

ESSAY:
ON MIND

by

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Started Friday, February 25, 2000
Finalised Thursday, March 30, 2000

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of Mind — using that word in the most commonly understood, or dictionary, sense: “That which perceives, thinks, feels, wills, and desires”, as an example given by Webster expresses it — is probably one of the most important in any human endeavour, whether that endeavour be science, technology, the humanities or any sort of spiritual quest: for without Mind, how can any such endeavour be undertaken at all? Indeed, even most *physical* human activities cannot be conducted without Mind: certainly not the conscious ones.

Thus it seems essential to get a firm grip on the concept of Mind. Among the questions that need to be asked are: What is Mind?, What is primary, Mind or matter?, How many minds are there?, Can artificial minds ever be created?, and others like them.

THE EXISTENCE OF MIND

The very existence of Mind has, at times, been denied or doubted. In such a case, of course, the question begs to be asked: *Can* anything be denied or doubted at all, without presupposing a mind doing the denying or doubting? Surely even to suppose that a denial can be made or a doubt can arise without presupposing the existence of a mind sounds preposterous. Thus it might be argued that minds — or at least *one* mind — *must* exist.

But there are more subtle arguments that have at times been employed to show why Mind (speaking in the most general terms) cannot be said to *indisputably* exist. One of these is the argument that the only entities that can be *indisputably* said to exist are those whose existence is available to raw experience. If something is directly experienced, such as pain or joy, then obviously that experience is undeniable and indubitable, and thus indisputable. But anything which is merely *inferred* from that which is experienced *might* not exist, for inferences might be wrong! Indeed they often are.

Now Mind is not *directly* experienced: what *is* experienced are such things as ideas, thoughts, pain, emotions, perceptions, desires, and so on. All of these are *presumed* to be a result of the activity of the Mind; but that is only a presumption, after all, and there is no guarantee that there *must* be any such thing as Mind “behind” them or giving rise to them.

Thus it is argued that since Mind is not *directly* experienced, but merely *inferred* from the fact that a denial has been made or a doubt expressed, the existence of Mind is not *indisputable*. And if so, of course Mind *might* not exist. In such a case, only the denial or the doubt indisputably exists, without there necessarily being any hypothetical “Mind” that lies behind the denying or doubting, giving rise to it.

This is analogous to the way a storm can exist without there being any hypothetical “God of Storms” (such as the Greek *Zeus* or Vedic *Indra*) behind the storm, making it happen. If there need not be any “stormer”, as it were — and pardon the neologism — of a storm, then there need not be any “thinker” of a thought, any “feeler” of a pain, any “doubter” of a doubt. There need be only the thought, the pain, the doubt: just as there need be only the storm.

As of date this argument — which is quite old, and often found in ancient literature such as that of Zen Buddhism — seems to be difficult to challenge, in that a counter-argument does not seem to be forthcoming with any ease; and thus it may provisionally be granted that Mind *may* or *may not* exist.

And yet a lingering problem remains: for the argument above, being itself not directly experienced but merely inferred, might not be correct! And if it is not correct, then Mind *may* exist after all. (But note that this counter-argument does not — yet — prove that Mind *must* exist.)

REFUTATION OF THE HYPOTHESIS THAT MIND DOES *NOT* EXIST

However, such a proof can perhaps be obtained in a round-about way. Even though it has to be granted by the above reasoning that Mind *may not* exist, it must also be granted that it *may*. Under such circumstances, there are at least two choices: either Mind does *not* exist or it *does*. (Is there a third choice? Or more? There don't seem to be any more than two: but then again, it is perhaps best to keep an open ... uh, mind! ... about that.)

Anyway, even if there are more choices than the above two, one of them is that Mind does *not* exist. Now if it be assumed that Mind does not exist, and that only direct experiences exist — and this has been seriously advocated by several highly educated and very intelligent people, among them e-correspondents of the author — then there seems to a serious question as to whether most of *knowledge* can exist either. The vast majority of knowledge is *not* knowledge of things that are directly experienced. For example, knowledge of how to multiply numbers together is not directly experienced: it is learned, sometimes laboriously. Similarly, knowledge of how to travel from, say, New York to Washington is not (necessarily) experienced directly: indeed it is quite possible to have such knowledge without ever having made the journey!

However, any knowledge, *once acquired*, *is* directly experienced. There definitely *is* knowledge, for example, that the writer of the present essay knows how to write, and the reader knows how to read! That knowledge is *now* a direct experience, although *originally* it was learned; and thus its existence *at present* is undeniable and irrefutable.

Thus it seems that the assumption that Mind absolutely does *not* exist is not in consonance with *other* kinds of direct experience.

Also — and perhaps even more to the point — it must be acknowledged that in order to make the assertion that only direct experiences undeniably exist, and/or that inferences have been known to be mistaken, Mind is required! Such knowledge is *not* self-evident: it is *itself* inferred.

Thus it must be acknowledged that any assertion to the effect that Mind (speaking generally) does not exist *presupposes* the existence of at least one mind, because it presupposes the existence of knowledge which is *not* directly experienced; and thus such an assertion cannot be true. Or to put it in another way: any knowledge — or indeed any *belief*, whether it be true or false — about whether the Mind either exists or does not exist, presupposes the existence of Mind.

And as a corollary, *without* such presupposition there cannot be any knowledge; and without any knowledge at all, it cannot be *known* that Mind does *not* exist.

Thus it cannot possibly be true to categorically state “Mind does not exist”.

MIND VS. MATTER

Now if it be granted that the above conclusion is true, perhaps it should next be asked whether the existence of Mind is primary or that of matter is primary. That is to say, which of the two gives rise to the other, or rather (and to express it more accurately), which of the two has to be presupposed for the other to be inferred to exist?

As of date there is not enough knowledge of or about brains to enable it to be said with absolute certainty that minds are merely emergent properties of brains; nevertheless, that is one assumption that has often been made. (Indeed most of the time when this assumption is made, it seems to be asserted with absolute conviction, as if it were an undisputed Truth, and that too with a capital “T”!) Nevertheless such an assumption — at least as it appears from the vantage point of the present essay — seems unwarranted.

It is to be noted that if it is asserted that minds are merely emergent properties of brains, and as a result it is the existence of matter that must be presupposed for the existence of Mind to be inferred, in order even to make that assertion it has *a priori* been assumed that *brains* exist, and *ipso facto*, that *matter* exists! In other words, the conclusion is assumed by the premise. Surely such an argument cannot be said to be valid at all.

Is it possible to establish *first* that matter *must* exist — and that too, exist independent of the Mind — and only *then* prove that minds are emergent properties of (material) brains? Some attempts have been made in that direction. However, under intense analysis they all seem to have serious drawbacks. (Here the word “Mind”, with an upper-case “M”, is used to denote Mind in

general, while “mind”, with a lower-case “m”, is used to denote individual “minds”. As will be argued later, these are two distinct, though to some extent related, concepts.)

