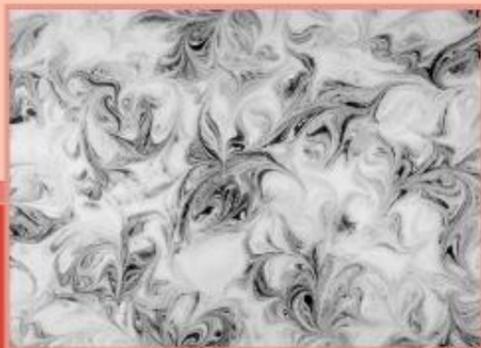


# YOU THINK YOU THINK

A BOOK FOR THE NON-  
FRAGMENTED MIND



STEPHEN  
MUIRES

# **You Think You Think**

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the Non-Fragmented Mind

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**Stephen Muire**

## Preface

This book has been many years in the making. It is short. It is written with depth, in depth and at depth. Less is more.

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## Abstract

This is a study in thinking according to, but not withheld by, traditional methods from the branch of philosophy called Experiential Philosophy. Philosophers are interested in the topic of thought, if no one else. Yet, thinking is what we do sixteen hours a day. Or, as this study will show, thinking is what is done to us sixteen hours a day. What is thinking? Why is it? And, who is in charge here anyway?

The following book will enter these questions and make a serious attempt to keep deviations from target as small as possible.

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## Part I: Problem

You think you think, but maybe you don't. Hold that thought. This curious and meta-thought enforcing sentence is, like most philosophy, easy to dismiss. Instead of dismissing it, let us take it as a thesis. Something to be tested, possibly to be disproven.

Thoughts are peculiar things. We are extremely familiar with them. We can transfer them to others using words and pictures. By reading a book or article we think another person's thoughts as if they were our own. Thoughts are virtual, in the sense that it is hard to assign a physical reality or location to them. Thoughts are deemed to be in the brain, yet detailed electrical and anatomical analysis has not been able to locate them. Thoughts sometimes pop up out of nowhere, and other times are weary invalids struggling to take even a few steps. Sometimes we want desperately to have thoughts about an issue, and none come. Other times we can't stop the fragmented stream of ideas, half-sentences and images flowing through our brains.

So we think we think, but do we?

The question is hard, because it pushes us into an emotional response. If we don't do our thinking, then who or what does? Anyway, the suggestion is ridiculous.

There are two ways to wrestle with thought. One is by thinking. The other is by not thinking.

In previous centuries, philosophers attempted this task and saw it as worthwhile. Kant, Schopenhauer, Sartre. Their books are largely incomprehensible and way too long and intricate for an Internet-trained brain to digest. Yet their work is still in print, a hundred odd years later. This is certainly not going to be the case for 99.9% of modern blogging, newspaper articles, and popular non-fiction.

Thought can have weight. Weighty thoughts last longer than light ones. Sometimes centuries longer. Struggling to have weighty, deep thoughts is wrestling with thought by thinking. Struggling to have no thoughts is wrestling with thought by non-thinking.

A common misconception is that non-thinking refers to meditation. Several semi-spiritual teachings propose this technique as an end in itself. This is like saying that a screwdriver exists in order to be a great screwdriver. Instead of for driving screws into wood.

Non-thinking, as well as thinking, is an act of thought. By attempting this, we begin to see that the question posed earlier (we think we think, but do we?) is disconcertingly astute.

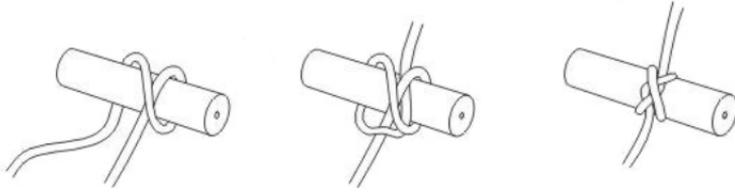
Why? Because it is disconcerting to suspect that when you think you're thinking, you are in fact not. Why is this important? Because all of us think all the time.

Focused thought on an issue regularly fails to bring a solution. Unfocused thought, sometimes called unconscious thought, comes to the rescue by working on a solution in the background. This is a real life observation. What this implies is that thought continues whether we are actively thinking or not. Thought continues on its own, which has led to the subconscious mind theories as in Jung and others.

This is a deep insight. We do not have to accept the theoretical construct of layers of (sub-) consciousness. We do have to accept the observation that thought gives evidence of independent activity, i.e. independent from us.

Thinking has highs and lows. It can flow or it can lag. One of the toughest jobs is to push thought to be productive when it lags. Is this even possible? Our answer will initially be, yes, I can sometimes do that. The answer is not based on proven practice, but on the assumption that it should be possible. After all, we are in charge of our own minds, is the belief.

A constrictor knot tied in a string is a relatively simple knot, designed in such a way as to tighten in on itself the more it gets put under pressure. The more you try to open the knot, the more it constricts. Thought is exactly like this. The more you push, the more it slows. The more you try to stop it, the more it chatters.



Constrictor knot

Whenever we have a phenomenon that observably has highs and lows, the implicit understanding is that we have no control over it. Like the weather, the stock market, or an epidemic. A temporary conclusion is, therefore, that we have little or no control over our thinking. Because thinking is what we do in order to grapple with this conclusion, we land up tightening the constrictor knot. This is ineffective.

As pointed out, there are two ways to wrestle with thought. Thinking and not thinking. We readily understand the first. But what on earth is not thinking?

Space is filled with objects. Tables, cars, houses fill space. Air fills the space where no objects exist. If we take away the objects, and take away the air, space is still there. What fills it? Following this thought, and imagining space empty of objects or gases or molecules, gets us to a point where we, almost, think about something without thinking about it. What fills space?

This is not a science question. The answer is not radiation, or neutrinos. This is a philosophy question. The answer is, non-thinking fills that space.

So we come to the door of the mystery.

An experience that writers have is to stare at a blank piece of paper, pen in hand, waiting for words to come. It is considered an obstacle, an unpleasant first step, the opposite to inspiration. But it isn't an obstacle. To feel frustrated in such moments is to close a wide open door and then complain that the door is closed.

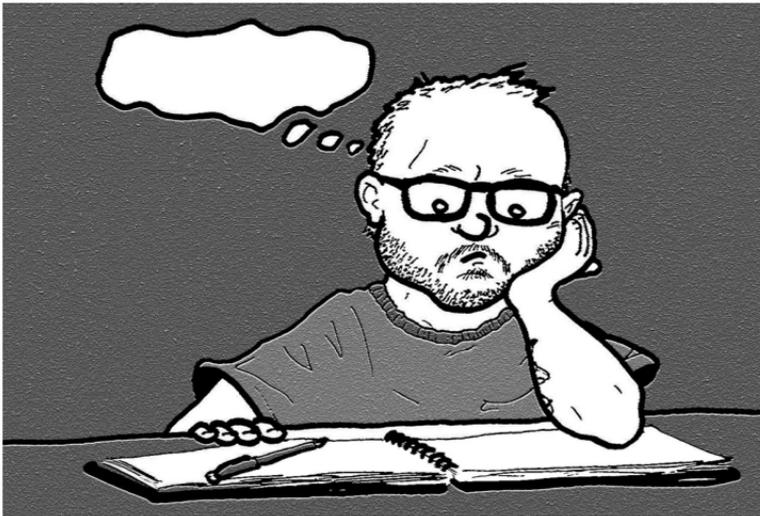
The white page, or screen, contains non-thinking. Words eventually have to come one by one; language works like that. The blank space, before any words arrive, is blank because all words are pressing in at once. They are all present. The good and the bad. The suitable and the irrelevant. Even the genius, never-seen-before thoughts, the world shakers, are there.

The white page is unbearable. We will do anything to get past it, to fill it quickly. Another way, maybe better, is to welcome it and stare it in the eye. Friendly or unfriendly is not the issue. We are suffering from morality. The blank space is an enemy, and so what? If thinking is employing reason and reasonableness, non-thinking is holding a flame-edge sword, poised to strike but not striking.

We are beset at all times by a universe that is overwhelmingly more immense than we can conceive. We

are like an ant that wakes up to find that an elephant has lain down on top of it. Thinking helps us make sense of life. Non-thinking helps us make non-sense of life. Either way the elephant stays.

The blank piece of paper offers an opportunity to not think. This is an unacceptable fact.



As the saying goes, with facts like these who needs enemies? The ruthless friend of the white page comes along on every journey. In the intersection between reaching for meaning and the blank screen we stand at a loss, with no control. Who can, after all, control a million sparks? It is unknown what will happen to someone who refuses to back down.

When we do not think, the illusion of being in charge, of thinking that we think, is briefly broken. It soon snaps back into place, of course. We have trained it to.

