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Education of the Mind & Its Faculties

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*"Whatever is received is received according to the nature of the recipient."
Saint Thomas Aquinas*

We all know that verbal communication is very weak, that only 5% of what is expressed is to be understood. But I believe Thomas Aquinas is not referring to this issue of efficiency in communication, but to the very nature of our own mind and how it determines up to the very content of what we hear and understand.

The mind is the primary cause behind everything: the reality is perceived through our mind, our identity is defined by it; so as all our interaction with others. Therefore whatever we may hear, understand, accept and memorize from what is said today, these are all consequences of all our values and preference systems. What is received is received according to the nature of the recipient. **Or to say it another way, we do not believe what we see. Rather we see what we believe.**

In this essay we were asked not to talk about education in general, but to focus on the education of the mind and its faculties and how it might be trained for the good of nowadays' and future generations.

For us to reach this objective, we defined a structure. First (1) we will frame a common understanding of the mind and what is at stake when we wish to educate it. Then (2) we will raise the question of how to change our unconscious pattern which will introduce (3) some potential faculties of the mind. Then we are to wonder (4) why and what for we are trained today this way and (5) what might be needed in this globalized 21st century?

PART 1: Conscious and Unconscious mind at work

1.1 A base definition of the mind

When I use the word “mind”, what is the symbolic picture you see? Do you draw a brain or data processing facilities? Do you imagine a stack of past memories and potential dreams for the future? Do you see an antenna that receives inspiration? What do you see? What are the contours of this organ that you call “my mind” and with whom you spent your entire life, day and night?

A commonly accepted definition could be to consider the mind as a continuous and mostly unconscious process that determines our actions at every instant based on external stimulus and the reference to past likes/dislikes.

Like a sculptor hitting the stone, any response to the environment is leaving a trace in the mind that reinforces a past preference. All these traces finally define flows and streams and rivers and torrents that we may identify with, determining our identity and our singular way of interacting with the surrounding reality.

After a few years, let's say by the age of 7, most of our life's beliefs' systems and values and preferences patterns are set. The rest of our life will consist of experiencing the so called “choices” we would have made by that age as surely as water is always flowing within the stream bed.

Now a question may arise about the unconscious dimension of the mind, if I know I exist it means that there is some consciousness involved somewhere in the process. Where do I locate consciousness in this process? Or what is the relationship between conscious, visible pattern and the unconscious treatment from the mind?

1.2 From body sensation to the “mind at work”

Well right here right now, what do you feel within the framework of your body?

Maybe you can feel heat in your back or moisture in your hands. What would it tell you about your mind activity if you were to pay attention to these signals?

Well maybe the feeling of heat may express that your mind is fighting against the idea or experimenting some kind of cognitive dissonance. In that example, you know about the discomfort because you feel heat.

Let's take another example with a more neutral feeling, like a regular blood

pulse. It may express that the idea I am discoursing about right now, is obvious or not touching anything important and you can carry on sending e-mails and sms...

In these examples the mind is doing an unconscious treatment work, out of which you observe conscious biochemical reactions at the surface of the body. **The so-called conscious mind is therefore only the end game, the visible side of the iceberg of a complex unconscious process.**

Our experience of life with an untrained mind is biased, fragmented and partial. It is so separated from the reality with a capital R, that Plato was telling an allegory to make us understand this. He says man is born in a cave with projection of frightening shadows we called reality. It is with a great effort that he may discover the light behind the shadows. In the vedic tradition we find the same idea with the word maya, the big illusion that is the place of mankind before its realization or awakening.

And in modern scientific terms David Bohm's¹ implicate and explicate order theory², in which we would live in a holographic projection, a form of simplification in just 3D of a Universe that is much more complex and much more intelligent than we can just imagine.

Same ideas all over time space and culture: what we experience with an untrained mind is simply fake.

Men are mistaken in thinking themselves free; and this opinion consists of this alone, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined.
Spinoza in Ethics

So what is at stake with education of the mind : nothing less than our free-will leading to our responsibility vis à vis ourselves and the world.