ARGUMENTS REGARDING THE INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE OF MATTER

1. “Tree Falling in an Uninhabited Forest” Argument

The most common argument heard in this regard is what might be crudely referred to as the “tree falling in an uninhabited forest” argument. If it fell, would it not make a sound, even though that sound might not be heard? Similarly, it is argued that the universe *must* have existed before there were any humans — or indeed any kind of life — to take notice of it. If it hadn’t, how could it all have suddenly come into existence the moment minds evolved? And what would they have evolved *from*?

The fallacy in this argument is that it already *presupposes* the existence of Mind. Without at least one mind in already existence, how could such an argument be made in the first place?

The argument cannot be made *without* presupposing the existence of Mind. Why, even *imagining* a mindless universe — whether that universe is postulated as existing prior to the coming into being of mind, or otherwise — requires at least one mind! Without a mind, it is impossible even to *imagine* a mindless universe.

It may be argued that the mind which is doing the imagining exists *now*, but it did not exist *then*. This argument also contains a serious mistake: for such a statement can only be made *now* — *i.e.*, now that at least one mind has come into existence. It could not have been made *then*, before *any* mind *at all* came into existence. *After* at least one mind has come into existence, it can imagine a time *before* it came into existence. But obviously it could not have imagined a time before it came into existence *before* it came into existence!

In other words, even for *Time itself* to come into existence, at least one mind must be presupposed. Time has no meaning — indeed, even “*meaning*” has no meaning — without presupposing the existence of Mind! For that matter, even “before” has no meaning without presupposing the existence of Mind. (Here again, the word “Mind” is used in the most general terms; and note that the prefix “pre-” in the word “presupposed” above has nothing to do with a *temporal* order, but merely a *logical* order, of concepts.)

Thus even for a *past* to be asserted to exist, Mind has to be *presupposed* to exist.

It should also be noted that although it *may* be possible to validly think or speak of, or assert meaningfully and truthfully, the existence of *objects* regarded as being mindless— such as rocks — it is not possible to validly think or speak of, or assert meaningfully and truthfully, the existence of a mindless *totality* (using that word in the sense of “everything that exists”). This because by definition, the totality must *include* the Mind that thinks or speaks about it!

If, therefore, the word “universe” be taken to mean “all that exists” — or, as the on-line dictionary [WordNet](#) puts it, “everything that exists anywhere” — then it is self-contradictory to think or speak of a “mindless universe”. (This seems to be one of the most serious lacunae in all of modern cosmology, which is willing to include in its so-called “universe” everything *except* that without which the science of cosmology itself could have no existence: namely, Mind.)

2. Inexhaustibility of Information

This argument regarding the independent existence of matter is based on the observation that any material object is “inexhaustible”, which is to say that more and more can be learned about it the more it is studied. A chair, for example, may *seem* simple enough, but if it is studied carefully, an inexhaustible amount of fresh and previously unknown information and knowledge about it may be gathered. As a result — or so it is argued — the chair must have an existence independent of any mind that studies it.

Against this might be argued that the same sort of “inexhaustibility” applies to many mental entities as well. A great symphony, for example, can be studied endlessly, and more and more knowledge and appreciation obtained from it: knowledge and appreciation which was not previously known or attained, perhaps not even imagined. Similarly, a work of pure fiction like *Oedipus Rex* or *Paradise Lost* might be read over and over, and more and more valuable insights obtained thereby. And yet it cannot be denied that the symphony or the work of fiction is all in the Mind.

It is to be noted that even though the symphony or the work of fiction might be *approached* or *perceived* via material media like sounds or books, the sounds or the books are not *themselves* the symphony or the work of fiction. Strictly speaking, a symphony or a work of fiction can rightly be so called only *after* the material medium has been translated into thought or emotion. And the proof is, that even *before* the work of fiction or symphony is first put down on paper or performed on instruments, it exists solely as a *thought* or a *mental entity* in the mind of the author or composer!

Similarly, numbers are inexhaustible, and so are mathematical theorems: and it cannot be denied that numbers and mathematical theorems are all in the Mind. And all of today’s mathematical theorems has been derived from yesterday’s mathematical theorems, and all of tomorrow’s will be from today’s: and their number just keeps on growing and growing. How could this be, unless the theorems of mathematics were inexhaustible?

Admittedly some simple mathematical statements *appear* to be exhausted upon understanding them. Take the equation $2+2=4$. Is it not simple? Is it not exhausted once it is fully understood? The argument is made that such simple mental entities *can* be exhausted, and nothing new or further gleaned from it; but (or so it is argued) material objects cannot be exhausted, and more and more information — *new* information, not known before — can always be gleaned from them.

The answer to this seems to be, that mathematicians who really love mathematics can find even the most elementary of mathematical entities — even numbers — endlessly fascinating and information-bearing. To the ordinary person a simple number such as 1,729 might be very uninteresting, and appear to be exhausted once it is realised that it represents one thousand, seven hundred and twenty-nine. But as Srinivasa Ramanujan, the maths prodigy from Madras, once pointed out to G.H. Hardy, the Cambridge University mathematician who “discovered” Ramanujan, it is in fact a very interesting number: it is the smallest number that can be represented as the sum of two cubes in two ways, as follows:

$$1,729 = 10^3 + 9^3$$

and

$$1,729 = 12^3 + 1^3$$

Thus it is seen that what is considered as exhausted according to one viewpoint might not yet be exhausted according to another. If so, how can it be asserted with any degree of certainty that a mathematical equation *must* be exhaustible? Perhaps another point of view might demonstrate such an assertion to be totally without foundation.

Indeed if Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorems are true, then there cannot even be any purely axiomatic system of *logic* that is complete (and thus exhaustible). More and more can always be added to any one of them. And yet, being purely axiomatic, they are, by *definition*, all in the Mind! Thus it might be argued that Gödel has *proved* that at least some mental constructions *must* be inexhaustible.

3. Uncontrollability of Matter

A related argument is that the “real world” is uncontrollable, unlike a fictional reality, which might be created, changed, and re-created at will.

Against this it may be argued, firstly, that the so-called “real world” is also not *entirely* uncontrollable: that all things artificial are evidence of such control (which is exercised *via* Mind, of course). No houses, cars or washing machines could exist without *some* control being exercised by Mind over matter as the latter exists in nature: mostly, in fact, over dirt, air and water!

And as time passes, the “real world” gets more and more controllable. Who knows, with Nanotechnology (*vide* the various Nanotechnology Web sites around the Internet) the so-called “real world” might be just as controllable as any “virtual reality” is inside a computer today, or perhaps even more so. Certainly it seems that such a thing might eventually come to pass — and that too, in a not very distant future.