Someone once coined the phrase, "The truth will set you free." But think about this: it never has. Yet the words have charisma. They have survived 2000 years. When convenient we still allow them on stage in our mind, sounding the bell of truth. Extraordinary how certain thoughts have such power. Thoughts exist, apparently, on a gradient from daily prattle to history-changing slogans.

On the planet 7 billion physical bodies are engaged in mental activity, from baby to grandpa. All at the same time. If this constitutes an influence of sorts on our own individual mind, it can be assumed to be massive. As heavy as an elephant. And each person thinks that their thoughts originate in their own head.

Philosophy comes across as abstract when it is not relevant to the business of daily living. The thinking process that goes on in us, every waking hour, that influences how we feel about life, what we do, where we go, is relevant. Especially if it turns out that our relationship to our thoughts is not exactly a mutually beneficial one.

To the person who is convinced that the proper way to tackle life is from the heart, not the head, two brake-screaching questions can be put:

- 1) Are you able to stop your head from thinking?
- 2) What makes you think that head and heart are different?

We are approaching a realization now, an admittance, a look under the mortician's sheet. To shine the headlights on thinking is not a fun activity. We will not like what we see, when those beams finally rest on the target.

To shortcut this process: thinking, that excessive uncontrollable habit, is at the core of our unhappiness, despair, suffering, and mortality. We fear because we think.

The motivation for this study on thinking is to find a cure. The description, though not explanation, of this cure is freedom from thinking. The chances of success are slim. But not zero.

There is an edge. Beyond that edge lies the as-yet unknown. To make incursion, to make things known, the human mind travels to the edge, and then it happens at unforeseen times that a small part of what was unknown becomes known. It is a marvelous moment. A crumb thrown to us by the gods.

Two reflections must be made:

- 1) You have to stand at the edge. No crumbs can ever be found in the middle of regurgitated knowledge.
- 2) While the edge is elitist, in this case it's not dependent on education or wealth.

The edge is a long line, not a minuscule secret point. There is a lot of edge. Every field of human endeavor has one, including crafts, technology and philosophy. This study is written at the edge of thought.

This brings us to the question of effort. This, too, is not as straightforward as might be assumed. A lot of effort is not useful. No effort is also not useful. The effort or energy is itself somehow tied to the edge.

The edge is not a physical place that we can either go to or not go to. We can theoretically go to the planet Mercury but in practice not right now. It is as if the edge itself has a say in the matter. This is rather problematic to our standard world view. It stinks of animism or spiritism. It is the reason Jung delineated his research as the science of psychology and never told his readers about the seances he attended. Yet he proved that the human psyche has a department called the collective unconscious, which, since it is collective, irrevocably means outside of the person. A recent, more harmless term is the “adjacent possible.” Steven Johnson explains this as: “The adjacent possible is a kind of shadow future, hovering on the edges of the present state of things.”

The “adjacent possible” is a hipster term, more concerned with looks than with substance. Yet it corroborates the identification of a reality, somewhere, that is not quantifiable. Even so, that reality is the source of progress,

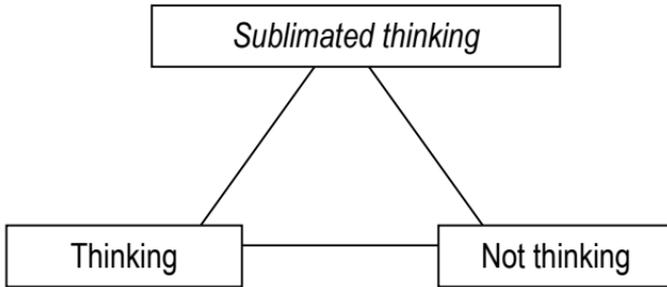
the evolution of ideas and knowledge, and the evolution of the human mind.

This reality is not far away. In mathematics a non-quantifiable quantity is called infinity. Just between 0 and 1 exists an infinity of rational numbers. This is acceptable, logical. It gets weird, in the adjacent possible sense, when it can be shown that the infinite collection of rational numbers between 0 and 1 does not contain all possible rational numbers between 0 and 1. That the numbers not part of the infinite collection are infinite in number.

Understanding this requires effort. Remembering the understanding does not. But the memory does not contain the understanding. The snapshot taken at the summit of Mount Everest does not contain or represent or even come close to the experience and effort of climbing the mountain.

When pushing an edge, one effort is not enough. The edge requires the effort again and again. Which means that the point of this exercise is not the resulting knowledge. It is something else. The ability to think and not think becomes sublimated.

It is true that this sounds alchemical in the Jungian sense. Lead gets sublimated into gold, except there is no lead and there is no gold.



None of these are ordinary. Thinking means thinking at the edge, the kind that is active when staring at a blank page and taking care not to run with ordinary, repetitive thoughts. Non-thinking, while a practice in itself, is more fruitfully approached as the dynamic flip side of thinking. Like a battery has + and -, so does thinking. Like electrons flow from negative to positive, so does non-thinking flow into thinking.

We think we think, but we don't. Fight these words, to sublimate them.

The thinking that is in front of us, is fragmented. Regardless of why, witnessing our own ordinary thought processes from morning till evening, as well as those of people around us with their smart phones, thinking is a stop-start, steerless, and oddly repetitive phenomenon. In the midst of this we, clumsily, manage to grow older, with only a relatively small percentage falling down the stairs or crashing their cars. When statistics point out that most deaths and injuries are accidental, it is fragmented thought that always plays a part. It never gets blamed, because that

would be like blaming the sky, or the green grass, or gravity.

The ability to start a thought in one place and finish it in another, is rare. Yet it is a valuable ability. We expect ourselves to have this ability, though the expectation is unjustified.

In the diagram above, fragmented thought has no place. It is not suitable building material.

Another obstacle to purposeful thinking is the deep-rooted assumption that we already know what thinking is. We do it, after all, so often. We utter the words, "I think," more than most other interjectional phrases. Yet, at the very moment we utter, "I think," we are definitely not thinking.

Not entirely accurate, thinking is done with the body involved. Entirely inaccurate is limiting it to purely a brain function.

The one that thinks calls itself incessantly, "I." The letter i is a vertical 1-dimensional line with a single 0-dimensional dot floating above it. The flatlander witnessing the beginning, or ending, of the transversal of a higher dimensional being into or through the world. From this perspective thinking is a point of contact at which something we cannot see or imagine, enters our world, but doing so unsuccessfully. A couple of these unsuccessful dots and we think we're thinking. "I think," is the equivalent of "I'm blind."

The moment the body gets involved, thinking becomes more deliberate and a lot more clunky. Clunky or not, these thoughts are solid. The thousands of thoughts get replaced by one or two. They are unsublimated, for sure, but a start.

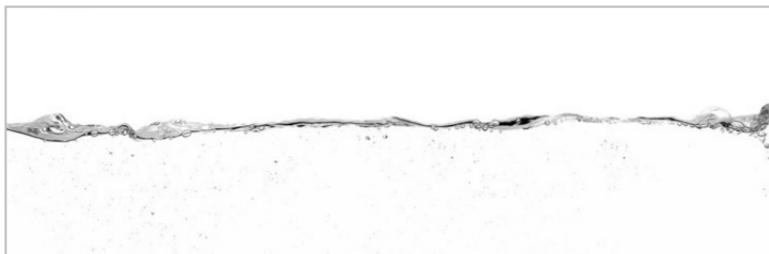
Scientifically, thought has not been localized or determined. Nevertheless, it is generally true that thought takes place in some sphere of energy. A computer's thoughts, i.e. its flow of information, is electrical, determined by an absolute voltage differential in localized bits of memory. The system is binary, encoding all information in just the two values of 0 and 1. The energy system of thinking is not like this. It shows fluctuations, uncertainties, gradients. 0 is not absolutely different from 1. Thinking employs perspective, overriding the absoluteness of true and false. True and false are easy to come by, perspective is not.

Thinking and not thinking, both, manage to regard available information from an unheard of perspective. Not thinking, especially, excels at opening the fog of the mind and creating a perspective. Attempting to not think, while focusing only on the brain, is like holding your breath. You can only do it for so long. With the body, or the energy field of the body, thinking becomes amphibian. Amphibian thought is more like a flow of information, a swimming, than mere noisy chatter in the head.

Fish crawling out of the water onto the land to become mammals, denotes evolution. Bringing evolution into this perspective is educational, even as it is misleading. We

generally regard evolution as a good thing. But on a cosmic scale mammals are not more significant, or better, than fish. Nor do we have evidence that human beings, on that same scale, are better than fish. The planet would be healthier and cleaner without people, after all.

