The Principles
of
Mental Physics

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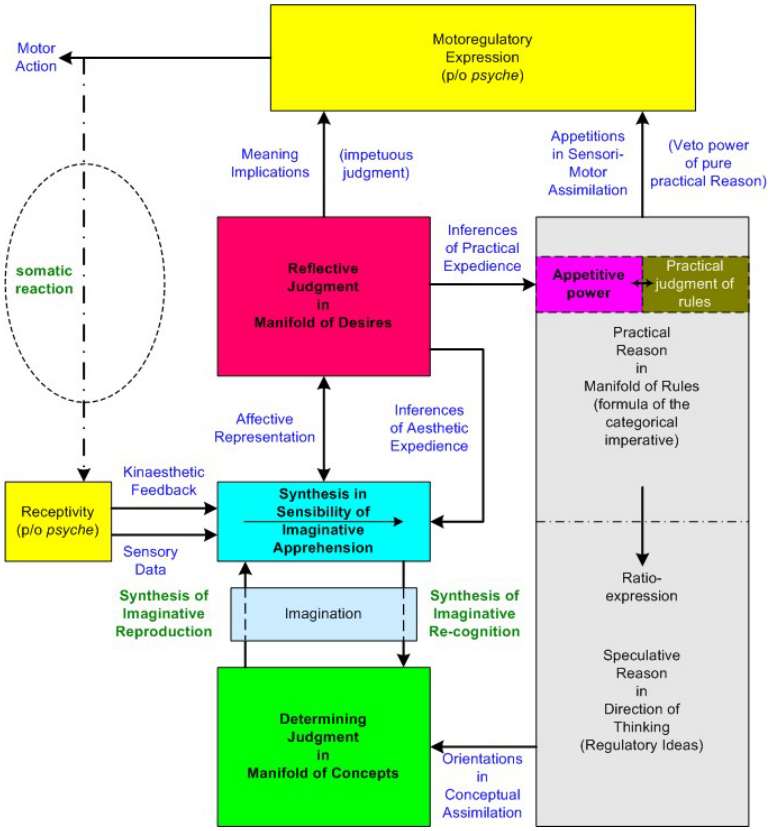

Preface

What is mind? We are each certain we have one of our own and most of us would claim to know what we mean when we speak of it. Yet when we try to go beyond the first assertion that our minds exist we find ourselves presented with, to use one of Winston Churchill's phrases, a riddle wrapped in an enigma inside a mystery. The riddle of mind has been a challenge and a debate for scholars for some twenty-four centuries. The question of mind has long challenged the concerted wisdom of theologians, philosophers, and scientists alike. Mind has been called by some "the battered offspring of the union of philosophy and psychology" and, like an abused child, the topic of mind is one psychology and neuroscience have alternately embraced, then denied, beaten, and locked away, and then embraced again. Many have equated this most quintessential character of what it is to be a human being with spirit or soul; others have dismissed it as a nothing-more-than-a-reflection or image of brain activity. No one really denies the existence of at least his or her own mind, but arguments over the nature of its substantial existence have been endless. Almost every psychology textbook mentions it briefly in the opening pages and then refuses to speak of it again.

Within the great diversity of opposing views of mind there are some common threads, some commonly agreed-to phenomena in human experience that we all call *mental* in nature. The first of these is the phenomenon of *thinking*. While the nature of thinking and the question of in-what-does thinking subsist? have been subjects of endless disputes, no one doubts that thinking is an attribute of the phenomenon of mind. Descartes, who made it his philosophical policy to deny the existence of everything of which he could not be certain, could not deny his own existence because he found he had to be certain of the existence of his own thoughts – and if his own thoughts existed, then *ipso facto* Descartes himself had to exist. Hume was able to deny he could be certain thoughts, including his own, really existed, but the Great Skeptic also had to deny he could be certain they did not. In one sense, Hume's philosophical position was the most scientific of his age because his position amounted to saying he simply did not *know* what (or if) mind is. And yet even his ultimate skepticism did not prevent him from speaking and writing of mind as-if-it-did exist. Thinking is part of the phenomenon of being human and if there were no evidence of thinking in the world, "mind" would be a word with little or no possible meaning at all.