And secondly, it may also be argued that the mental “world” is not entirely controllable, either. Mental contortions will not allow for two and two to make three, for instance. Once a certain set of axioms and a certain set of rules of inference has been accepted — as is done in the formulation of systems of logic or mathematics, for example — the conclusions that follow there-

from are as uncontrollable as any recalcitrant mule! Indeed, perhaps more so; for the mule can at least be shot if it won't do what is wanted of it, and then replaced with a machine; but shooting a mathematician won't get rid of mathematics, nor can mathematics be replaced with anything else.

Thus there seems to be little difference between the material "world" and the mental one as far as controllability goes. Some things are controllable in both "worlds", and some are uncontrollable in both.

Indeed if the laws of modern physics are valid for *all* matter, including so-called "living" matter, then it would imply that matter and mathematics are, if not absolutely identical, at the very least absolutely identical "reflections" or "representations" of one another. That is because *all* the material sciences, without exception, are assumed to be based ultimately on physics, while physics, at its most fundamental level, is assumed to be based *entirely* on mathematical principles. (There seems to be absolutely *nothing* in modern particle physics that cannot be expressed mathematically!)

If that is really the case, then every single aspect of the material sciences *must* be based on mathematical principles and laws: either the laws of probability (which apply in Quantum Mechanics) or laws of some other aspects of mathematics like non-Euclidean geometry (which apply in General Relativity and the more recently-proposed super-string theory).

Which in turn must mean that essentially there can be no difference whatsoever between the above-mentioned mule on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the equations of mathematics which are presumed to lie at the basis of the matter of which the mule is (presumed to be) made! In other words, the mule must be, in essence, merely a very long and complicated mathematical formula. (This should explain the mule's uncontrollability! ... Just kidding.)

4. No Minds Without Matter

In this argument, it is argued that no mind has ever been observed without *some* material object which (apparently) gives rise to it. A crude way of expressing it is: "Just blow your brains out and then see how much mind you have left!"

(a) Minds Without Matter *Have* Been Observed

Against this argument there are a couple of objections. One is that minds without matter *have* in fact been observed — or at least they have been *claimed* to have been observed; they are just not universally *believed* to have been observed. Spiritual and religious texts the world over are full of accounts of non-material minds communicating with humans. All the way from the stories of Moses at the burning bush and the Prophet Muhammad with the Archangel Gabriel, through the tales of Joan of Arc in France and Kâlîdâsa in India, down to our own days of mediums and their messages from the beyond, countless people have claimed, and still claim, that non-material minds *have* been in communication with human beings. It's just that such accounts are not *believed* by many other people, despite the fact that these claims are virtually ubiquitous.

In addition, millions the world over believe that after their death, even though their brains might be blown out, they will still retain some sort of consciousness, some sort of mind. They are just in no hurry to get to that stage. But they don't doubt it in the least.

On the other hand, there are also millions the world over who doubt very strongly that any such thing can or will happen. And in both camps there are highly intelligent people: among the most intelligent the world has ever known, and certainly far more intelligent than either the author or — in most cases, surely — the readers of this essay! (Of course that does not prove that they were right; but it does hint that they need not *necessarily* have all been wrong.)

Obviously, then, there is a distinct difference of opinion about this, and it is not all that cut-and-dried a conclusion. So then the question looms large: which of the two above-mentioned opinions is right?

Now it does not seem possible to *ever* prove by *any* sort of experiment or argument that there *cannot* be any mind without matter. What sort of experiment might be conducted to *prove* any such thing *conclusively*? How can it be proved, for example, that life after death — that is to say, life of some sort in a disembodied state — *cannot* exist? Certainly no appropriate experimental design comes to mind which would be *foolproof* in this regard. Indeed if such a thing *could* be proved definitively, virtually all religious doctrines the world over would be conclusively debunked; but obviously that has never been possible, even though Marxists and others have tried their hardest to do it.

If that is the case, how can it ever be *definitively* asserted that there can be no mind without matter? The best that can be said by any particular person is that he or she has not *personally* observed any such thing. That hardly qualifies as a proof.

Which leaves the *definitive* conclusion that minds without matter *may* exist: an “unequivocal *maybe*”, in other words! ☺ And as a consequence, it is impossible to say *definitively* that minds *must* be dependent upon matter.

(b) Matter Regarded as a Part of Mind

The second objection to such an argument, which would be valid even if everyone in the world had always agreed that there are no minds without matter, is that if matter is regarded as a *part* of the Mind, then all it would prove is that matter is *included* in Mind. It would not establish that matter must be *independent* of Mind!

Of course in order to regard matter as a part of Mind, it has to be shown how that can be done. But that isn't too difficult, and was done by Kant quite a while back. Matter, after all, is *perceived* by the Mind: if *none* of it were perceived, how could its properties — or even its existence — be known at all?

Take for example a chair. If a chair is perceived, it is generally assumed that there is a “thing” very much like that perception which is “out there” somewhere, independent of the perception, and which in fact generates the perception.

But if there is such a “thing-in-itself”, how can it be known that it is anything *like* the chair as it is perceived? That “thing-in-itself” could well be something like an apple, or even like a worm — or rather like a *perception* of an apple or a worm — but as long as the perception generated by it is like that of a chair, it would be perceived as a chair!

As explained by Dr Kelley L. Ross at <<http://www.friesian.com/kant.htm>>:

Kant’s most original contribution to philosophy is his “Copernican Revolution,” that, as he puts it, it is the representation that makes the object possible rather than the object that makes the representation possible. This introduced the human mind as an active originator of experience rather than a passive recipient of perception. ... Perceptual input must be processed or it would just be noise — “less even than a dream” or “nothing to us,” as Kant alternatively puts it.

(One inescapable conclusion of all this, of course, is that one can never be quite sure that one’s spouse or in-laws are anything like one has always imagined them to be — but then, what else is new.)

But if Kant was right, and we can never know what he called “the noumenon”, the “thing-in-itself”, then how can we ever say for sure that it even has any existence?

It might be argued that even though we may not know the actual *properties* of the “thing-in-itself”, we have to at least assume that it *exists*, otherwise how could *any* perception be generated at all? But that argument presupposes that a perception has to be generated *by* something. That is not necessarily so: hallucinations, dreams and the like are quite capable of generating perceptions which are *not* generated by anything “out there”, independent of the Mind.

And even if be accepted (provisionally) as correct that there would be no dream if it weren’t for a dreamer, that still does not prove that the dreamer must be *material* in nature.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF MIND INDEPENDENT OF MATTER

Now taking the opposite tack, and arguing in favour of the existence of Mind independent of matter, several arguments come to mind.

1. No Knowledge Without Mind

It will surely be admitted that a statement or an assertion need not be believed unless it is true. Thus if a statement or an assertion is made to the effect that there cannot be a mind inde-

pendent of matter, it must be asked how it might be known that such a statement or assertion is true!

And surely it will also be admitted that a statement or an assertion can't be known to be true by any object that is *purely* material. Can a rock or a brick — presumed of course to be totally mindless — know anything at all, whether true or not? Surely to assume that any entity, whatever it may be, can know anything at all requires an *a priori* assumption that it too must have a mind.