When the energy of the body takes part in thinking we have more options, as well as fewer thoughts. Less is more. The edge of thought is like the edge between water and air. No edge, no evolution. It can be easier to explore the depth and width of the oceans than to cross the few inches from water to air.



Thinking is hard. Books of advice on self-management, on career planning, on spiritual development, seem to be hilariously ignorant of this fact. Words are easy, thinking is hard. The conclusion has to be that words don't make thinking. Hold that thought.

In the beginning of this study it was pointed out that reading a book equals allowing the author of that book, temporarily

and possibly shallowly, to do our thinking for us. This makes a book potentially a thinking tool. Like training wheels. This is where books of philosophy stake their claim. When someone gushes that a certain book changed her life, she could be referring to a sweeping emotion engendered at a lucky moment. Mostly though, when a book changes a person's life, it is through thinking. A slow, meticulous realignment, unnoticed when in progress.

The reason we are willing to let a book's author take over our thinking is that, sometimes, anything is better. The voice in our heads never stops.

This brings us to the one property of thought that stands out above all others. Its incessant, never-ending movement. The rarer something is, the more valuable. Neutrinos are almost non-detectable, which has made them worth studying. But thought? There is so much of it, its value is essentially zero.

This book studies thought. If thought is a tool, then studying thought using thought is asking a hammer to study itself. It is not obvious how this can be done. A hammer will prefer hammers above all other tools. The last to know he's in the water is the goldfish.

The scientific method for studying rare particles is either to slow them down or to collide them into destruction. When thought collides, out comes destructive human behavior. While certainly revealing, we already knew this. Slowing

down thought has, so far, been the method employed in this study.

There is a lot of thought. This is significant. Curiously, maybe pathologically, this is an aspect of the mind that is ignored by experts. When thoughts are so abundant in the water that they block out the sunlight, reasonable questions are: Why is this? Where do they come from? Where do they go?

As pointed out, one obstacle to research is the faulty belief that thoughts are private and internal. An example to prove the opposite: I go to the supermarket because I need milk. I need other groceries as well, but milk is essential. I walk into the store, take a basket and look around for the items on my mental list. I fill the basket, pay, and arrive home, only to realize I didn't get milk.



This is not a unique occurrence, nor is it personal. Our minds are inexplicably interfered with when we enter the supermarket space. The thoughts that we have at home or walking outside are dramatically different than the ones we have inside the shop. If thoughts were private and internal, this could not happen. Therefore, our thoughts are to an unknown extent not our own.

You think you think, but do you?

This explains how it is possible, even inevitable, that thoughts are incessant, multitudinous, and their supply is never-ending. We live and breathe in fields of thought. We have no choice. Yet, without this choice we cannot be free.

There exists a desperate contradiction between thinking and being free. Thinking is like a system of government, or a system of beliefs. You cannot change it from within, because it will overwhelm you in the end. You cannot change it from without, because a change from without is always a destruction. The choice, then, is to let it be. Don't join them and don't fight them. This means the suffering will continue, but it also avoids the drain of life through wasted effort.

The principle here is one of energy, not of right and wrong. We have life, or energy. Life is limited in time, or energy.

We are already part of the system, and fighting it or supporting it, both, drain our energy. We cannot help thinking, therefore we have to let thinking be. It is a serious

mistake, on the other hand, to think that we ourselves are that which thinks, that we are the free agents of thought. We think out of slavery, not out of freedom. We are not the beneficiaries of our own thinking.

If thinking was an immersive video game, we would play the game and try to glitch it. Glitching a game means finding an oversight or fault at a meta-game level that can be used to our advantage. An example is the resource duplication glitch in *Fallout 4*. Through deft button manipulation two mutually exclusive in-game options are activated, and the software is forced to grant the player both. This results in the free duplication of objects and materials.

The question then is, how to glitch thinking. Game glitches are discovered within months of a release date. Thinking, however, was released to (imposed on, would be a better word) the human race millennia ago. Have we not been looking?



The unfortunate truth is that, no, probably most of us have not been looking. After all, our looking tool is thinking itself. A hammer cannot use itself to investigate hammering. Thinkers have focused on fathoming the workings of the mind, using the mind itself. This made us vulnerable for exploitation. By analogy, this was like installing an anti-malware program that itself is malware. Thinking is malware.



The deepest understandings of philosophy and psychology are infected with the very disease they try to cure, namely thinking.

Gamers find glitches because they understand that the system of computer hardware and software coding logic inherently is limited and flawed. Consequently, the system can sometimes be made to do things that are not supposed to be possible. If the human hardware and software system shares that trait, it too can be made to do things that are not supposed to be possible.

If not, then we can never be free.

We need to look at the similarity between computer software and thought. Or the dissimilarity. Software covers both the flow of information and the rules that govern this flow. Data and code, as they are called. When opening up a computer it is relatively easy to find the data, and relatively hard to find the code. But this is purely a result of code having been compiled into non-human-readable machine instructions, or executables. It is still code, and it is locatable.

In thinking, it is likewise easy to find the data, i.e. thoughts and images. But where is the code? Where are the encoded rules that decide the flow of thoughts? The answer is, we have no idea. We don't even know for sure that such rules exist. Thinking about thought can get uncomfortable, because, were such code to exist, we would immediately want to know who wrote it.

In the human we can find what is equivalent to software data, though it is not physically clear how and where it is stored. But we have no equivalent executables. The comparison with a computer may have to be dropped.

In a video game, we are the player. Everyone else that we meet is a non-player character, or NPC. As the player, we have control, choice, invincibility in the form of reload options, meta-knowledge concerning glitches, and the possibility to pause the game. Inevitably, we would like to consider our AFK (Away From Keyboard) life in the same way. We like to be in control. We like to have choices. We don't want to have to worry about death. But life is not like that. We need to allow for the possibility, therefore, that in the game of life we are an NPC, not the player.

The NPCs have no idea they're in a game. For them it's real. Things happen to them. They don't, and can't, see how or why. They can't pause the game. They die. There is no shortage of NPCs, since they simply respawn. All this sounds worryingly familiar, like a parody of real life.



Fallout 4 Vault-Tec representative, NPC

An NPC has no chance of escaping the game environment and entering reality. An NPC, in other words, is thoroughly fucked. Philosophy is the attempt to find evidence that we, humans, are not in the same predicament. Experiential Philosophy makes this attempt in a non-academic manner.

An avenue to pursue is to find out where thoughts come from. This is not unreasonable, since we, after all, do not know what we're going to think before we're thinking it. We are not constructing our thoughts and then let them roll out the factory. Watching the emergence point of thought is possible. It is like being a cat, sitting outside a mouse hole, waiting for the mouse to come out. An intense focus will, for a while, stop any thoughts from emerging. But eventually they come.

It is hard to determine whether they come from the inside or from the outside. If “inside” means, “not through the five physical senses,” then thoughts come from the inside. If “outside” means, “from somewhere that is not part of my consciousness,” then thoughts come from the outside.

Watching thoughts come can be compared to hesitating before turning the page of a book, then turning it and reading. Using spatial energy awareness, thoughts appear “from the side,” i.e. neither inside or outside. This can partially be confirmed by watching people’s eyes when they try to recall something or answer a difficult question that requires thinking.

At the same time, there is no sense of having a choice of thought. We do not observe ten lines of thought as they emerge and choose one of them to actually think. When we get a thought, it is just one thought. It is personal, it is ours, or so it seems.

Abstracting from our moment-to-moment thoughts, we can accept that our thoughts are not original. On a daily basis they are not of the  $e=mc^2$  kind. But they are, most definitely, personal. When thinking, “I must remember to go shopping later today,” that is being thought by thousands of people. Yet, as I have the thought it is I who is thinking it, not those other thousands. I give the thought a measure of uniqueness by being me.

A thought comes in from the side. If we focus hard on its emergence point, a gap gets created and no thoughts

come. The moment the focus falters, thoughts stream in again. It requires absolutely no effort on our part to have thoughts. That is a striking realization.

Our language implies that thinking is an active, not passive, event. We do the thinking. With a focused effort, this can indeed be so. The point is that the rest of the time, 99% of the 16 waking hours, thinking just happens. No focus is needed.

When we have a thought, information is processed. Something comes in, we chew on it, and it goes out. Since we asked where thoughts come from, it is likewise incumbent here to ask where thoughts go after we have thought them. Energy cannot be destroyed, therefore we cannot have thoughts come in, process them, and then nothing. They must go somewhere.

Considering the thousands of thoughts we have every day, and considering that the majority of them are soon forgotten, un-remembered, there is an energy deficit. A thought has energy during process. Which necessitates that energy going somewhere afterward. It does not go to us. Otherwise we would get more and more energized as the day wears on. The opposite is true. The conclusion is that thought, by passing through us, robs us of energy. We give it awareness, consciousness, time, consideration, and then the thought disappears, we don't know where, taking that sliver of energy with it.

