

Do You Form Your Thoughts?

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Introduction

Every question, answer, its justification- are **all thoughts**. So The Question is: how do thoughts arise? This question is rarely investigated esp. experientially. It is **assumed** that either 'some mysterious free entity restricted to the body' or 'brains evolved via natural selection' generate them. The former, a default ingrained belief, the later, a hope based on correlation of neural activity with thoughts. But a look at what (**experientially**) happens, resolved The Question and with it resolved every other (in essence).

Is One Aware of Formation of One's Thoughts?

C: What are thoughts?

E: Words/symbols that you are aware of- mostly as sights/sounds - that I can't know till you tell me e.g. intents, choices, plans, reasoning, narratives, question-answers, theories, beliefs,....

C: Can there be 'knowing' of thought's content without awareness of related words/symbols?

E: Something (e.g. words/symbol) must **represent** thought's content e.g. to differentiate 'want coffee' from 'should buy a book' - when neither coffee nor the bookstore is in sight!

C: Yes, almost always the case. But sometimes there is a vague/feel or sense...

E: Doesn't clear knowing of what that vague feel is about, require awareness of related words?

C: Yes. I am aware of thoughts but what about their formation?

E: Two ways to answer: 1. Formation of thought would require prior conscious 'knowing' of its contents. But any such 'knowing' would be awareness of related words/equivalent= thoughts!

Are you aware of unwanted thoughts and of the 'wish to not have them' via different means- one only when corresponding words/symbols emerge as thoughts and the other before?

C: No! No conscious 'knowing' of thought's contents before related words arise as thoughts!

E: 2. Prior 'knowing' of contents aside, is there seeing/hearing of the thought formation process - putting together of corresponding sights/sounds/meanings? Is any 'I' seen, heard,.. doing so?

C: No, almost always not. But sometimes there is struggle to recall a word, express an idea....

E: Is the **formation** of- clues, intermediate results, final answers- conscious (during struggle)?

C: No! So no, I am not aware of thought formation. But what if its revealed to be so later?

E: Thoughts '**pop up**', says today's **empirical limit**. 'I that forms thoughts' is one such thought!

C: But so is our discussion - thoughts popping up!

E: Yes, thoughts reflecting on their **empirical** past- without calling it real/not, **no assumptions** about who 'I' is, whether world is real. If this is not valid then nothing thoughts say would be!

C: Why is there a strong sense that I generate thoughts-even when generation isn't conscious?

E: Thoughts **pop up** - implicitly/explicitly refer to 'I forming thoughts (IFT)': I thought, told you so, I didn't say it, was just wondering etc. And unlike the IFT, **those thoughts are empirical!**

Who Am I?

Curious: Who am I?

Empirical: a **sense** conjured by thoughts- of a free entity limited to a body, persisting in time

C: But I **feel** I am real- have intents, make plans, choices, control body, do things, see, hear...

E: We agreed that there is awareness of thoughts but **not** of their formation i.e. they pop up, no 'knowing' of thought's content between their arisings. **Empirically**, no 'I' generates thoughts

C: Yes, we did. I see what you are hinting at but don't see it clearly

E: Why do you feel that 'you' move your hand but not my hand or planets?

C: Because my hand moves as per my intent, yours (or planets) doesn't move as per my intent

E: And what is that intent or the later claim, "I moved my hand"?

C: Now I see. Those are thoughts that '**pop up**' - thought's **alluding to 'I restricted to a body'**

E: Right. Hand movement is **empirical**, **so are those thoughts** but **not** I that thinks, moves hands

C: I agree that intents, plans, choices etc. are all thoughts that pop up. But surely, I see, hear?

E: Seeing, hearing, thoughts "I saw/heard xyz"- are **experiential**. But some 'I persisting in time, limited to a body' sees, hears, is **not experiential**- it's a story/claim of thoughts that pop up!

C: Hmmm, now I get it! When thoughts about- who sees, what's seen, whether its real, vanish, **just undivided 'seeing' remains**. But thoughts are momentary, I seem to persist in time...

E: No 'knowing' of thought's contents between thought arisings e.g. I in time. A **single empirical** thought e.g. "I was 13 then", creates 'sense of many years', is the **sense** of persistence in time

C: **Different** thoughts pop up. Incessantly. But 'sense of I' is present throughout....

E: Almost every thought that pops up, **implicitly/explicitly**, refers to I - as the author of actions, thoughts, as the subject of experiential: I did, think, saw, know. Body that I alludes to, **changes**; words I/me/name is the invariant thread that links **different** events, weaves a story- time

C: No **notion** of 'I in time, limited to a body' between thought arisings. Almost every thought that pops up, **freshly conjures** 'sense of I'. Such I isn't directly experienced, thoughts referring to I, are! The thought-free state doesn't vanish with thoughts, needs no proof, is so intimate

E: But slightest attempt to describe (thoughts!) that state - even to say "**It is**" - and the whole thought conjured drama appears in full force. **It** remains **It** even in presence of thoughts but is tricky to recognize with the mesmerizing 'thought masks' **It** wears: waking ('real') vs. dreaming ('illusory'), I limited to a body vs. you etc. So Shhhhhhh

Can there be Theoretical Explanation for Presence of Thoughts?