Thus even to assert that there *cannot* be a mind independent of matter, presupposes that there *is* a mind.

However, as seen earlier, to assert that there cannot be matter independent of Mind does *not* necessarily presuppose the existence of matter.

If so, it seems impossible to say with any confidence that matter *can* exist without Mind; but it *is* possible to assert with confidence that Mind *must* exist (whether it be independent of matter or not.)

Now this does not prove that mind must be *independent* of matter (indeed it seems impossible to conclusively *prove* any such thing, for otherwise all materialists — whether “dialectical” or not — would be out of business!); but it *does* seem to indicate very strongly that mind precedes matter from a logical viewpoint, and not the other way round.

2. Hypothetical World Entirely in the Mind

Another argument is to say that there can be a hypothetical world which is entirely mental, but there *cannot* be any world, even a hypothetical one, which is purely material (*i.e.*, entirely mindless). Worlds without matter have often been postulated — in fact, that has been done from ancient times: most concepts of heaven or paradise are precisely such worlds. But how can a hypothetical world without any mind at all even be postulated? Surely to even postulate any such thing, the existence of Mind must be presupposed.

This argument also does not prove that Mind without matter *must* exist, but it strongly indicates that it *may*.

3. Mind as a Presupposition Without Which no Matter can be said to Exist

In this argument — which is basically an extension of the first two above — it is recalled that for any statement about existence to be made, Mind is *presupposed*; and thus without Mind, no statement *at all* can be made. Thus it cannot be said “Mind is *not* primary” without presupposing Mind; indeed nothing can be said at all without presupposing Mind.

Thus it is argued that since Mind is presupposed in the making of *any* statement — and indeed in the formulation of any *thought*, whether uttered or not — Mind must logically precede everything else, including not just all statements and thoughts, but also the things about which the statements are made or thoughts exist, or to which they refer.

This is the strongest of all arguments to date regarding the primacy of Mind over matter. Against this, it has been counter-argued that matter might still precede Mind, even though it cannot be *said* or even *thought* that matter precedes Mind without presupposing Mind to begin with. But — or so goes the counter-argument — just because it cannot be *said* or *thought* doesn't mean it's not *true*.

Of course — and as is obvious — the problem with this counter-argument is that it *isn't* an argument, whether “counter” or otherwise! If it were, by its own admission it couldn't be made.

It's a bit like a crude version of the “Liar Paradox”: only, instead of saying “This statement is false”, it says “This statement is not a statement” — or, after having made the above counter-argument, it says “The preceding counter-argument is not an argument, whether ‘counter’ or otherwise”. It “pulls the rug out from under its own feet”, as it were.

One solution to the “Liar Paradox”, as the author has explained in a previous essay entitled *Essay On The “Liar Paradox”* (see <<http://cpu2308.adsl.bellglobal.com/>>), is that in most of its versions, the “Liar Paradox” disappears if the statement(s) that generate the paradox is/are taken as only *approximately* true. This is analogous to the approach of fuzzy logic.

However, such an approach does not seem to do much for the statement “This statement is not a statement”! The notion of an “approximate statement” doesn't seem to make much sense.

Another approach to certain versions of the “Liar Paradox” is to take it as meaningless: either approximately meaningless or totally meaningless. To take the statement “This statement is not a statement” or “The preceding argument is not an argument” as *totally* meaningless does nothing to support the counter-argument, namely that matter might still precede Mind, even though it cannot be *said* that matter precedes Mind without presupposing Mind to begin with; however, to take it as *approximately* meaningless (which leaves open the possibility that it is also approximately though not totally *meaningful*) might help in making some sense out of it.

The question still remains open, however, whether just *some* sense — *i.e.*, partial sense — is enough to validate the conclusion of the counter-argument, namely that matter might still precede Mind, even though it can't be *said* to do so. Maybe it can only *approximately* be validated. An expert in fuzzy logic would have to be consulted to give a definite (or perhaps a definitely fuzzy!) answer.

At all events, it seems clear that the only support the conclusion of such a counter-argument can have is a fuzzy or approximate one; whereas the original argument, the one to which the

counter-argument is a counter, has a *definite* conclusion, not fuzzy at all. Ladies and gentlemen, place your bets accordingly.

EXISTENCE OF BOTH MIND AND MATTER

The question then arises, though: is it absolutely necessary that both Mind *and* matter exist? If it can be established that this is *not* an absolute necessity, then it would have to be concluded that Mind is primary and matter secondary; for it has certainly *not* been established that matter *must* exist, whereas it *has* been established that in order to establish anything at all, Mind *must* exist.

1. “Two Sides of the Same Coin Argument”

It has been often said that matter and Mind are like “two sides of the same coin”, and just as one side of a coin cannot exist without the other, so too Mind cannot possibly exist without matter.

The problem with this argument is that it is not an argument: it is only an assertion. An analogy is made, but it is not explained just *why* such an analogy is necessary. Now it may be that the analogy is apt; however, since it has not been established that it is *necessary*, why should it be accepted as such? (It might be noted that the earlier argument to the effect that “there is no Mind without matter” has already been shown to be inadequate.)

Can it be established that the existence of matter is absolutely *necessary*? It doesn't seem to be so, even from a materialistic viewpoint. For example, according to modern cosmology, it is presumed that time, space, matter and energy all came into existence a finite amount of time ago. (Indeed it does not even make sense to think of space and time — or space-time — as having come into existence before matter and energy! What kind of space can there be before there is anything to occupy it, or time without any events to give it meaning?)

Although strictly speaking there can be no meaning to the term “time before time”, yet in a sense it may be wondered, if neither time nor space nor matter nor energy existed more than a finite amount of time ago, what *did* exist? If the answer to that question is “Nothing”— as most cosmologists claim — then surely it ought to prove that the existence of matter is *not* absolutely necessary!

And yet, even under those circumstances, the existence of Mind *is* necessary: for it cannot even be *asserted* that the existence of matter is not necessary without presupposing the existence of Mind. Indeed the existence of Mind is necessary for asserting anything at all: as it is even for postulating a hypothetical state in which there might be nothing at all, not even Mind. (This, again, is where modern cosmology — which ignores Mind — falls flat on its face.)

2. Mindless Worlds

In this argument — which is basically an extension of the argument given earlier that there can be hypothetical worlds without matter — it is argued that such a hypothetical world need not be all that hypothetical after all.

To show how this argument is made, it may be assumed to begin with that a hypothetical world *exactly* like the present one exists somewhere “out there” (or maybe it would be more appropriate to say “in here”: *i.e.*, in the Mind), in which there is no such thing as matter. Or to put it in another way: suppose it is granted that in this world, it is *real* matter that generates perceptions; now imagine a world exactly like the present one, with the sole exception that there is no *real* matter: all there is, is the *perception* of matter. (Remember Kant’s argument given earlier on page 9 *ff.*) What possible difference could there be between such a world and the present one? Obviously — and indeed by very definition — *none whatsoever!*

Now if such a hypothetical world entirely without matter *can* be imagined, what is there to prove, or even indicate, that the present world is not *itself* such a world? Obviously, again, nothing. In other words, such a world need not be all that hypothetical after all: the real world could *itself* be a world entirely free of matter.