Let us address an earlier objection once more. The objection is, “But life is more than thinking. It is also full of feeling and emotion.” Yes, and therefore all the more energy that goes to unknown destinations. Everything said about thought can also be said about emotion. They are basically the same thing. Also, to repeat, people who live by their emotions still think. They think just as much, and as often, as anyone else.

Thought robs us of energy. Attempts at focused thought prove this indirectly, because the effort of deliberate thinking gives us energy, instead of depleting us even more. Focus serves as a re-channeling, a retaining. The same is true for efforts at not thinking.

The word focus comes from the world of lenses and photography. A blurry image is focused into a sharp one. Dispersed light is concentrated into a beam. When thought focuses on a question, a concept, a mystery, it collects loose strands of information and puts them under the spotlight. Focus is an attempt to connect together that which is disconnected. Anyone who has experience with this, in whatever field, knows that, when successful, it is as if a chain reaction starts up. Suddenly there is massive energy. The process may get its own momentum. The baffling reality is that thought is, or can tap, a large reservoir of energy. It is right there, at the edge of thought.

While thought robs us of energy, the source of this energy is, on the other hand, large. Very large. This is why we

don't die at the end of a day of thinking. We go to sleep and enact the whole thing over again the next day.

The purpose of the existence of thought is not the results of thought. It is not the knowledge acquired, the stories told, the memories collected. The purpose of thought is the harvesting of energy through the process we call thinking. The term harvesting is an analogy. Analogies are flawed, because they take natural world images to explain abstract universal concepts. That cannot be done, of course. Harvesting, in a restrained sense of the word, means that something is extracted, produced by thought, and taken away. We don't know where, we don't know why.

A parallel with Aldous Huxley's doors of perception is discernible here. Huxley stated that our perception acts as a filter that reduces actual but infinite input to something we can handle. He referred to sensory input, not specifically to thought. However, sensory input cannot be widened by voluntary intent, whereas thinking can. The doors of perception dynamic applies to thinking more than to the ways our bodies filter the universe.

A side note about telepathy. Transmission of thoughts from one person to another is still unproven. Which means, after more than a century of scientific methods available to verify this phenomenon, it does not exist. Philosophically this makes sense: we are receivers of thought, not transmitters.

A side note about advertizing. Advertizing tells us what to think. Because we don't think, but have thoughts come in

when we think we're thinking, advertizing can be effective even when we resist it and know better.

Thought influences our lives. That almost goes without saying. When we favor a particular thought, give it attention, repeat it, extend it, talk about it, it becomes stronger. It becomes a certainty or a belief. Eventually, whatever the thought is about, it becomes fact.

Facts do not precede thought. Thought precedes facts.

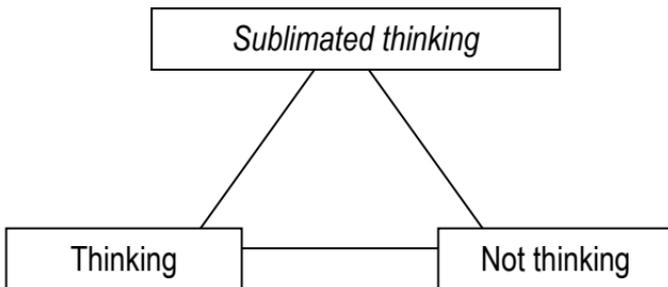
In extreme cases we have no difficulty admitting this. Any prejudice against race, religion, or gender orientation has its roots here. A person with a certain prejudice does not consider the prejudice to be a thought that has simply gained popularity in his or her mental constructs about the world. No, it's now a fact. Rather than this being true only for extreme cases, it is true for all cases. All facts are consolidated thoughts. Even the smallest ones, the everyday life ones. Which is why we disagree about facts. That would not be possible if facts were real and thoughts just opinions. Instead, thoughts are real and facts are just opinions.

It is in this fundamental way that thought influences our lives. It is also in this way that Descartes wasn't far off the mark.

If thought influences our lives, then not thinking stems the tide of this influence. This hints at, but is not, freedom. Intentional not thinking is a fascinating activity. Thoughts

are, as it were, stopped at the door. They are still coming, but for a few moments they are not let in. The purpose of this activity is not to stop thought and eventually get rid of it altogether. A Buddhist, or an Eckhart Tolle follower, may claim that such is possible. Yet, at the very moment they claim this, they are thinking, and thus lying.

The purpose of not thinking is to sublimate thought, in the dynamic relationship with thinking.



Not thinking is simply another kind of thinking. Likewise, thinking is a form of not thinking. It's a dynamic, a tension. By not thinking we don't stop thought, but displace it. Whereas thinking is seen as located in the head, not thinking certainly is not located there. Location is not a fact; it is a thought.

These are not abstract thoughts. At the level of deliberate thought there is no abstraction. What is normally called

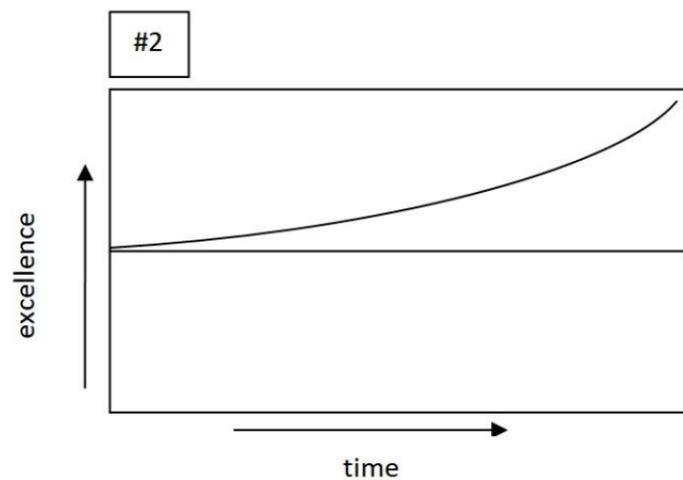
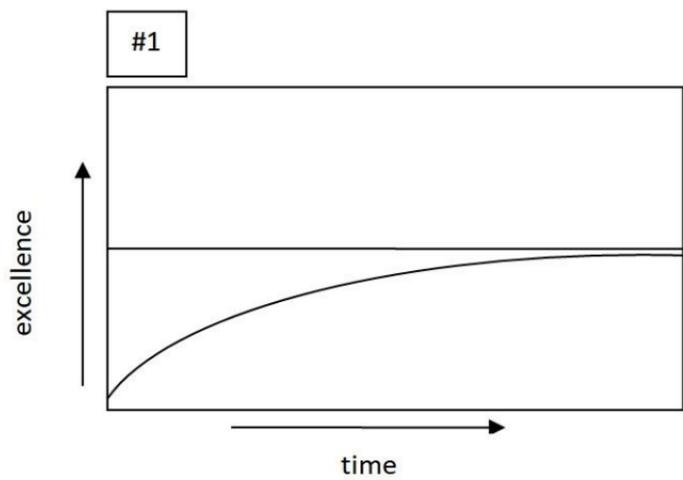
abstract is artificial thinking, in which a system is built from the ground up with artificial bricks. These bricks, or concepts, are primarily defined in terms of each other.

Thought influences life. This can be reformulated as: thought is the reality that creates what we call ordinary life. This includes our behavior.

The following is an analysis of a behavioral pattern. It is probably easily recognizable. A person has a job, let's say in IT, or in a hospital, or creating art, or cleaning offices at night. What the job exactly entails, is not relevant. The person has received training and education to perform his duties. When he thinks about his job, the pattern goes like this: "I will go to work. I will do my job well. I will do my best to maintain a high standard or quality of output. I know I can do this, based on my work experience so far."

We generally consider this a pretty good attitude to have. But this is neither the only pattern that could be active, nor the best. Here is a different one: "I will go to work. Based on previous experience I know I have been capable of a high standard or quality of output. I will use this as a base level to apply myself again and again, and increase in skill and effectiveness."

In diagrammatic form the two patterns look like this:



Person #1 is setting himself up to reach as close as possible to a pre-established level of quality. Person #2 uses the pre-established level as a runway into the sky.

The behavior of the person, and therefore the results they achieve in life, is a thought pattern, not an action pattern. The action is incidental. When we look at a person's behavior we are actually looking at the behavior pattern of their thinking. Thought becomes the actor.

Taking the work ethic diagrams above, it is safe to estimate that most of us aspire to live up to #1. Simultaneously, not many of us ever adopt #2. Or even try to. The issue here is not one of behavior, education, skill, privilege, success, or the lack of any of these things. The issue is one of thinking.