I do not believe we will reach anything good sustainably if we do not grasp collectively this individual responsibility we have to control our greed and our feeling of insecurity to enter the field of ethics and master cardinal virtues like temperance, justice, courage and wisdom (Cicero ; De Inventionem, II – LIII).

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Bohm

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Implicate_and_explicate_order

PART 2: How to change unconscious pattern?

Yes the mind is set around the age of 7, but nothing is set forever. As we all know the very essence of Life is change, movement.

“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man”. Heraclitus

Another way to say it in modern, neuroscientific ways is to refer to brains plasticity. And there are many testimonial of this ability of the brain to recover from intense trauma:

Let's see the example of Dr Milton Erickson, who lived up to almost 80 year old though he contracted polio at the age of 17. The following paragraph is a very informative discussion³ between him and one of his best students Dr Ernst Rossi when he was asked to remember his first auto hypnotical experience.

(E)rickson: As I lay in bed that night, I overheard the three doctors tell my parents in the other room that my boy would be dead in the morning. I felt intense anger that anyone should tell a mother her boy would be dead by morning. My mother then came in, with as serene a face as can be. I asked her to arrange the dresser, push it up against the side of the bed at an angle. She did not understand why, she thought I was delirious. My speech was difficult. But at that angle by virtue of the mirror on the dresser I could see through the doorway, through the west window of the other room. I was damned if I would die without seeing one more sunset. If I had any skill in drawing, I could still sketch that sunset.

(R)ossi: Your anger and wanting to see another sunset was a way you kept yourself alive through that critical day, in spite of the doctors' predictions. But why do you call that an auto hypnotic experience?

E: I saw that vast sunset covering the whole sky. But I know there was also a tree there outside the window, but I blocked it out.

R: You blocked it out? It was that selective perception that enables you to say you were in an altered state?

E: Yes, I did not do it consciously. I saw all the sunset, but I didn't see the fence and large boulder that were there. I blocked out everything except the sunset. After I saw the sunset, I lost consciousness for three days. When I finally awakened, I asked my

³ Autohypnotic Experiences of Milton H. Erickson (Milton H. Erickson and Ernest L. Rossi), The American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis, July. 1977 20, 36-54.

father why they had taken out that fence, tree, and boulder. I did not realize I had blotted them out when I fixed my attention so intensely on the sunset. Then, as I recovered and became aware of my lack of abilities, I wondered how I was going to earn a living. I had already published a paper in a national agricultural journal. "Why Young Folks Leave the Farm." I no longer had the strength to be a farmer, but maybe I could make it as a doctor

I chose this long extract for a couple of reasons. First of course to demonstrate that yes change is possible and also to illustrate a few factors involved in change and resilience.

- It starts with a strong enough external stimulation that shakes up the mental structure like a trauma or a **symbolic death**
- It requires a **choice to live** and experience Life with a capital L in its basic majesty: to see another sunset
- Finally it needs the mastery of modified state of consciousness.

But these conditions, though highly classical, universal and eternal are difficult to be included in a scholar system. No modern parents want they child to be traumatized to initiate the process of mind mastering.

But that has not been the case all the time. We lost the tradition of initiation and rituals. In Sparta or in still living shamanic traditions, it is frequent to send a 7-year-old kid for several days and nights alone in nature. Those who study these cultures may find it barbarian but if we include the education of the mind in our judgement, we might discover that we are the barbarians, not to include confronting death and mind mastering in our way to educate children.

Back to Milton Erickson, through the mastery of his mind, he has recover the faculty to walk and speak and even heal his patients like probably no other doctors. The whole NLP movement is based on his work and I believe 99% of the current communicators and life coach and therapist owe him almost everything. He is an example of the power of the mind to access its unconscious potential and to change, to evolve in a positive way.

He was a living example of reducing terrible pain at the expanse of more than an hour of auto-hypnosis every day, which leads us to the following section on the faculties of the mind.

PART 3: The faculties of the mind

In 2000, a study conducted over 200 patients⁴ proved the efficiency of hypnosis used for excisional breast biopsy. Results showed a significant reduction of pain, nausea, fatigue, discomfort, emotional upset and a cost savings of \$772 per patient, due largely to shorter time in the operating room.