This is an argument — or at least its conclusion — that has been asserted from ancient times. In the sacred texts of Hinduism, for instance, there is a verse which reads *Brahma satyam jagan mithyâ*, which being translated reads something like “*Brahma* [alone] is real; the world is unreal”. The term *Brahma* (or *Brahman*) is a term used in Hinduism for the Supreme Being; but if the term is taken to mean “Mind” — and that surely makes sense, for how can a Supreme Being be mind-less? Wouldn’t that make Him not quite so supreme after all, and subject to the control of those creatures which *do* have minds? — then the above verse might be taken to imply that Mind is the only reality, while matter is unreal. And similar statements have been made in Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism — among other ancient religions, especially (but not exclusively) those which saw their major development in India.

Admittedly not all religions take this view; but it is not *incompatible* with any religion, either. Bishop Berkeley, for instance, argued a view like this without having to renounce his position as a Christian clergyman. Similarly, many Sufis take such a view without necessarily renouncing Islam; and parts of the Kabbalah echo similar sentiments.

This view *is* incompatible with Marxism, of course; but then, Marxism is an overtly materialistic philosophy, stridently affirming the primacy of matter. Thus it cannot *but* be incompatible with Marxism.

Marxism’s objection to Berkeley’s position, as expressed at the Web URL <<http://www.marxist.com/philosophy/chapter4.html>>, is as follows:

Berkeley's arguments only retain a degree of consistency if one accepts his initial premise, that we can only know sense-impressions, but never the real world outside ourselves. This is put forward dogmatically at the beginning, and all the rest is derived from this proposition. In other words, *he presupposes what has to be proved* [the emphasis has been added by the author of the present essay], namely that our sensations and ideas are not the reflection of the world outside us, but things existing in their own right. They are not a property of matter that thinks, of a human brain and nervous system, capable of being investigated and understood scientifically, but mysterious things of the spirit world, emanating from the mind of God. They do not serve to connect us with the world, but constitute an impenetrable barrier, beyond which we cannot know anything for sure.

However, if the mistake of “presupposing that which is to be proved” should be censured — and rightly so — then does not Marxism itself presuppose the existence of Mind in order to try and establish that there *is* any “matter that thinks, ... a human brain and nervous system, capable of being investigated and understood scientifically”? One way or another, it seems that Marxism itself cannot escape this very criticism.

Thus it would seem that the Marxist position, namely that it has *got* to be matter that thinks (or in other words, that Mind *must* be generated by matter), is untenable.

Besides, Berkeley's position is not “put forward dogmatically at the beginning [of his thesis]”, but rather taken as understood already from earlier arguments made by others, especially Locke, who wrote extensively on epistemology. Moreover, as explained at <http://www.maths.tcd.ie/pub/HistMath/People/Berkeley/Stock/Life.html>:

His [*i.e.*, Berkeley's] principal argument against the existence of ... material beings may be reduced to this syllogism:

Whatever is *immediately* perceived by sense, is an idea. [Note that a material object is not *immediately* perceived: it is only the *perception* of the object that is *immediately* perceived.]

Sensible things are things immediately perceived by sense.

Therefore sensible things are ideas; and consequently exist only in the mind.

This is not very different from Kant's saying that one can never know whether a postulated external cause of a sense perception is anything like the sense perception itself. (*Cf.* one's spouse and in-laws, already mentioned at page 9.)

Admittedly Berkeley's argument does not prove that there is *no* such thing as matter independent of the Mind: but it does prove that it is unnecessary to assume that there *is*.

But then the question surely arises: if an assumption is unnecessary, why assume it? As we saw, the world would not change one whit if it be assumed that there actually are chairs and ta-

bles and trees and mountains and in-laws out there somewhere, giving rise to the *perceptions* of tables and chairs and trees and mountains and in-laws. Surely if an assumption is totally — but *totally* — unnecessary, it makes no good sense to indulge in such an assumption.

HOW MANY MINDS ARE THERE?

One consequence of the above line of reasoning is, of course, that just as it is unnecessary to assume that chairs and tables and mountains and rivers and planets and galaxies exist independently of the perceptions thereof, so it is unnecessary to assume that human *bodies* or *brains* exist independently of the perceptions thereof: for they, too, are presumed to be made of matter. All that it is necessary to view as indubitably existing are *perceptions* of human bodies or brains: not human bodies or brains themselves, separate from and independent of the perceptions thereof.

And from this conclusion it is easy to argue, too, that just as it is unnecessary to assume that human *bodies* or *brains* exist, it is also unnecessary to assume that human *minds* exist *inside* them, or *produced by* them! In other words, not only do your in-laws' and your professors' *bodies* not exist, but their *brains* and *minds* don't either. In fact, neither do yours or mine.

This might seem to contradict all that has been argued above — not to mention common sense as well — but that is not really the case. The existence of *Mind* as such, speaking in the most general terms, is quite irrefutable: what is unnecessary to assume is the existence of *many* separate minds, each presumed to be inhabiting a separate body and emerging from a separate brain. If the bodies and brains themselves cannot be irrefutably demonstrated to have an existence independent of the Mind, and could well be mere perceptions, how can it be said for *certain* that they must be “bearers” or “containers” of minds? The Mind must be a bearer or a container of perceptions, not each perception a bearer or a container of a mind.

This is another reason why, in the present essay, the word “Mind” has been spelled with an upper-case “M” when speaking of Mind in general, while it is spelled with a lower case “m” when speaking of any particular mind. They are two distinct concepts. As argued above, it seems rather unnecessary to assume the existence of the latter, while it seems absolutely necessary to assume the existence of the former.

The “Self” in Buddhism and Hinduism

And although it does seem contrary to common sense in the West, this too is an ancient argument, used very widely and for millennia in the East, especially in Buddhism — or at least in several interpretations thereof — and also to some extent in Hinduism. In Buddhism it is denied that a “self” exists within a person: this is known as the doctrine of *anattâ* (Pali) or *anâtman* (Sanskrit). One interpretation of such a doctrine is that just as a person's body is presumed to be an illusion or a mental construct, so too is the so-called “self” which is normally presumed to be “inside” such a body.

Indeed the “self” is not even perceived, as the body is; and so, although the body exists at least as a *perception*, the “self” does not exist even as that! All it exists, therefore, is as an idea, a notion, a belief, a supposition: and a supposition, moreover, without any sound foundation.

A bit of clarification might be in order here.