Wonderful. Now we know. All we need to do is to adopt a new thinking pattern and success, happiness, wealth, love and red sports cars will follow. Yes. If we were in charge of our thinking this would indeed be true. But it isn't. Because no matter how much we think we think, we don't. Remember, 99.9% of the attendees at a Law of Attraction seminar are not millionaires. Which kind of knocks the bottom out of that idea.

The phenomenon of thinking displays a range of qualities. At one end we find heavy fragmentation, and at the other great focus and deliberateness. It would be enticing to decide that daily life thinking may be out of our control, but not the focused, deliberate kind that produces coherence and creativity.

But the old saying is, you can't eat your cake and have it. The implications of the thesis of this philosophical study in thinking are disconcerting. In fact, we begin to share the realization of our old friend the NPC. We are thoroughly fucked.

Let's look further at the two diagrams of thinking behavior. We could call #1 Mr. Average and #2 Mr. Ambitious. But this does not get us very far. Better to call #1 Mr. Maximum and #2 Mr. No Maximum.

The first curve grants large initial progress and then slows down as it approaches the horizontal maximum or plateau. The second curve is flipped upside down, making only slow initial progress. The acceleration that becomes available later is hidden in the beginning. This is discouraging, making the effort not seem worth it.

Both curves show thought movement over time. Thought has the ability to see ahead, to see the shape of a series of instants in time. This ability is both an allure offering false promises, and a crack in the prison wall of thought. When we are thinking, when a thought develops, time is not part of the result. Thinking takes time, but thought is timeless.

This is immediately clear when not thinking. Thinking takes time, but not thinking does not.

When Mr. Maximum works at a task, he is not moving toward his best performance. In a way his best performance is behind him. It is already given, in the

thought pattern, and now directs and limits his actions. The curve of #1 is instant, since it is a representation of thought. The line approaches but never reaches the maximum.

The same reasoning applied to Mr. No Maximum opens up an intriguing possibility. The unlimited potential of the exponentially rising #2 curve is also instant, and present right from the start. The curve represents thought, or the energy of thought. This energy is very large and, because thought compresses time, is not far off.

When a person undertakes training, an education, an improvement program, they are automatically governed by curve #1. Skill training's thought pattern says: this is how to become better, up to the level labeled as "excellent," or "licensed," or "authorized." But never beyond. Education does not make a person smarter, it only makes them better educated. Additionally, they now have an ingrained sense of limit, which they call "maximum." Curve #1 says: you will be approaching your maximum achievement and forever not get there.

On the other hand, curve #2 says: be at your maximum, though it is not a true maximum. Do better today than yesterday. Your maximum is your zero point.

Examples of this phenomenon are, not surprisingly, few. The band Yes released true no maximum music between 1971 and 1977. They were on a #2 curve. Then, they somehow fell below their own horizontal line and have never quite been able to get back to it, not for lack of trying.

In the 30 years that followed they got stuck on curve #1. By contrast, the artist David Bowie has managed to reinvent himself multiple times, thus staying in a Mr. No Maximum dynamic far longer.



Yes - Close To The Edge (1972)

The thought patterns of curves #1 and #2 are not quality measurements or scales of excellence. They are thought patterns, configurations of energy. By default we are trapped in #1. Pattern #2 is accessible, but good luck getting there.

The thought that we need to “get there” is itself dubious, though. The diagram shows it. #2 does not start from the bottom. It starts from the plateau of best. Again, this is

thought, not action. Thought can start anywhere it likes, even in mid air.

The only reason this seems too pat, a tautological evasion of the issue, is that we think we can control our thinking. We think we think. We can avoid this conclusion, but it won't avoid us. The tool we use is compromised.

An area where this is traceable is memory. Memory is thought looking back at previous thoughts. A memory that is dormant at the moment, is a thought not engaged in using our brain. We have memories that we can sit down and recall (few). We have memories that we have forgotten (many). Considering the quantity of a lifetime of memories, they are like books in a gigantic library, but without an index. Recall of a childhood memory is more often a spontaneous event than a deliberate one. In fact, trying to deliberately recall something specific is not necessarily successful. Yet the memory exists and will come of its own accord at some other time.

Apart from the memories that we can recall at will and those we can't, there is a third class. Memories that we are aware of and struggle to hold on to, and that nevertheless slip out of memory. In other words, they are not forgotten by us. It is not a matter of years passing and they simply fade. No, these are thoughts that we are conscious of at 7:00 am and that have become irretrievable at 7:05 am: dreams. We wake up from a vivid dream, a long and important-seeming story that we really want to think more about. We struggle

to remember it, but we can't. The dream memory is unwilling to stay and we can't make it. We are not in charge of either the dream in question or the memory mechanism that governs it. Even the practice of writing down a dream immediately upon waking, does not prevent the memory from leaving. We land up with a set of words on paper that does not capture the experience we had. The memory of the dream and the written down version are somehow two different things.

If dream memories have the power to leave us, even as we are aware of this and try to stop them from doing so, then thoughts have the same power. Dreams are, after all, thoughts.

If childhood memories have the power to come to us, without invitation at random moments, then thoughts have the same power. Childhood memories are, after all, thoughts.

Therefore, thoughts have the power to be thought in us, even as we monitor them and even when we try to stop them from coming in. Making use of the flexibility of language, let's restructure the phrase, "Thoughts have the power to be thought in us," into one that is, presumably-maybe-definitely, closer to the truth: Thoughts have the power to think in us.

The next question, then, is: why do they do this? The answer is found in a saying, typically expressed when a

thought-provoking issue is discussed: “This is food for thought.”

Apparently, thoughts can get hungry and occasionally need food.

At this point your thoughts will comment on the craziness of the book you are reading, if they haven't already. But no matter, let's rephrase the last statement and take out the adverbs: Thoughts get hungry and need food.

We are the food.

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## Part II: Non-Solution

The body is or can be involved in thinking. One demonstration of this can be found in research surrounding Heart Rate Variability (HRV). This refers to the dynamic speeding up and slowing down parallelism between the heart rate and the breathing. When the two are in sync and the HRV follows the breathing patterns in a balanced way, an individual is healthy and responsive. Biofeedback systems have been developed to encourage such coherence. Their stated purpose is to fight stress and improve thinking as well as other kinds of performance.

During a TED talk in 2012 Alan Watkins demonstrated a simple, and repeatable, method. A member of the audience is invited on to the stage and asked to do the following: count down from 100 using steps of 3. A heart rate sensor is attached and a screen shows the HRV graph in real time. As soon as the experiment starts, the facilitator puts pressure on the victim by asking him to speed up, questioning the correctness of the count, or interjecting random numbers. The monitor shows the heart rate rising and the HRV graph going into chaos, while the person makes mistake after mistake. This is phase one of the demonstration.

In phase two the facilitator proceeds to teach the participant a breathing exercise. He is told to breathe at a comfortable speed, keeping both in-breath and out-breath at an even

flow. The length of time for in and out can vary, as long as it is the same for each breath, or as close as can be. It is not that hard to do and the participant quickly gets it, the screen confirming that the HRV pattern now is much more balanced than before. He is instructed to continue this way of breathing and again try to count down from 100 in steps of 3. The facilitator attempts to pressure him as before, but now the participant is able to more or less ignore him. He still makes a mistake or two, but his performance is drastically improved.

A coherent HRV, induced by even regular breathing, creates thinking clarity, concentration, and a degree of immunity to external disruptions. This is an example of thinking with the body involved.

Heart rate, breathing and thinking are connected. But the conclusion that breathing techniques (like found in yoga, meditation, and so on) are the key to greater control, better thinking and even happiness, is unfortunately incorrect. If it was correct, we would all already be there.

The connection between breathing and thinking is not one of cause and effect. A change in thinking intensity has a parallel effect in the breathing and heart rate. A change in the heart rate and breathing has a parallel effect in the thinking. All systems that make up the body function in a similar way. What makes this particular connection interesting is that the thinking system can act in opposition

to the breathing system. Harmony or coherence is not a given and is, in fact, often absent.

It is as if we are split beings. It is as if body and mind are two different entities. This is the root of the trouble, the contradiction and the suffering of thought. It is as if thought is a stranger in the house.

Some of these strangers are more than usually charismatic. They get us to do and feel things with enthusiasm. Thought can enter into a sympathetic resonance with feeling, in the same way that it does with heart rate and breathing. When thought resonates like that, it becomes persuasive and powerful. Among the ranks of inspirational speakers, political leaders, evangelical ministers are individuals who have a knack in this area. When they present thought, the listener is swayed. The internal resonance of the speaker is passed on to the listener. Thought becomes more than information, it becomes a cause, a rally cry. We are susceptible to thought. When someone expresses an opinion forcefully and with conviction, our initial and instinctive response is to agree. Then we take a step back and ask, "Wait a minute, what did you just say?"