A second factor common to all conceptions and theories of mind/mind-phenomena is *knowledge*. Like thinking, each of us feels we know what it means to say we know something. And, like thinking, the idea of knowledge and the nature of knowing prove to be slippery to the grasp as soon as we try to dig deeper and explain what we mean by it. Ask a philosopher, a psychologist, and a physicist what knowledge is, and you will likely get three different answers and each will likely be different from your own (if you think you have one). Even so, everyone admits there really is something we call by the name "knowledge" and there really is a state-of-being we call "knowing." To make any argument to the contrary is an intrinsic absurdity because to do so amounts to saying one *knows* there is no *knowing*. It would be alike to the person who once said to Bertrand Russell, "I am a solipsist and I don't know why more people aren't."

A third agreed-to factor of the phenomenon of mind is that thinking is capable of being reflexive. This is to say we are able to think about thinking. We use terms such as "self-consciousness" and "self-knowledge" to describe this reflexive power of mind. It is certainly obvious to all but the most learned fool that if mind did not exist or did not somehow possess this ability to reflect upon itself then *theories* of mind could never arise in the first place. Any argument to the contrary is, again, an intrinsic absurdity.

Finally, the fourth factor common to all conceptions of mind is the idea of *purpose* (or, if one prefers a different word, *intention*). Purpose has the connotation of planning and carrying out a course of action with foreknowledge of the goal or objective of this action, or of working in any

way toward a desired and foreseen end or effect. Where one finds in oneself the notion of a purpose, there also one finds the companion notion of mind. So inseparably linked are these notions that we say, "Where mind does not exist, neither does purpose exist." The corollary to this is obvious: Where we attribute the presence of a purpose, there also we attribute the presence of mind.

Beyond these four attributes of the phenomenon of mind, there has been no general consensus on what, if any, other ideas or concepts are properly to be regarded as attributes or factors in the phenomenon of mind. Even with these four factors, consensus rapidly breaks down as soon as scholars try to probe more deeply and inquire into the nature of thinking, knowledge, reflection and purpose. Some try to understand these on a purely materialistic plane; others on a purely spiritual plane; still others on a purely logical plane; and others still, finding these topics extraordinarily difficult and refractory, give up the effort altogether and put these matters, so to speak, out of mind completely. To use the words of a celebrated American jurist, they take the non-position that "I do not think about things I do not think about."

Because you are reading this book, I make the assumption you do not number yourself among this last group of people, that you wish to understand the meaning of human mind, and that what you are seeking is an explanation that is scientific, comprehensible, and as complete as is currently possible to offer. I will be so bold as to say I think this book can provide you with this if you possess the patience and endurance to see it through to the end. This book is a scientific treatise of the phenomenon of mind, as that phenomenon appears in human experience, and provides an introduction to the fundamental principles governing the phenomenon of mind. This book has pertinence for psychology and for neuroscience (the study of the central nervous system), but it is neither psychology *per se* nor neuroscience *per se*. I regard what I present to you here as the founding principles for a new science, and to give a name to the topic I call this science by the name *mental physics*.

The point of eruption for the historical debates and controversies over mind comes down to just one of the two fundamental connotations of the English word "existence." The distinction between these two connotations is important and fundamental, so let us briefly outline it. The first connotation of "existence" is existence in the connotation of "there is something" or "something is." This connotation is raw, naked, and primitive. It does nothing more than declare a specific reality, to point to an object for discourse. It provides a subject-matter of which predications may be made but does not predicate anything more specific than this. Beyond this declaration it says nothing else at all. The English language lacks a word for unambiguously conveying this and only this connotation of existence, and so we will borrow a word from German and denote this connotation of existence as ***Dasein***. It is the real and actual *Dasein* of mind that no one doubts.

