concrete diversity. The destination of reflective thinking seems now to be given to us: supreme unity, i.e. to unite the entire diversity of the sensuous and abstract-idealistic world in a single point and to trace it back to oneness, i.e. to unite thinking and being not as an identity of two different substances but as an undifferentiated synthesis.

Secondary thinking (Exonoesis) is objectified primary thinking (Hyponoesis) occurring as two apparently opposite forms: Thinking and being, mind and matter. Matter, however, is not a product of thinking but an aspect or an aspectual form of primary thinking, analogous to secondary thinking or consciousness.

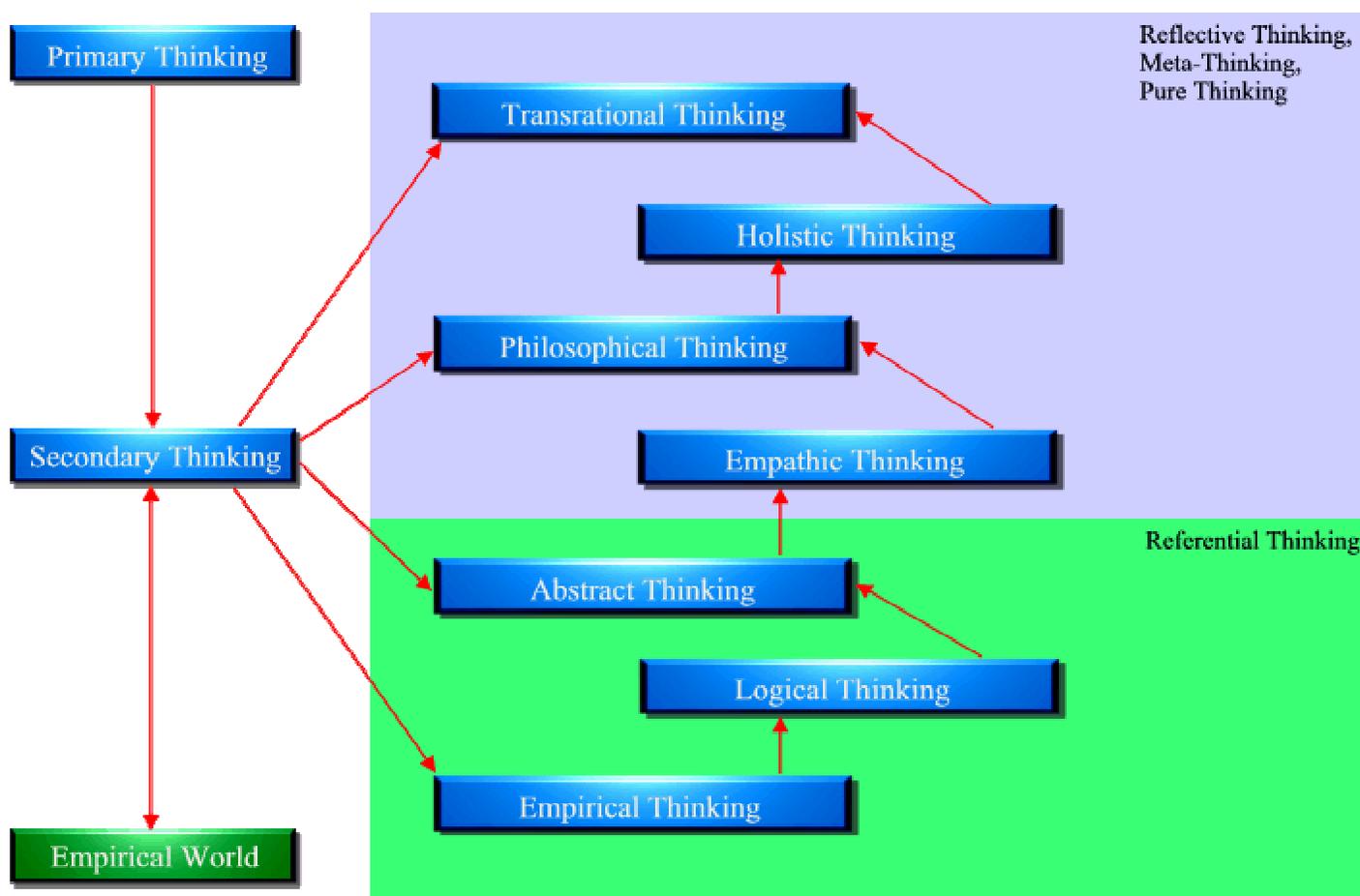
Both, mind and matter, are individuated forms that are distinguished and separated from other forms of the same nature. That this multiplicity of form becomes finally united in one point, or rather has always been united and become separate only by the thought process - this insight is the product of philosophical and reflective thinking.