I have been trained in Ericksonian hypnosis and I can personally testify its efficiency on pain reduction but also in allergy, depression, insomnia or strong anxiety generated by animals like spiders or rats... I also have seen personally people quit smoking, and get rid of strong addiction with a couple of hours of just a man talking to another one. No medication, no surgery, no heavy technical platforms and no miracle neither: just science of the mind.

However this is not where I have learnt the most extraordinary faculties of the mind. They come from practicing vipassana meditation: an atheist, body-scanning type of meditation. Thanks to this technique, I experienced something beyond mind and matter that I will never forget and it turned my life upside down.

I also learned many things from shamanic initiations and from a 2-year mediumship program where I talked to at least 100 dead people. These were astonishing experiences that I may disclose to you if you ask me, but out of which I came to a few personal conclusions about the mind, how it works and what are its faculties. Let's summarize them.

We mentioned already

1. Intensely reducing sensations like pain or cold
2. Communicating with the after life and channelling entities from other dimension / universe
3. Accessing a realm of no space/no time beyond mind and matter

But I can also testify on the following ones

4. Controlling the speed of the space-time-continuum flow like living in slow motion during a car accident
5. Sensing people and living their emotion as if I was them
6. Accessing the past, present and future of a person
7. Remembering past lives
8. Tuning in the mind to live other dimensions of the Universe

In the literature these faculties are very well known and documented. In the

⁴ <http://jnci.oxfordjournals.org/content/99/17/1280.full>

Christian world, please refer to Corinthians 1 chapter 12⁵ and see the gifts from the Holy Spirit, in Hinduism, please refer to the Book 3 of the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali. In Tibetan Buddhism and the vajrayana lineage there is the story of Milarepa and most masters' *siddhis*. For those interested in books, I would recommend: Autobiography of a yogi [Link⁶](#) where you will discover the full potential of the mind and also the dangers that exist if we play with them.

After a couple of years chasing out these experiences I have stopped a few years ago but what remains from these years of quest is the certitude that the so-called "reality" that our basic mind allow us to live when it is untrained, is far from being sufficient. It is partial, biased and separated from an infinite source of wisdom and happiness.

I believe the genius like Mozart or Einstein had a natural access to this source of evidence. It is obvious with Mozart who was "composing" opera before the age of 7. Now we understand why and how the mind of genius is working. They are not processing information; they receive direct knowledge via a trained unconscious.

As a conclusion of this section an untrained mind makes us harm the one we love most, through our incapacity to control our internal wild animals like anger, animosity, greed, wrath... and because of our need to be loved.

Whereas a trained mind can generate a sense of fulfilment and joy far beyond any pleasure , desire or external objects.

Now a question may arise in your mind: if these faculties are so well known and documented, why are they not more mainstream? Why and what for are we trained this way? This is what we are to understand in the coming section.

⁵ Paul is describing the gifts of the Holy spirit : "8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of **wisdom**, to another a message of **knowledge** by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing** by that one Spirit, 10 to another **miraculous powers**, to another **prophecy**, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another **speaking in different kinds of tongues**,[a] and to still another the **interpretation** of tongues.[b] 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."

⁶ <http://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/Autobiography-of-a-Yogi-by-Paramahansa-Yogananda.pdf>

PART 4. Why and what for are we trained this way?

Surviving comes first. Eating, sleeping, nurturing a family is the basic foundation for anything and since the sedentarisation of mankind tribes have grown and they looked for enhanced security they found in collectivisation.

This growth of tribes required both standardization of roles and specialization of tasks and a need for governance. A system appeared that still today is evolving with its rules, and the limits an authority claim over individual wish. As power did grow, greed did also and control over the masses expanded up to today.

With the cities and states numerous systems developed themselves, sometimes in opposition, sometimes in collaboration. Just to mention a few living organisms: education is a system requiring professors to teach and students to learn. Religion is also a living system requiring adepts and priests. Government is another one requiring politicians and tax payers. Military forces are another one, requiring enemies and soldiers... And whatever the system, their first purpose is to survive as any living organism.