Thought has this persuasive kind of power. At the same time we have another kind of power: the ability to question thought, even our own. This ability is subtle, but essential for the present study. We can literally stop ourselves, right after thinking or saying something, and doubt whether what

we just thought or said is true, whether we really meant it. It is as if we are split beings.

In the history of philosophy this dilemma has typically been tackled by proposing a hierarchical structure to the human mind. Pure reason resides above ordinary reason. The higher self has access to wisdom the lower self lacks. The conscious and the subconscious, the soul and the mind, and so on. This paints a logical sheen over a phenomenon that makes no sense, a phenomenon that is illogical. How can we be two when we are one? We can't be one if we are two.

The following mathematical sleight of hand purports to prove that  $2 = 1$ .

<b>Step</b>	<b>Reason</b>
1. $a = b$	Starting premise
2. $a^2 = a \times b$	Multiply both sides of (1) by $a$
3. $a^2 - b^2 = a \times b - b^2$	Subtract $b^2$ from both sides of (2)
4. $(a - b)(a + b) = b(a - b)$	Apply algebra on (3)
5. $a + b = b$	Divide both sides by $a - b$
6. $2b = b$	Replace $a$ by $b$ in (5) because $a = b$
7. $2 = 1$	Divide both sides of (6) by $b$

The result is not possible. There must be a mistake, a glitch, in the reasoning. There is. On line (5) we divide by

$(a - b)$ , which  $= 0$ . This cannot be done, because such a division is either infinite or undefined.

$2 \neq 1, 2 = 2$ .

Since we are mostly convinced that we are individual, unique, sovereign, independent beings, we have performed a sleight of hand on ourselves. Or it has been performed on us. We think 2 equals 1, but it doesn't. We think we think, but we don't.

In a sense there no real way forward from here. It is a fight that cannot be won, and a road that is circular. If we do get somewhere, we are probably deceived, only now we believe the deception because we are invested in it. Small deviations become huge misses the longer the bullet flies.

The method adopted here is to stick to the small deviations and not to run with any grand theory, however attractive it seems. Grand theories are, in the end, always wrong, because of their grandness and because of their theory-ness.

Thoughts are more deceptive than lies. If thoughts cannot be trusted, then what can? Non thinking will never come with a lie, because it will never come with a thought. Yet the absence of thought also entails the absence of truth. We are, by now, familiar with this problem, see Part I.

Not thinking seems like an anti-answer, a non-solution. Zen bullshit. The sound of one hand clapping. Yes, but if the

deviation of thinking becomes painful and obvious, not thinking can slow it down and stop it in its tracks. The empty page gives no answer, but also no lie.

When the way forward is barred, the only hope is to find a weakness or crack in the structure. A window that hasn't been bricked up. Foot holds in a concrete wall. A glitch in the software. Life is hard and will only get harder, and when we have worked our asses off, we will die and be destroyed. There is no way back, no way forward, and no way out. No heaven, and not even a hell. In the face of this challenge, with death guaranteed, we look for distractions and promises that all will be well. But we know all is not going to be well. We have proof in the cold corpses that people leave behind when the fight is over.

Distractions and promises are easy to come by. Thought and the incessant flow of thinking provide them. Therefore, it has to become an immovable attitude that thought itself is not ever going to lead to freedom. This is the problem as well as the non-solution. We stand at a point of small deviation, since we have no choice but to think, and here we look for the glitch. If that is not what we are doing, we are done. RIP.

In software a glitch can be defined as follows: something unexpected and not-understood happens, and it can be repeated. A software developer will enter it into the bug database and work to correct the "error." A philosopher, a

gamer, will repeat the glitch and figure out how to benefit from it.

What kinds of things happen in thought that are unexpected and not understood? We will deal with this question in Part III.

We wallow in perverse shock when someone we know is dying. But we are all going to die, so we might as well enjoy it. Not life, but dying.



Philosophy, or thinking about thinking, is not a leisure activity. It is a matter of life and death. If we are lying on our death bed when we discover the glitch, it is probably too late. We need to discover it now, now, now.

The moment we open our eyes in the morning, and sometimes even before, the thinking starts. Because this is so reliable and permanent, we identify with that voice. Our

personality, our opinions, our beliefs are based upon and formed by our thinking. We think, therefore we are (who we are): another interpretation of Descartes that is painfully true. By not thinking we become less of the person (we think) we are. This makes it an unattractive proposition for most. We want to become more, not less.

A bum in an American small town, in the novel *The Affair* (2011), asks Jack Reacher, “You think?” Reacher answers, “All the time.” This expresses pride and superiority. Thinking is the characteristic of the master race. Stupidity is ascribed to failing to think. Someone who does not think cannot be smart. We are convinced of this and the evidence, it must be said, is abundant.

But even a supersmart NPC is still an NPC. Smartness is not a way out. We want to become the player, step out of the software, out of the machine, into freedom.

Our identity hinges on who we think we are. In a supplementary way, our identity also hinges on who other people think we are. In Cartesian terms, “They think, therefore I am.” We identify with the voice of our thought. Dissecting this sentence, which plenty of people have done, has no effect on its apparent truth. We understand that “we” are separate from the “voice.” Otherwise we couldn’t, then, identify with it. Yet realizing this changes nothing. We still identify. There is no other way to be.

In early 2018 doctors scanned an 84-year old man in Ireland, to discover that he had a 9 cm pocket of air where

his right frontal lobe should have been. Aside from weakness and unsteadiness, the man was in good shape. He opted out of surgery since it involved so many risks, and 12 weeks later he was reported to be doing fine. A living airhead. It makes you think about all the millions of people who have never had a brain scan done.

The man's personality was intact. Thinking, thus, may not depend on the presence of a brain. Dr. Eben Alexander, in his 2012 book *Proof of Heaven*, maintained that his brain was clinically dead while he continued to be conscious. When we take our bodies to extremes, through exhaustion, hunger, disease, drugs, or even temporary death as in Alexander's case, we don't stop thinking, but our thinking does change. When our thinking changes, the world changes.

Criticism: No, "the" world doesn't change, only ours does.

But this is not quite true. All of "our" worlds are "the" world. Someone in another country has a different thought frame and consequently a different world view from us. But we can't do anything with that. It is impractical information, even if true.

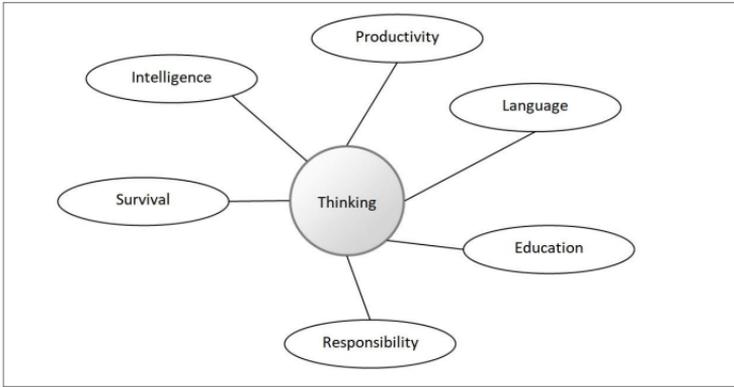
What matters is that a shift in our thinking shifts the world. Thought is, apparently, a thing that can be shifted. If we can shift thought, can we glitch it?

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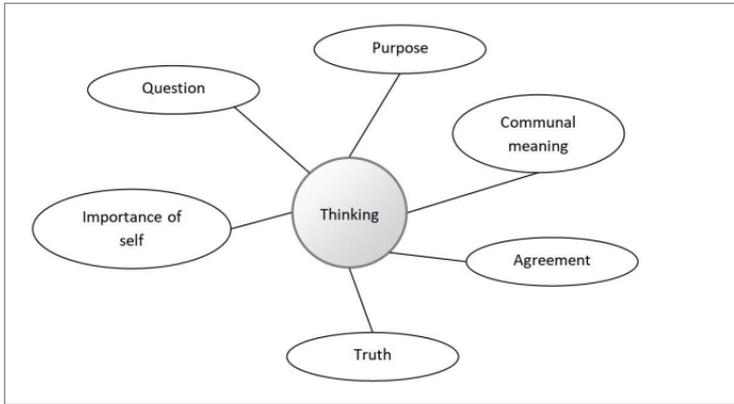
## Part III: Sublimation

When thought is shifted it becomes aware of itself. Or rather, there is awareness and there is thought, whereas before they were the same thing. This small shift makes it possible to catch thoughts out that don't belong to or originate in oneself. Especially in crowded environments, a street, a commuter train, a shopping mall, we sometimes think thoughts that are not our own. Awareness of this phenomenon is a small but essential feature of shifted thought.