Of course it is obvious that the “self” or “mind” in another person is not *directly* perceived: one does not normally know what another person is thinking, unless they tell, inform or convey those thoughts in some other, maybe indirect, way (as for instance *via* body language or facial expression.) Thus it is generally *assumed*, for the sake of convenience and convention, that others have a self or a mind, but that’s a mere assumption, and such a self or a mind in *another* person is never directly *perceived*.

But it may be argued that *one’s own* self or mind — or at least its functioning, in the sense of experiences, thoughts, emotions, and so on — *is* perceived directly. However, this argument again presupposes that which remains to be proved — only in this case, what it presupposes is that there is anything that can be called “one’s own”!

Note that the phrase “one’s own”, in this regard, means “belonging to one’s self”. In other words, the existence of the self is *presupposed* in order for the argument to be made. Such an argument is therefore invalid.

Also, it is obvious that there need not be any *body* or *brain* of “one’s own”, because as was argued earlier, to assume that the body or brain, as such, exists *independently* of the perception thereof is unnecessary: all that need be taken as perceived directly is the *perception* of a body which is thought of as “one’s own”. Now a perception cannot, surely, bear or contain or give rise to a mind: quite the contrary, it is Mind that must bear or contain or give rise to perceptions! In other words, perceptions must be *inside* Mind, and not the other way round.

Thus it is not as if the self “owns” the Mind — or perhaps more accurately, the contents thereof — which *is/are* directly perceived, but rather, it is the Mind that “owns”, as it were, the “self”. To say of the Mind that is directly perceived “This is *my* mind” or “this mind belongs to me” is nonsense: it would be somewhat more appropriate — though of course not entirely so — to say “I belong to the Mind”. (It would not be *entirely* appropriate because that sentence, too, presupposes that it *is* necessary to assume that such a thing as an “I” which exists independently of the Mind; and that, as has already been seen, need not be the case.)

In Hinduism, such a Mind is referred to as the *âtma* or *âtman*, normally translated into English as “Self”, that is to say with an upper-case “S”. It is also identified in Hinduism with the Supreme Being, the *Brahman*; and like the *Brahman*, the *âtman* is also held to be One (indeed, in Sanskrit it is called *advaita*, which is to say “one *without* a second”, or “one which cannot be contrasted, as it were, with a second”).

Such a “Self”, therefore, is not to be confused with the “self” as implied in the sentence “As for myself, I just don’t believe you, though he might, and she does.” The Self, as it is defined in Hinduism, is what in this essay has been referred to as “Mind”.

However, probably because there is scope for confusion between the concepts denoted by the words “Self” and “self” — especially since in Sanskrit there are no upper or lower case letters — Buddhism eschews the term altogether, and while denying the necessary existence of the *âtman* or “self”, refers to what Hinduism calls the “Self” by terms entirely different from *âtman*, such as Mind (Chinese *Hsin*, Japanese *Shin*), *Bodhi-citta* (Sanskrit, “Consciousness of Awakening”), *vigñâna* (which the *Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon* translates as “the act of distinguishing or discerning, understanding, comprehending, recognizing, intelligence, knowledge”), and so on and so forth.

In this essay, too, the term “Self” is eschewed in favour of the term “Mind”, but it is admitted that the Hindu term “Self”, written with an upper-case “S”, is synonymous with what has been called here “Mind”.

Number of “Minds”

And, of course, like the “Self” of Hinduism, there can be only *one* such Mind. All other “minds” must be *within* the One Mind, just as the “minds” presumed to exist in other persons are within the Mind that is doing the presuming. There cannot be a large number of minds, all independent of each other: there has got to be just *one* Mind within which not only all perceptions of matter, but all notions of mind too, exist.

The Mind, therefore, must be the One Thing Which Contains All, as it were. It must be the Totality of All Things; it must be That which must be presupposed for everything else to exist, That beyond which (or outside which or independent of which) there cannot be anything at all.

The above argument has the added merit of being in consonance with observed reality. No multiplicity of minds is actually *observed*; all other “minds” are *within* the Mind that is doing the observing. To put it crudely, you don’t always know what others think of you; you only *think* you know what they think of you! And they don’t always know what *you* think of *them*, unless you inform them (and sometimes even then they don’t have a clue.)

In other words, in every known case there is only One Mind which does any observing; and although it is often *assumed* that there are other minds which are also doing some observing, that is an *assumption* and not, itself, an *observation*.

EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE FOR THE ABOVE VIEWPOINT

It should also be noted that there is some quite reputable experimental evidence for the above viewpoint. According to a review of a book entitled *Dogs That Know When Their Owners are*

Coming Home and Other Unexplained Powers of Animals by Dr Rupert Sheldrake, formerly of Harvard, Cambridge University and the Royal Society, and presently Fellow of the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Sausalito, California (see <<http://www.sheldrake.org/>>),

... How does a dog know when its owner is returning home at an unexpected time? How do cats know when it is time to go to the vet, even before the cat carrier comes out? How do horses find their way back to the stable over completely unfamiliar terrain? And how can some pets predict that their owners are about to have an epileptic fit? Sheldrake compellingly demonstrates that we and our pets are social animals linked together by invisible bonds connecting animals to each other, to their owners, and to their homes.

When Dr Sheldrake was asked on his FAQ (also available at the above Web site):

Why do you think it is that some pets appear to anticipate their owner's arrival?

... he answered:

Their ability to anticipate this arrival seems to depend on a kind of telepathic bond. We have found by experiment that it can not be explained in terms of routine times, familiar sounds, or clues given by people at home.

And when he was asked:

Why do you think it is that people seem to be able to sense when someone is staring at them?

... he answered:

This depends on the way in which perception works. I suggest that when we are looking at somebody or something the image we form is not located inside our brain but projected out to the place where it seems to be. In other words, our mind reaches out to touch what we are looking at. This means that we can effect what we are looking at. So if we look at somebody from behind, and they do not know we are there, they can feel this unseen gaze if they're in a sufficiently receptive state. A fuller discussion of this phenomenon is given in my book *Seven Experiments That Could Change the World*, and can be read on this web site by clicking [here](http://www.sheldrake.org/experiments/). (Clicking takes the reader to Dr Sheldrake's Web page <<http://www.sheldrake.org/experiments/>>.)

The author of this essay wrote privately to Dr Sheldrake, suggesting that he consider as an explanation for such phenomena the Buddhist doctrine that there is only One Mind, and Dr Sheldrake wrote back to the effect that he had indeed considered such a viewpoint as a plausible hypothesis which might explain his experimental results, and mentioned some of his thoughts in that regard in his book.

COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER VIEWPOINTS

The above viewpoint is also compatible with many of the explicit and implicit teachings of religions and religious philosophies. Although the religions that originated in West Asia do not explicitly teach that the material world is an illusion, they too imply that the Entity referred to by them variously as God or *Elohim* or *JHVH* or *Allah* or *Ahura Mazda* is, basically, a single Mind. In these teachings, the Divine — by whatever name called — is taught as being formless, and not having a material nature; and He is also invariably referred to as being capable of willing and loving and forgiving, and of communicating thoughts and ideas: which in turn implies that He has a Mind.