And what are the qualities required by any system whether it is a religion, a state, a school, a military corpse: obeisance and faith in the capacity of the system to ensure the good of its components. **Through repetition, the system forces you into a format, a place, a role that will provide you with an identity and a security.**

On the other hand, **what are the qualities that any collective system is not willing you to acquire: autonomy of choice, self-realization, understanding.**

Individualization and collectivization are two opposite movements. These are two opposite driving forces for growth as Clare Graves in its spiral dynamics perfectly express. When we go too far in the "each man for himself" direction, the group needs to emerge to balance ego. Then the group pressure is too strong, men refuse it and stand up for their right.

But there is another force that is driving growth. Let's call it Internal and External or Esoteric and Exoteric as you will find in most references. During the ages schools of mystery and other systems of initiation have always existed and incorporated this individualization force leading to the Mysteries of Self-Realization : the Logos, the Void, The Ein Sof, Brahman, the Tao or the Kingdom of Heaven Within.

These schools of philosophy were the one who gave access to the previously discussed potentials of the mind, making sure they were given to men of

morality. Since the realization is individual, they were considered as an opaque parallel society, cultivating secrecy and therefore becoming a threat to the collectivizing force.

These schools are bound to end quickly, because they are a source of anarchy. Indeed, those who progress among them are simply out of control for the dominant system, unmanageable and ready to die for the truth. We can remember Diogenes asking Alexander the Great to stand out of his sun! or Dostoeievski: when you've robbed a man of everything, he's no longer in your power, he's free again. These schools and teaching set you free, free of fear, free of needs, free of identity, ...

If we take a closer look at history, there has always been two systems being run in parallel. One exoteric, hierarchical, book based, and the other esoteric, pointing at the Kingdom of Heaven within, and giving sense and purpose.

Like the Yin and the Yang, the esoteric and the exoteric systems have always run dynamically, hand in hand, one complementary to the other. Mainstream, average people need standard solutions, plug-and-play discipline and no understanding. And among them, some individual will ask for more, they will simply not fit into the system, requiring more meaning, more purpose, higher entropy. They are willing and capable to take more risk and gain more knowledge and wisdom. For them esoteric teachings are needed.

One is not necessarily better than the other. One keep the book of the other. One is bound to remain stable when the other is bound to collapse. Both are needed hand in hand, one valuing the other.

**One system is teaching man how to make a living,
the other how to make a life.**

I believe the nature of the shift we live today is the access for the mass and the average to the science of the mind. Internet made the teachings of every tradition available at no cost. And the more we standardize the world and the people, the more powerful the individualization force become.

This is why I strongly believe in the education of the mind.
How to do it is what we will cover in the next section.

PART 5. What might be needed in this globalized 21st century?

We understood that there are two forces that aim at the same greater good of humanity but with two different beliefs. In one hand, human nature is bad and it needs to be formatted. On the other hand, there is a place of good in every man that needs to be nurtured. Two visions, and the two are equally right and wrong, equally biased, fragmented and partial. The only issue is that nowadays one has won and smashed the other. The exoteric is everywhere and the esoteric very difficult to find.

But alternative to the mass education promoting exoteric and individualistic values exist. Systems like Montessori, Steiner Waldorf or Frenet have proved successful for decades in every culture. These systems value something essential, which is that there is a place of goodness and knowledge inside everybody, that needs to be nurtured. Let's hear from one of these education leaders: Rudolf Steiner

Where is the book in which the teacher can read about what teaching is? The children themselves are this book. We should not learn to teach out of any book other than the one lying open before us and consisting of the children themselves.
Rudolf Steiner

What he says is very close to another philosopher from the 19th century Soron Kierkegaard:

Instruction begins when you, the teacher, learn from the learner.

All these methods require humility from the teacher and many more qualities since he/she cannot rely on any procedure, or on any method. It requires improvisation, empathy and wisdom, all qualities that are undervalued by process based systems who question and doubt the quality of man to rather trust machines and systems.

So for me everything start with an appropriate teacher! Someone who walked the path for long enough that he embodies himself the very values and actions he wish his students to acquire.

And beside the teacher, which teaching? I believe in three pillar of mind mastery:

1_ Morality (*shila*)

There is a whole theme on values and virtues from Pr Nagan and I am sure he will have cover this question of morality. But there are obvious laws like : no

killing, no harming, no lying, no stealing and no adultery....