Unitary thinking is possible only in reflective thinking. As long as we are rooted in secondary thinking and related to the multiplicity of the sensuous and abstract world, we cannot apprehend the underlying unity. Only in pure thinking that abstracts from sensibility, that is, in reflective thinking are we able to intuit the primordial unity. A rudimentary form of unitary thinking is possible in abstract thinking. Physicists strive to set up a homogeneous theory of all physical natural forces, a world formula. With this, however, they only explain the physical structure of the world and not the human being as a whole who is defined essentially as having consciousness. These unifications in abstract thinking are only partial and incomplete. Only on the next higher level, that of philosophical and holistic thinking, can a truly holistic and comprehensive unity be realized.

Our next step is to show the necessity of self-reflective thinking as means to resolve the initially set up paradox.

Graphical Representation of the Formal Classification of Thinking

Each graphical element is clickable and links to the paragraph discussing that topic



Logical and Moral Thinking

We have to still explain the connecting link between empirical and abstract thinking as seen in the graphics above. This is logical thinking. Logic studies the laws of abstract and rational thinking. The characteristics of abstract thinking are the ability of induction and deduction, of drawing conclusions, of consistent thinking, etc. Logical thinking is part of abstract thinking (formal logic) but also of empirical thinking or moral thinking (practical logic).

Our will manifests itself in moral thinking as an expressed action, as a goal-oriented activity of the human nature. Action is expressed and embodied thinking. Acting is the ground of being of every action. Practical-logical thinking realizes through volition and freedom of will the mediation of action and self-expression

Practical Thinking

This is intentional thinking. It refers to our world and to other people. It is communicative thinking that allows the exchange of ideas. It is social thinking that finds its expression in welfare, love, education, etc.. It is also pragmatic thinking that seeks the greatest benefit for itself. In this respect it is of course egocentric or egoistic thinking. Thinking which is externalized in exterior relationships and which does not refer self-reflectively to itself, is practical thinking. Practical thinking contains a number of derivative forms, such as the ones mentioned above. Psychological thinking, too, is a paradigmatic type of practical thinking because it attempts to implement the relationship to the "outside" within the framework of the psychological structures of the human nature.

Analytical and Synthetical Thinking

A further classification is possible between analytical and synthetical thinking. The latter is philosophical thinking, while the former is abstract thinking.

Analytical thinking tries to split up the whole into parts and to examine these parts individually in their functionality in order to conclude from their description and activity to the function of the whole. The complexity of the whole is broken down into single, elementary, and separate units. This artificial reduction has above all a practical value. However, regarding the comprehension of the whole, this thinking leads to paralogisms, sophisms and mistakes. Reductionistic thinking is never able to explain the whole, not to mention to understand it. The tendencies in modern natural science, e.g. quantum physics or chaos theory, show clearly that humans need to disassociate themselves from the celebrated reductionism of modern science in order to obtain an understanding of the whole.

Synthetical thinking is the negation of analytical thinking. By canceling reductionism and analysis, synthetical thinking endeavors to reach the whole through the comprehension of the whole itself. Not individual parts are of interest but the direct, intuitive apprehension and experience of the whole. Pure thinking combines itself with pure experience, the abstract with the sensuous. The human consciousness is the locus efficiens of synthetical thinking that includes the human being as an integral entity.

Unifying Thinking

Finally, we may designate holistic and transrational thinking as unitary thinking or unifying thinking. This is the highest level of thinking and consists in the absolute unity of thinking and being. In this unity, all differences and multiplicity are canceled. In unifying thinking, we attain the primordial unity of primary thinking, abstracted from all individuality. Therefore, we cannot say that WE think unifyingly, for this WE or this I is annulled in the unifying thought act. It is object-less thinking. We will cover this absolute thinking in more detail when examining transrational thinking.

We conclude now the survey of thinking. We need to implement modifications and enhancements continuously in the process of our investigations, especially since transrational thinking (Paranoesis) is not yet defined. We also do not want to get fixed dogmatically to this scheme, for it should only serve as an intellectual expediency and guide on our way to the exploration of thinking.

Forms and Objectifications of Thought

We distinguish between forms of thought and objectifications of thought. Forms of thought e.g. are empirical thinking, philosophical thinking, practical thinking, etc. Objectifications of thought are manifestations of the totality of thinking, such as will, intelligence, feeling, reason, conscience, intuition, intention, etc. Objectifications of thought are intentional, are expressions of thinking. Forms of thought represent the reflexivity of thinking, the self-consciousness of the human being, the intentional consciousness of...