But if He has no *body* of a material nature, then would it not be more accurate to say He *is* a Mind, rather than saying He *has* a Mind? Other than the Mind “of God” — using the term “God” in a broad way to denote the Entity which all these religions regard as Supreme — what *else* does God have? Of course in these religions it is taught that God has a “being”, that is to say an existence; but then, as we have seen, so too does the Mind: indeed everything that has an existence must, *by definition*, have an existence. But apart from existence, in no major religion is God taught as *having* anything other than a Mind. Certainly He is not taught as having a *body* or a *brain*.

Thus according to the teachings of all these religions, the two — namely God and the Mind (or the “Mind Divine”, if it be so desired to call It) — can be taken to be *exactly* identical with each other.

The present viewpoint also explains some otherwise unexplainable phenomena reported by, or purported to be true according to, the teachings of these religions. For example, the statement reputed to have been made by Jesus (*Matthew 17:20, King James Version*):

And Jesus said unto them, ... verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

This sort of feat seems impossible if it is assumed that a mountain is a real, immensely heavy and permanently fixed material object, quite independent of the Mind; but if all it is is a *perception* in the Mind, why then the claim isn't quite so unbelievable.

And the same applies to pretty much all of the other miracles mentioned in the Biblical texts. They are relatively easily explained if it is assumed that in the ultimate analysis, the Mind has power over all its contents.

Of course *how* such power may be accessed is not so readily explained, other than saying that it might involve much prayer and fasting, and other spiritual practices too, such as meditation: and also, that it might in general be possible to access such knowledge only under the guidance, guardianship, and grace of a qualified Spiritual Master, just as a Ph.D. thesis is best written under

the tutelage and guidance of a qualified professor. But all that lies in the realm, if so it may be called, of “spiritual technology”, or what Buddhism calls *upâya kaushalya*, “skill in means”. (As the well-known science-fiction author Arthur C. Clarke once wrote, “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic”. Substitute the word “miracle” for “magic”, and the same explanation applies to scripture!)

SOME PARADOXES EXPLAINED BY THE PRESENT VIEWPOINT

It may also be noted that the present viewpoint explains several so-called paradoxes which cannot be explained by the view that matter and Mind are separate. For example, the paradox of Schrödinger’s Cat (see, among other URLs, <http://mist.npl.washington.edu/ti/TI_40.html#4.3>) remains a paradox if it is assumed that the Mind which is conducting the experiment is separate from the matter on which the experiment is being conducted. But if it is assumed that the matter (including the cat) is all in the Mind, having no *independent* existence, then the apparent paradox is removed. (If the cat is only a perception, and has no existence apart from the perception thereof, then there *is* no cat in the box — whether dead or alive — before the box is opened!)

Similarly, the so-called “Time Travel Paradoxes” — such as the paradox resulting from a person travelling back in time and preventing his parents from conceiving him (say by murdering them) which would result in the non-existence of the person himself, and thus make it impossible for him to travel back in time in the first place — is removed if it is argued that there *is* no Time as such, independent of the Mind. (In such a case, there would be no *real* Time Travel, only *perceived* Time Travel; and there would be no *real* murder of the parents, only an *apparent* murder.)

AVENUES FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

The above viewpoint does not explain everything fully, however. In particular it may be asked, if there is only one Mind, how is it that it does not seem to be always aware of all of its contents? As noted above, the Mind that any single person is aware of doesn’t know what others think: why not?

Free Will

A partial answer may be, that the One Mind might have the capacity to break up, as it were, into fragments, and each such fragment might have the capability of largely if not fully shutting itself off from others. This may be the case because the Mind must have at least *some* free will: for without free will, true knowledge is impossible. And this in turn is because knowledge must begin as a belief: it is only when a certain belief is *freely chosen* from among a number of beliefs, after all of them have been tested (in the sense of the older meaning of the word “proved”) that it becomes what can validly be called “knowledge”. In other words, for true knowledge to exist, there have to be *several* hypotheses, and the hypothesis which is to be regarded as true must be *chosen* from among them, and those which are to be regarded as false freely discarded. As was

expressed by an e-correspondent of the author, who is known to the author only by his first name, Thom, and who was elucidating and amplifying something the author had written earlier:

... if everything {including beliefs} is caused, then all beliefs will be believed, not because they are {necessarily} true, but because they arise {i.e., are caused to be perceived to be true}. Therefore there would be no way to assert truthfully that what is asserted is true and not false, because the assertion would simply have been caused {and not necessarily, or even understood to be, true}.

Now if the Mind *must* have free will in order for each and every belief to be tested to determine its truth, then perhaps *every part* of the Mind must have free will too: just as the taste of salt pervades every part of the ocean, so the essence, as it were, of free will may be required to pervade all parts of the Mind. Indeed it could hardly be otherwise, if the existence of free will is a necessity for the concept of the truth of *any* belief or idea to have any meaning at all.

And if that is the case, it may be possible for a *fragment* of Mind to exercise that freedom of will to reject or ignore what the rest of It contains.

To some extent such a theory may also be derived from observation of certain psychological disorders. Just as in multiple personality disorder a single person may exhibit the ability to “contain” several different “minds”, each distinct from the others and often each in total ignorance of the others, so it may be possible for the One Mind to have parts in It which are separated from the rest of It, either by an act of will, or simply as a result of some mental malfunction of some sort. And by setting things right, just as it is possible at times to cure a person of multiple personality disorder, it may also be possible for the separated fragments of the One Mind to once again be re-untied with their Source.

Although this is at present only speculation, and cannot be established by as solid an argument as the absolute necessity of the existence of the Mind can be, nevertheless the speculation does make some sense, and may provide an avenue for further inquiry. It is also in keeping with the teachings of several religions and philosophies, such as the Buddhist teaching that essentially we are all Buddhas, we just have to realise the fact; or the Christian teaching that we are all “Children of God”, in conjunction with what Jesus is reputed to have said to the Jews of his time, “Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?” (*John 10:34*) and “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give [it] to you (*John 16:23*).” Such statements might be interpreted as saying much the same thing as is hypothesised in this essay, only couched in terms which the ancient listeners or readers of the statements might have been able to understand at the time when the statements were actually made.

One Advantage of the Present Line of Inquiry

One advantage of pursuing such a line of inquiry is, that if it can be found out how any one fragment of the Mind may link up with the rest of It, there may be a possibility of attaining almost unlimited quantities of knowledge. If, for instance, it is possible for one person’s “mind” to

link up with the “minds” of the best experts in that particular person’s field of study, *all* the knowledge currently available in that field might be available to the inquirer ... and that too without having to undergo a lengthy and arduous course!