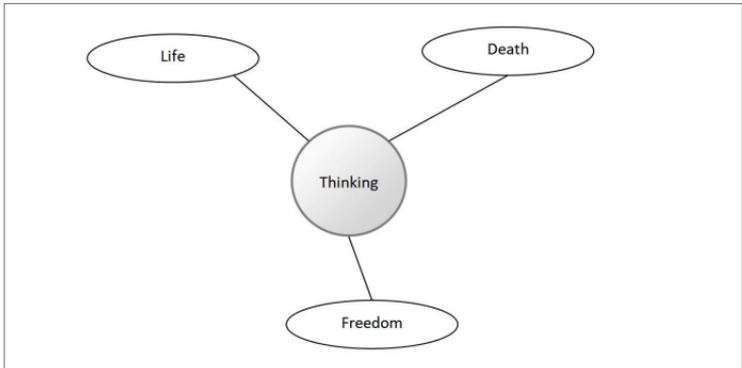
Most of our thoughts are so familiar that we automatically identify with them. They are us. The thoughts that we initially can catch out are, therefore, those whose content or format is slightly at odds with our normal thinking. Spotting a non-personal thought provides a unique opportunity. First, we can remain detached, unemotional, since this thought clearly was not ours. Second, it provides a glimpse of freedom from thought. We are aware of ourselves and yet distinct from thought.



1<sup>st</sup> level diagram: the obvious associations of thought.



2<sup>nd</sup> level diagram: the fuzzy sphere of thought.



3<sup>rd</sup> level diagram: the uncomfortable level of thought.

Discomfort is part of this glimpse, but prisoners are always uncomfortable when first released from their cell; or cave, as in Plato's allegory. Since identity is tied up with repetitive and familiar thoughts, shifting reduces or jettisons a sense of identity. We become lost as we become free. Thought says to us, like a mother, or like a god: "You are safe with me." We feel we can be ourselves with thought, but we feel not ourselves without it.

Be yourself, is incredibly bad advice.

The source of thought is not one. Not only is it not one, it is multileveled. Not all thoughts are equal. It is wrong to assume that fragmented thought is a result of a faulty or badly trained thinking process. Instead, the fragmentation is inherent in a certain level of thought. Thoughts come to us in an already fragmented form.

This bears repeating. When we think chaotic, cyclical and broken up thoughts, it is not our lack of cleverness or attention that is to blame. We simply process thoughts that themselves are chaotic, cyclical and broken up.

Improving, or sublimating, our thinking is, therefore, initially a matter of selecting better thoughts. There exists more than one source of thought. Selecting is, as already established, easier said than done, because our selection tool is thought itself.

Let's look at a peculiar, but also specific, example of thought sourcing: channeling. One of many such exponents is Barbara Marciniak, a channeler of thoughts that are not her own. There is no need to believe that her claims as to source and veracity are true. They are not. What is unequivocal, though, is her thought selection process. She is able to switch to another source. This sufficiently changes the quality and content of her thoughts that she feels justified ascribing these to beings from another star system. The interpretation may be insane, but the phenomenon isn't. Channelers are really channeling. It's a phenomenon that goes back to Moses and the burning bush, and is rife in the circus of modern New Age spirituality. New Age channelers may be peripheral crazies in today's world, but once upon a time those same people were the founding fathers of the world religions.

A channeler claims to have access to two radically different thinking sources, which they can demonstrate. The fact that

they proceed to erroneously ascribe the channeled thoughts to Saint Germain, archangels, or aliens, is a topic for another book.

The basic assumptions that the person makes is: “this” thinking is my normal self, and “that” thinking is from a higher source outside of me. Neither assumptions hold.

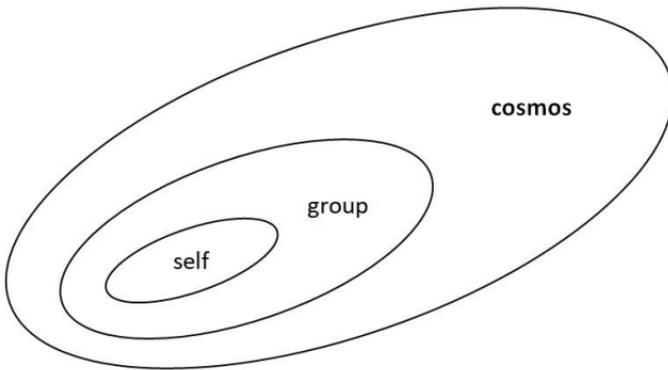
First, the assertion that the voice(s) belong to intelligent and always benevolent beings of light, spirits, gods, or whatever, is unproven and more than a little dubious.

Second, the “normal” self is not essentially a different case from channeling. It is just much more familiar and much longer incubated. We are, on a daily basis, channeling our own selves.

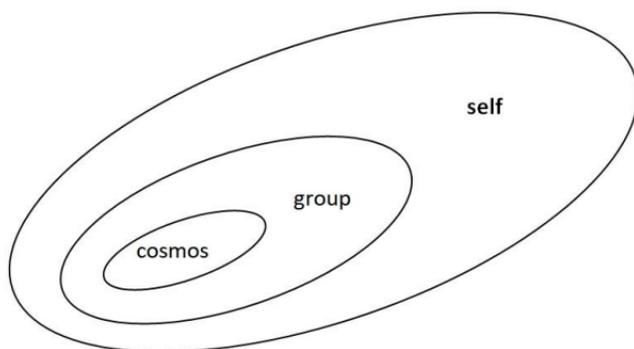
A second example of thought sourcing is the social phenomenon of group mind or group think. A group of people, in some cases a whole country, thinks in a predictable way. As if everyone draws upon a shared and specific pool of thought. We also call this the social norm, which makes the concept more threatening because of the implied control, morality and authority behind it. Group mind is active and can be observed at soccer matches, rock concerts, political demonstrations, in the political correctness movement that has gripped the globe during the 2010s, and so on and on. People have jokingly called it the “thought police.” The Scandinavian countries boast of having a consensus society, meaning that everyone is expected to think the same way in order to make any kind

of decision in the working place, in schools, or in government.

It is an accepted fact that innovation or revolution almost exclusively occurs outside the group mind, until such time that the new set of thoughts becomes a group itself.



Group think is located in between the personality cult and the spiritual/religious or cosmic, for lack of a better word, cult of channelers and prophets. This diagram does not have an outside. The reason is that it can just as easily be reversed in representation:



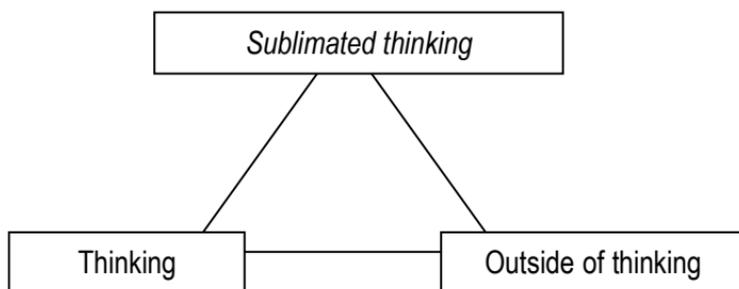
We are our own cosmos. Within this all-important field is a smaller area where we belong to a group or nationality. Within that is an even smaller area where we put God. This can be seen e.g. in the fact that even deeply religious people are significantly more obedient to the laws of the country than to the laws of God.

If innovation is only possible outside the fields of self, group or cosmos, this “outside” becomes an evasive quality. Earlier on we called it the edge of thinking, or the adjacent possible. What all three fields have in common is that they are thought fields. Freedom, innovation, or sublimation, require going outside of thought.

A glitch in a computer program or game requires knowledge from outside the system. Put another way, we need to be able to see how something that exists outside the system can interact or interfere with the inside workings of the system. A software security flaw allows insertion of

far too much data into a small memory field, causing overflow and potentially the execution of code that was never meant to run inside the program.<sup>1</sup> A game glitch employs the knowledge that a set of actions that is illogical outside the game can turn up as totally logical inside the game, and thus give impossible results.

Thinking can never escape thinking. Non thinking is a phraseology that denies the normal workings of thought. On paper this sounds very clever, very Zen. Let's, therefore, tweak the terminology in the diagram we have seen before:



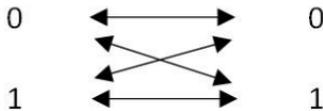
Not thinking means going outside of thinking. Like the hippies said, "Far out!"