C: One is not aware of thought formation but we can still have consistent theories about them..

E: When thought formation isn't experiential/conscious, no theory can explain them

C: Why?

E: Any such answer would be just more thoughts **popping up**, a thought **story** about own origin

C: Why do you call it a story?

E: Because any such answer would **necessarily** involve non-experiential **claims** i.e. thoughts that **pop up** would be those non-experiential claims/implications and their **sole** justification. Non experiential = that which is not seen, heard, touched, smelled, tasted **in the immediate moment**

C: Could you please clarify?

E: A voice is heard with no **empirical** clue about its origin. That voice is the **only** 'knowing'- no 'knowing' between voice arisings. What it says about its origin is **all** that can be known. Story.

C: But it could be a consistent story, theory, hence a valid explanation?

E: The voice says, "my content is correlated with the movement pattern of 'this specific tree'- so although you **can't hear** (empirical) my origin in the tree, it 'explains' my presence". Indeed, a total correlation is observed as claimed- so the theory is consistent. But is it an explanation?

C: Why not?

E: First, this story is empirically unverifiable- would be consistent both in waking and in 'dream as seen from within a dream'. No **experiential** way to know whether the tree exists when not empirical (is 'real')! Its reality **implied** by the voice theory above- is- its **only** (sense of) reality

C: Oh! No voice, no (non-experiential) **notions** of real vs illusory!

E: Second, without the voice, just **present continuous**: seeing/hearing. Voice saying, 'last 1000 utterances were related to tree movement', **is** correlation, **is** explicit memory- (sense of) time

C: Hmmmm, no voice, no (non-experiential) **notions** of past/future-time, no correlation!

E: Third, it is the voice that accepts its own proof, saying, 'it explains my presence'!

C: Got it! All the non-experiential= thought that pop up, **vanishes between thought arisings!**

E: Yes, reality of waking world, time, other conscious entities, nonexistence e.g. deep sleep, l..

Summary

There is awareness of presence of thoughts but **not** of their formation. Such thoughts that '**pop up**' **are** all the **non experiential**= that which **can't** be seen, heard, smelled, touched, tasted **in the immediate moment** e.g. sense that things persist when not experiential (objective world), sense of other experiential aka conscious beings, sense of time, sense of nonexistence e.g. deep sleep, sense of I - a free entity restricted to a body & persisting in time etc. The whole human drama. **All the non-experiential= thought conjured, vanishes between thought arising**

Thought free state= the source & sink of thoughts. **It** doesn't vanish with thoughts the way e.g. 'sense of I limited to a body' does. **It** is the most intimate, needs no proof. But the slightest attempt to describe **It** (thoughts!) - even to say "**It** is" - and the thought conjured drama appears in full force. **It** remains **It** even in presence of thoughts but is tricky to recognize with the mesmerizing 'thought masks' **It** wears: waking ('real') vs. dreaming ('illusory'), I limited to a body vs. you, past vs. present vs future etc.

Note: since there is no direct awareness of formation of thoughts and thoughts are all the non-experiential -> no explanation possible for thoughts in the realm of thoughts i.e. there are explanations, theories, within the thought conjured drama but none for the drama itself. No explanation = The explanation! This meta-description is part of that drama!

Appendix: Can Brain (or any localized physical phenomena/object) Explain Thoughts?

(1) Do thoughts arise in physical space ? (2) Can the physical e.g. brain activity, predict the existence of thoughts? (3) Are thoughts correlated with neural activity ? (4) Are thoughts generated by neural activity- does the brain have inherent/local power to 'cause' thoughts?

(1) Imagine a colorful graph with varying brightness - can you measure 'light' from that graph e.g. can a photodetector capture the variation in its brightness? Can I see your graph ? No! => it does not exist in physical space (by definition!). No future findings can change this!

(2) Physical properties e.g. mass, charge, motion etc. can only predict/derive physical phenomena. Thoughts do not appear in physical space - hence physical/informational properties (e.g. of neural activity) can never derive/predict the existence of thoughts.

(3) No functioning brain, no thoughts. Brain injuries, electrical intervention etc. affect thought behavior. Total correlation- a neural activity pattern for every thought (neural correlate of thought, NCT)- must be assumed for the brain to have a chance of explaining thoughts. That assumption implies 'no free self'- as the brain functions as per the rules of physical world

(4) Logical consequence of 'no free self': nothing can be said to have inherent causative power. Any event, including a specific NCT, 'is', because the universe is and has unfolded the way it has. So brain doesn't have inherent/local power to generate thoughts - they arise as part of a chain of events going back at least to the big bang. Chemical intervention may modify thought behavior. This gives appearance of a brain generating thoughts - till it is seen that the chemical intervention, change in thought behavior, recognition of link between the two, this meta view- all are part of universe's unfolding 'with no otherwise'!

Physical brain activity is correlated with thoughts. But it can never derive/predict the existence of non physical thoughts, nor has inherent causative power to generate them