We can also mention here the Golden rule : which is : not to do anything that you would not like somebody else do to you and the positive way : do to the others what you would like they do to you.

It is called the golden rule since it appears prominently in every known religion, including "Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and the rest of the world's major religions"⁷

Cultivating the right speech and the right action ensures that whatever we tell and do, it is aligned with our highest reference in ethics and values. Cultivating the right livelihood is for example avoiding working for a company that harm people : tobacco industry, weapons... Could you imagine a world where people would simply refuse to work for liars and killers?

2 Mind Control (*samadhi*)

Meditation is a drug-free, guru free, and cost free exercise of the mind. You just have to find a cushion and observe your respiration. There is nothing as basic as meditation. And though most of us ignore this exercise.

However, we see the value of a shower and of brushing our teeth every day, but what is our basic hygiene for our mind? Meditation is nothing more than this at first, a basic cleaning, a defrag for those who know computers. Its effect on brain plasticity is now very well documented. Please refer to the Mind and Life institute from Matthieu Riccard, or the clinical studies on stress from Dr John Kabatt Zinn' MBSR or Transcendent Meditation website.

But mind control is not only meditation, it deals with vigilance. This vigilance of every moment enhance the quality of our presence in the here and the now which is essential to avoid the mind remembering the past or dreaming about the future. It is a continuous exercise, never to loose the balance of the mind, never to loose what is required by the situation AS IT IS and not as we wish it to be.

This will allow letting go our negativity and cutting down the chain reaction that leads to fear, need, wrath, hate... These chain reactions can be stopped at the body sensation level, far before emotion and action but only through the right effort and with the right mindfull concentration.

3 Wisdom (*panja*)

With vigilance we cultivate an understanding at a deep level that everything is

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Rule

impermanent, any sensation, positive or negative has the same characteristics of rising and passing away. Pain is first a piece of information before becoming a sensation. Nothing last forever. This proper understanding of impermanence will help cultivate another traditional value highly essential, which is the wisdom of non-attachment. If everything is impermanent then why worry for my watch, my car, my house... I only have to take care but not to identify myself with it.

Another wisdom that is to be cultivated is a sense of holiness.

This modern society is the only example I know of a society that “functions” with no sense of holiness, not revering the sun, the earth and the natural forces with high respect. This attitude toward the surrounding natural forces brings devotion (*bhakti*) and a positive feeling of wonder to something that we all have in commons and that we all have to protect for our current need and for the need of future generations. Cultivating holiness is a key element toward altruism and ecology.

CONCLUSION

Even if we cover a lot today : what is the mind and how it produces conscious body sensations. How these body sensations are related to emotions and actions as an uncontrolled chain reaction. We learned some potential faculties of a trained and mastered mind that lead us to understand why exoteric system are fighting self individualization. We covered so many aspects to finally come back to the good old basics: morality, the golden rule.

But talking about education of the mind is also adding beliefs to your beliefs and in that sense I am not helping any of you. You have to make your own discoveries yourself.

Most of the spiritual teachers I have learnt simply refuse to talk. Or they repeat something like realize the Self or the true essence of Who You Really Are, and there will be no more questions. Once the false identity has been witnessed from inside as an illusion then there will be no need of any answer since the questioner in you, which is a consequence of an untrained mind, will have been destroyed. Merge with the Self and there will be no question, no questioning and no answer anymore. I believe that there is nothing to be done in the outside, visible, active world. I believe everything starts and end inside. Either we train our mind each of us individually to overcome our fears or our unconscious mind will lead us to a collective collapse. Thank you for your attention.

Topics landmarks

- What are the characteristic ways in which mind tries to know reality?
- What are the faculties of the human mind that can be developed through education?
- What mental faculties are developed by the current system of education?
- What types of mental abilities should we be striving to develop through education?
- What are the types of thinking and to what extent are they developed through the present system of education?
- How can education shift the emphasis from memorization to understanding, critical thinking and independent thinking?
- How can education develop the capacity for inclusive, holistic thinking?
- How can education develop the capacity for synthetic, integrative thinking?
- What do we mean by original thinking and genius and how can education foster their development?