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<sup>1</sup> Test this by copy-pasting a full page of random text into Google Search: it will inform you that they limit any search to 32 words. This is for a reason. DuckDuckGo, on the other hand, goes into error mode, returns no search results and exclaims, "Oops." Indeed.

There exists no roadmap to the outside of thought. The definition of “outside” is “off the map.” Any thought that sounds familiar or comprehensible is an inside thought. In retrospect, this makes *Finnegans Wake*, unreadable as it is, indeed the logical next step after *Ulysses*.

So what is an outside thought? An approximating analogy can be drawn with the quantum states of bits of data. A bit can be either 0 or 1. In quantum reality, if such a thing exists, one bit can be in both positions at the same time (it is then called a qubit). This means the possible quantity of data stored in two bits becomes  $2^2$  instead of 2, in three bits  $2^3$ , four bits  $2^4$ , etc.



2 bits = 4 combinations

This approximates thought, in the sense that thought in normal life is just one thought, whereas thought paired with non thinking becomes an enormity of thought. The enormity does not necessarily actualize in language. Just like a bit in a quantum state has both values 0 & 1, so a thought in a similar state is both false and true, both coherent and fragmented, both finished and unfinished, both one and many.

Not thinking sounds and feels like blocking the flow of thought. Like a rock in a stream. Outside thinking does not block thought, it lets it be but does not engage in thinking itself. Unfortunately this is not the same as mindfulness techniques. That would be too easy. Outside thinking, formerly called non thinking, is a quantum superposition of thought. It is like having two thoughts at once, without identifying with either or both of them.

That such a state may be difficult to achieve, goes without saying. That it may be impossible to achieve, is what makes it a glitch.

We are supposed to think that thinking is inside of us. Indirectly, this explains the let's-make-fun-of-Descartes movement in philosophy. Philosophers thought that Descartes ascribed a wildly inflated importance to a process that was just one of many going on inside a person. They heard, "I think, therefore I am important." That is not what was meant. By instilling in us a rock-bottom conviction, no one knows exactly how, that thought happens inside our heads or minds, it could rule us without question, and without protest. After all, if we learned that the government is able to implant thoughts in us, and might already be doing it, the revolt would be severe and instantaneous. Revolting against oneself, though, is impossible.

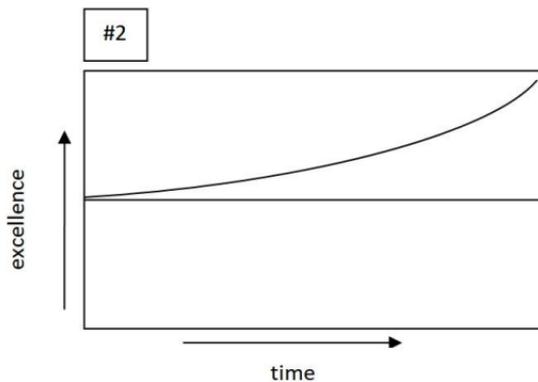
Normal thinking is inside, not because it is, but because we think it is. Therefore, a step we can take is to put thinking

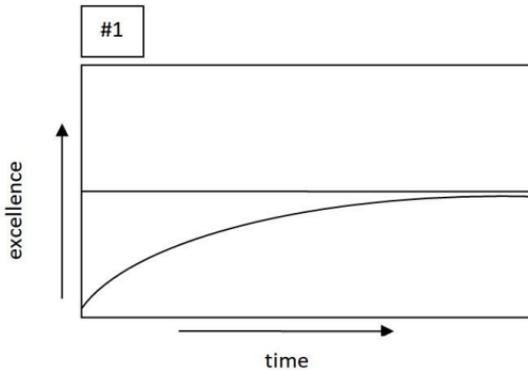
outside of us, even as a mere experiment. This involves intending to think without using the brain. It involves feeling less personally attached to the thoughts that invariably still make it through. Finally, it involves allowing thoughts that are unusual, paradoxical, and a little strange.

Interestingly, there exists an often-used expression that sounds supportive of this idea: “Thinking outside the box.”

The exploration of outside thought can lead to imagining impossible dynamics, and then playfully assuming they are possible. Like in a video game. For example, locate thinking in the space around, i.e. outside, the head.

The key characteristic of diagram #2 is that movement or progress is almost zero at first.





The curve rises too slowly to see. Which is why most of us prefer #1. It gives an immediate sense of progress. Thought pattern #1 is eventually limited, which describes our current situation. Switching to #2, which can be done by thinking, is initially frustrating and unrewarding. More than that, it feels wrong, a mistake, and even morally irresponsible. It does, but these thoughts are not ours. They come; they are not ours.

When we communicate with other people we use thought. At first glance, that statement passes muster. Let's look closer. When we communicate we are seen to use language, spoken words, images, facial expression, but never thought. Thought is invisible.

We think we use thought, but we don't. It uses us.

We are strangely weak when it comes to thought. Fraud and scams continue to find victims, even though the patterns of con games are simple and easily identifiable.

People still click on links in spam emails, after all the warnings not to do so.

When we walk into an advertizing trap or a Ponzi scheme, we are not in charge of our actions. Thought is. We acknowledge this by admitting that “it seemed a good idea at the time,” or “I don’t know what came over me.” Fraud is an excellent example for analysis, because all agree on it being undesirable from the standpoint of the victim. Yet we can’t blame anyone but ourselves. In other words, our thought is to blame.

If a person gets fooled by a Ponzi scheme, and they knew about such schemes from previous experience, they are not in charge of their own thinking process. This is inarguable.

But scams are not exceptions. We also get fooled by advertizing, by quick bank loans, by credit card companies, by insurance salesmen, by websites, by newspapers, by academic conclusions from statistical research, by the History Channel, etc., without end.

Being fooled is defined as: doing something that is detrimental to us or believing something that is demonstrably untrue. More fool us. Thought has the ability, and is specialized in this art, of fooling us.

The quick result diagram of #1 is the playing field of fools, and of being fooled. It is much harder to fool or get fooled

on curve #2. This is one reason out of many to adopt this curve. Sublimation of thought is only possible along #2.

What and who we are is defined by thought. This includes what other people think. A person accused of a crime automatically becomes a criminal, regardless of whether he is or not. It's the thought that counts, as they say. There may be a legal defense against accusation, but there is no defense against thought. A legal case can be dropped, but a thought cannot.

Thoughts rule the world.

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## Part IV: Wrap-Up

The term “sublimated thought” is a placeholder only. It may require updating when we get there. In this branch of philosophy, called Experiential Philosophy, we use concepts as temporary stepping stones. Doctrine and dogma are for crustaceans, i.e. those Michael Booth calls “the people with the elbow patches and the dandruff.”

To sublimate thought at minimum means cooking, distilling, fermenting and stretching it. During this process, certain ingredients present at the beginning, will evaporate.

A question to wrap up with is whether language is one of those ingredients. Has sublimated thought done away with language? Currently we use language as a honing tool, an anchor, a form giver. We pour hot thought into the cool mold of language. Yet, at the edge of thought we definitely get a sense that thought exists pre-language. In the same way electricity exists before it becomes light in a lamp.

Language can gain in precision, expressive power, and aspects of persuasion. Yet each of these can just as easily turn negative. Precision becomes misleading legalese, expressive power becomes inarticulate screaming in ALL CAPS, and persuasive power becomes a sly advertizing slogan that gets inside our heads. Sublimated language, therefore, is not better language. Also, thought  $\neq$  language, and so equating sublimated thought with sublimated language is an error.

At this point it is not known if language is an ingredient of thought that eventually has to go. What is known is that it's the tool of choice for thought. Or rather, the tool of no choice for thought, since we are stuck with it.

An old wise monk in the Buddhist tradition was asked by a student, "What is the meaning of life?" He smiled and said, "I still have much to learn." That is depressing and an admission of failure. Because at some point the old guy will keel over and then his learning days are done.

We know full well that learning is useful, but also that there is no end to it. Therefore, learning  $\neq$  sublimated thought.

Sublimated thought is the point of convergence of thinking and outside thinking, or non-thinking (see Part III: Sublimation). It is not an open road to nowhere, as is learning.

Sublimating thought is not possible if the thoughts we have to work with are not ours (see Part I: Problem). Sublimating thought becomes a koan-like riddle if we suspend thought and go outside of thinking. Although not a solution, it yet is (see Part II: Non-Solution).

Sublimated thought, therefore, is the point the effort of deliberate, edge-aware thinking is targeting. At that point the term sublimated thought may turn out to be inappropriate.

But we don't know, because we are not there.

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## The website for this book

[youthinkyouthink.wordpress.com](http://youthinkyouthink.wordpress.com)

### **Other books by Stephen Muire**

*Ordained – A Novel* (in three parts), 2015.

*The Wiled Years*, a work of objective picture journalism, 2015.