Objectifications of thought and forms of thought constitute a synthesis, a unity of thinking and acting. There is no pure action, that is an action that would be independent of thinking. Every action is grounded in thinking and contains the origin and impetus in thinking. Pure thinking, on the other side, is possible. Philosophical or self-reflective thinking is independent of action and is self-containing. It is the self-thinking of thinking or as Aristotle calls it: thinking of thinking (*ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις*) (Met. XII, 1047b, 34).

The objectifications of thought penetrate the forms of thought. No detachments and sharp distinctions are possible. Thinking always remains a totality, a whole, that can be structured and analyzed by means of the method of phenomenological description for the purpose of pure knowledge. The totality of thinking has different graduations or manifestations that can be represented hierarchically in a diagram of increasing purity. The purer thinking is, the more comprehensive, more profound and more holistic it becomes. The philosopher understands and knows more than the empirically or practically minded thinker because the latter is kept bound within the finitude and limitation of human thinking (secondary thinking) and is determined through this finitude. The limited thinker determines her essence within the finitude and relativity of historicity and sociability whereas the unlimited thinker transcends these "natural" boundaries and extends into the infinite noetic universe. This is pure thinking that transcends the unity of thinking and acting. It separates itself from the world as an "exteriority", as an antithetical structure, which seems to exist independently of the subject, and cancels this dualism of subject and object in the higher synthesis of the unity of thinking and being.

Material and Intellectual Evolution

Towards the end of this propaedeutic study, we have to establish and justify the necessity of self-reflective thinking, of a higher form of thinking that transcends abstract-rational thinking.

I claim that reflective thinking is essential thinking and therefore appertains to the true nature of the human being. Since, however, the human being is an imperfect creature that is still in a continual process of development, we must be aware that the nature of humans as manifest in the 20th century, is not the ultimate and final nature of the human being. The human being may be called the crown of the creation, but that does not mean at all that evolution is discontinued and that humans as biological beings have ceased to develop further.

From the point of view of anthropology a clue may be gleaned from the inherent malleability of human beings and therefore from the different embodiments within the species homo sapiens. Our physical evolution may be mostly finished, but consciousness and our mental abilities are a more recent occurrence in nature and - as evident from the intellectual history of mankind - they will evolve further and therefore achieve higher and subtler levels of development.

We can definitely assume that our thinking will develop further and that the level of abstract thinking, wherein most people today are rooted, is only a temporary stage in a complex process of intellectual evolution of the human being.

We must nevertheless distinguish between the material and the intellectual evolution. Although material evolution is bound to time, and as a consequence is continuous, and therefore cannot skip complete stages (the human being was the last link in the chain of evolution because the most complex), we know that the intellectual evolution can proceed anachronistically.

For most people the intellectual evolution is a slow process of adaptation towards intellectual abilities that have evolved through the dialectic process of the world spirit (to speak in Hegel's terms). It is proven that the great Greek philosophers had a much deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the world and of the human being than modern thinkers of the 20th century who are engaged primarily with analytical philosophy and therefore ultimately pursue pure reductionism.

Great thinkers always stood out from the age in which they lived and were far ahead of their or even our time. The incredible insights and knowledge of Plotinus are not only timeless but bear a profound truth that may one day become scientifically confirmed by future scientist-philosophers.

What I mean is that our thinking is not subject to the laws of the external physical world and its evolution in time, and therefore thought is capable of developing its latent faculties at all times. Only a few individual thinkers can realize this, because these higher abilities are not yet common property but are still hidden latently in us.

Furthermore, these higher abilities are impeded in their development by our obdurate and desperate clinging to the limitations of abstract thinking. Only the philosopher in full awareness exceeds the boundaries of abstract thinking and dares to enter unknown territory and thereby unfolds these higher abilities.

Horizon of Thinking

We must necessarily conclude from the concept of the human being and our anthropological understanding of our own nature that the possibility of higher forms of consciousness and thought is not to be excluded. If we consider furthermore the abundance of phenomena which regularly occurred during mankind's history and which is empirical evidence of extraordinary abilities (ingeniousness, psychic abilities, etc.), it would betray one's utter ignorance if we were to believe that our current way of thinking is the ultimate thinking.