At present the state of human knowledge is limited to acquiring knowledge about various *disciplines*; but little or no effort has been put into acquiring knowledge about *how knowledge is acquired*, and how it might be acquired more efficiently. Perhaps there’s a better and more efficient way to become a top-notch lawyer than attending years and years of law school, and then articling a few years more for a snooty downtown law firm. Or maybe there’s a quicker way to become a doctor ... well, you get the point.

And it should be obvious to even a mediocre intelligence that acquiring knowledge about how to increase one’s intelligence and knowledge would be, practically speaking, a most ... uh, *practical* way to use what little knowledge is already available! It would be a kind of “bootstrapping”, as it were: using a relatively tiny amount of knowledge to acquire much more of it, the way a tiny computer program hard-wired into a computer’s Central Processing Unit allows the entire operating system and other useful programs to be accessed once the computer is “booted”.

And one way to accomplish this sort of “bootstrapping” might be to find a way to access the knowledge of “other minds” directly. Just imagine how much knowledge there already exists all over the world; and imagine if it could all be available in as immediate a fashion as “one’s own” knowledge is available today. The leap in knowledge acquisition would be utterly phenomenal.

If the present theory is correct, then, it should be possible to do just that: by breaking down the barriers, as it were, between the different “minds” of people and even of other organisms. Wouldn’t it be an absolutely *tremendous* leap in intelligence? Would it not be a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Some Caveats

On second thoughts, though, maybe not: at least not for everyone. Perhaps there ought to be a bit of careful selection as to who gets such phenomenal powers. Just imagine if the Mafia knew all the plans of the FBI even before they were actually put into place? Or imagine the horror of giving away NATO’s military secrets to the Serbs.

Perhaps that is the reason most religions — or at least the ones which hint that such a thing might be possible — require those of their disciples who aim at attaining such spiritual powers to have previously attained a high degree of virtue and righteousness. As expressed in the teachings of Zarathushtra: *Kshathrem cha Ahurai a yim daregobyo dadat vastarem*, “The Power of the Almighty [only] accrues to one who becomes a protector of the under-privileged” (this is a liberal translation, but similar sentiments have been expressed in almost all religious teachings). Such a requirement probably screens out undesirables: it would be hard, surely, to find many Mafia hit

men going in for much prayer and fasting and meditation, or loving their enemies and doing good to those that hate them in a big way!

Even those religions — such as Taoism and Zen Buddhism — which do not expound virtue as a *prerequisite*, do affirm virtue to be a *consequence* of the attainment any appreciable amount of spiritual power. It's just not possible to have the one without the other. Which, probably, is just as well ... indeed one shudders to think of what might have happened had Hitler or Stalin been able to personally acquire astounding amounts of supernatural powers!

However, as mentioned earlier, all this is at present still at the level of speculation.

Not, be it noted, that speculation is valueless: had there never been any speculation before any discovery, would there ever have been any discovery afterwards? Surely speculation is one of the first steps in increasing knowledge: which end is, admittedly, not attained all at once, but only after lengthy and careful testing of hypotheses and theories.

It might also be noted that this viewpoint is in consonance with what is normally taken to be the case. In other words, it reconciles the normally held or common-sense view that each person has a “mind of his or her own” with the conclusion, logically derived above, that there can be only one Mind. If each person's “mind” is regarded as a *fragment* of the One Mind, then both the common-sense view and the logically derived view can be reconciled with one another, although at first blush they seem to be mutually contradictory.

However, if this speculation is correct, it should be noted that the fragments of the One Mind — the “individual minds” of living creatures — do *not* normally perceive the One Mind directly: all that each of them is aware of, as a general rule, is the products of the particular fragment which constitutes that particular “mind”. The One Mind in Its Totality remains largely unknown to the fragments: and only by re-uniting with its Source might any fragment *really* know that One Mind in Its Totality ... and of course, when and if that happens, the erstwhile fragment would be a fragment no more. But until then, all concepts of the “One Mind” are merely ideas, concepts, notions; not a direct experience or awareness of It.

It might also be appreciated that the present speculation reconciles the view, often expounded in some religious teachings such as that of Taoism, Zen Buddhism and parts of some Hindu texts such as the *Taittirīya Upanishad*, that nothing needs to be done — or, as expressed in the Biblical story of Mary and Martha (*Luke 10:42*) that only “one thing is needful” — with the view expounded in other, more common-place religious and ethical teachings that it is necessary to do the right thing and avoid doing the wrong thing. If it is assumed that the “self”, viewed as the performer of actions, is merely a fragment of the Mind, then because it is a mere fragment and not the Totality, obviously it cannot know which action is *truly* or *globally* right and which is wrong; and under such circumstances it may be best for it to do nothing, and instead simply get in tune with what the rest of the Mind is “thinking”, allowing the latter to “call the shots”, as it were. Whereas the Mind in Its Totality cannot *but* do the right thing, for if It didn't, it might undermine

Its own existence! (Perhaps that is why in every religion the Supreme Being — by whatever name called — is always regarded as being righteous and peaceful, for any hypothetical unrighteous and peace-despising Supreme Being would simply cease to exist after a while, having got into conflict with Itself ...)

Nevertheless, as mentioned above — and as cannot be emphasised too much — all this lies in the realm of speculation ... as yet. At the level at which this essay is being written, it cannot be regarded as proven, either by argument or by experiment.

ARTIFICIAL MINDS

One more — and, most likely, one very profitable — realm in which the above speculation might be useful is to apply it to the prevailing views about artificial “minds”. Can a machine such as a computer, a robot or an android ever have a “mind of its own”, capable of thinking for itself? Opinions are currently divided about this possibility.

If however the all the above is correct, then it may be possible to reconcile the existing differences of opinion in this regard. On the one hand, a computer or a robot, being made of matter, might well be taken to be a mere perception, like a chair, a rock or anything else made of matter (including the human body and brain.) On the other hand, however, it may be possible to say that such a perception might be able to give the distinct *impression* that it, too, “contains” or “gives rise to” a “mind of its own”, just as a human body and brain gives that impression: and that too, most convincingly. In this way it might be possible to truthfully say that computers and robots will not *really* be able to “think”, but will certainly be able to convincingly fool us into *thinking* that they are able to think! (Of course if we *are* so fooled, it will definitely prove that it is *we* who are not able to think ... just kidding, once again.)

CONCLUSION

From all the foregoing, the following definite conclusions may surely be drawn:

1. It cannot possibly be true to say that Mind does not exist.
2. There *need not* be any existence of matter independent of Mind (which is not to say, however, that matter *does* not exist.)
3. In the final analysis, there can be only one Mind.
4. There is scope for further inquiry as to what constitutes the multiplicity of minds which are normally held to be inherent in living creatures.

5. It might well be possible to create artificial machines (whether they be called “computers” or robots or anything else) which will be able to convincingly give the *impression* that they are able to think, or have minds of their own.

COMMENTS

Comments, if any, will be most welcome. The author appreciates e-mail sent to him either at his e-mail or postal address, both of which are given on the Title Page.