A product of this thinking caught in actual thinking is Kant's transcendental philosophy. He attempted to determine philosophical and higher thinking by means of abstract thinking and concluded that we may only move within a categorial thinking that always has a reference to sensibility, whereas the Ideas of reason are speculative and can never be empirically proven and therefore are not amenable to our knowledge. They are only of practical, that is moral or religious value but never of theoretical value. Kant's epistemology, however, was a brilliant achievement for abstract thinking, but failed pitifully with respect to higher thinking. He indeed realized a world beyond, but thought it to be inaccessible to our thinking: it is the thing-in-itself that can never be grasped by abstract thinking. On the one hand, he is right as far as it concerns abstract thinking, but that he postulated a thing-in-itself without making it amenable to knowledge represents a gross mistake in his philosophy and therefore led to controversial interpretations and discussions.

We should not limit ourselves a priori in our thinking as Kant did who assumed an immanent horizon of our mind, that could never be exceeded. He presupposed this horizon a priori without having been able to establish it in thinking. Thinking is infinite and unlimited by nature. If we run into boundaries, we are the ones who set up these boundaries. For empirical and abstract thinking these boundaries are necessary, otherwise we would not be able to cope with the experiences of the sensuous world and action would hardly be conceivable. Therefore, the boundaries of our thinking determine our relationship to the world and to other people. That explains their necessity. Let us, however, not conclude from this that these boundaries are an immovable and insurmountable fact of human nature.

Historical Thinking

The question might pop up why we should transcend our referential thinking at all, what is the sense and the benefit of it? This question is asked in the wrong way since it originates from the

viewpoint of abstract thinking. Our abstract and empirical thinking always needs to be utilitarian, because it is essentially practical, pragmatic thinking. We think that a direct benefit might be available for mankind in transcending abstract thinking, otherwise, we see no sense in it and leave this task to some eccentric thinkers.

In order to clarify this problem at all we need a more detailed discussion of historical thinking. Historical thinking is the intellectual evolution of secondary thinking in the form of collective thinking. On the one hand, this collective thinking is comparable to Hegel's world spirit, on the other hand to the collective unconscious of C.G. Jung. Both thinkers attempted to comprehend the intellectual evolution of the human being as a superordinate abstract substrate.

We often speak of a zeitgeist that determines our thought and action. The epoch called Renaissance for example was a time in which diverse great thinkers and artists were led by the same intellectual current and when they together shaped and expressed a certain spirit. The zeitgeist - if extended to the whole history of mankind - can be said to be the collective and intellectual total potential that itself runs through a process of development and determines our age vitally.

If we now apply this to thinking as such, we come up with historical thinking. This is the differentiating manifestation of primary thinking in the structures of secondary thinking. It is a self-manifesting, processual and dynamic movement of primary thinking. The formation of this movement is secondary thinking with all its forms of thought.

The great philosophers were especially sensitive to historical thinking and were often capable to delve into this flow of thought and thus to arise onto the level of holistic thinking. By this immersion into historical thinking, they modified it at the same time. That is the incredible power of the intellectual thinker. He can, although not always recognizable, influence the collective thinking and therefore change its form and direction.

The active interrelation of the philosopher with historical thinking enriches and advances it essentially. Since collective thinking always determines our time in all its fields, such as art, science, religion, politics, etc., a great thinker therefore has an essential or even elementary influence on the physical, cultural and intellectual evolution of mankind, although only rarely on his own age. Historical thinking is a slow process although the development of new forms can be sped up by radical processes (e.g. a revolution).

We are now in a position to recognize the necessity of philosophical thinking. For in an indirect way, the great thinkers are the catalysts of the intellectual evolution of mankind, they make material and cultural progress possible. But since this contribution is mostly not acknowledged, people fall easily victim to the prejudice that philosophical thinking be worthless.

Conclusion

This concludes the propaedeutic of thinking. We also resolved the paradox of self-reflective thinking and we established from the nature of the human being and of its thinking that self-reflective thinking is possible and necessary. That allows us now to examine thinking more precisely by means of self-reflective thinking. The propaedeutic diagram displayed above is meant to be a guide to trace back the individual levels and domains of thinking, starting with empirical thinking and leading up to transrational and primary thinking, and thereby obtaining a deeper insight into the nature of thinking.

My task is not only to compile the mosaic pieces of the history into a homogeneous and consistent whole but furthermore to aim at a first attempt of unification of science and philosophy. In particular I refer to quantum physics that is especially predestined to become united in a comprehensive unity with philosophy. My system should in its ultimate form not only contain all sciences but all phenomena of the world and of the human being. Only such a transcendental science may give us one day insight into the mystery of life and creation.

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URL: <http://www.hyponoesis.org/>
Updated: 5/27/2006