All the controversies involve the second connotation of existence, which we denote by the German word ***Existenz***. Existence in this connotation refers to "the manner of existence" or *how* the something-declared-when-one-declares-a-*Dasein* exists. As *Dasein* denotes only the subject of a predication, *Existenz* denotes only what is predicated *of* it. One can say *Existenz* speaks to the nature of that-which-exists-in-nature while *Dasein* declares presence-in-nature. (As for the word "nature," we will find ourselves talking about what this word means at some length in the pages that follow). All theories or speculations regarding mind are theories or speculations having to do with the nature of its *Existenz*. It is with the *Existenz* of the phenomenon of mind, the "how" of mind rather than the "what" of mind, that this book is concerned. We take as *granted* something-called-mind *is* (has *Dasein*) because anyone who denies this starting point denies his own *Dasein*. If you think you-are-not, there really isn't anything I can say to you or would wish to say to you, and you-who-is-not can set this book down now and get on with your not-being-anything.

If you're still with me, it isn't unlikely you may be thinking, "Why, this fellow is talking about

philosophy! I thought he was going to talk about science." If you are thinking this and experiencing disappointment or some other unpleasant reaction, I can hardly blame you. Twenty-five years ago if I had picked up a book and read what you have read so far, I would have reacted this way. In the days of my youth I saw philosophy as nothing but an idle pastime and viewed philosophers as people who somehow had managed to find professional employment in a field devoted to asking endless questions and answering none while striking the most learned poses possible. As a freshman sitting in a philosophy class, when the first words from the professor's mouth were, "How do you know you really exist?" I silently denounced him as a thick-headed fool, left his classroom, never to return, and got on with useful employments of my time and efforts. As a young scientist and engineer, philosophy had no relevance for my professional occupation and was merely something to dabble with for pleasure in my leisure time, much as one might try to work a jigsaw puzzle.

And yet a consuming drive to understand the nature of mind has occupied me for more than forty years now. It was the fortunate accident of my life to grow up during a period in history when great and revolutionary changes in science and technology came to pass. I witnessed the birth of humankind's exploration of space, the invention of the laser, the revolution that took us from the vacuum tube to the transistor to the microchip, the passage from youth to maturity of the computer, the beginning of the genetic revolution in biology, and the birth of what is now come to be called the information age. For me at least, there could hardly have been a better time to live nor a more awe-inspiring time to be young. The world was a place of boundless possibilities being opened up through science and engineering and I had a passionate resolve to be part of it all and to live my life in the thick of the action. The understanding of mind was, for me, the chief and most wondrous possibility of all.

The passage of years and the experiences I encountered over the decades of pursuit of this understanding is what finally forced me – with reluctance and skepticism – to grant philosophy, and in particular metaphysics, the opportunity to speak seriously to me and be listened to. In my youth I was a scientific materialist and a pragmatist, but it was the failure of this attitude to unlock the riddle wrapped in the enigma inside the mystery of mind that forced me to give a hearing to metaphysics. The first decades of my personal quest to understand mind revealed to me that the most difficult questions really were metaphysical questions, but equally brought an understanding that if metaphysics was to have any role in my quest it would have to become again what centuries ago it had proclaimed itself to be: a *science*. Was this even possible? I was skeptical but I thought it might be. If it had proved to not be so, I would have dropped it again as a distraction and this book would never have been written. Today I still think of myself as a scientist first, an engineer second, but now also a philosopher third. A scientific metaphysics did turn out to be achievable, and it did turn out to be foundational for the theory of the phenomenon of mind you will find in the pages of this book.

And it did turn out that the seeds for this science had already been planted two centuries before I began to give it serious attention. These seeds were planted by the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant. What you will read here I regard as Kantian metaphysics, brought forward from where Kant left it, tested in the full light of two centuries of scientific progress, and now reputable not just for the humanities but also for the *sciences*. Kant is justly notorious in reputation for being a man whose writings are often opaque, open to easy misunderstanding and even easier confusion, and so they are. I doubt if I would have made any progress whatsoever were it not for a brilliant contemporary insight provided by Dr. Stephen Palmquist, presently with the Hong Kong Baptist University, who published in 1993 a book called *Kant's System of Perspectives*. For me, Stephen's analysis was like a lamp in a dark cave and his insight into Kantian theory was the key that unlocked the door to everything you will read in this book.

You will encounter in this book many quotes taken from the corpus of Kant's works published

in German and Latin. These quotes deliver important definitions and principles providing key elements of Kant's theory. This means you must read them. Carefully. The translations you will read are my own. Kant's system is very technical and to express it he had to invent a great many precise technical terms making hair-splitting distinctions of subtle yet crucial importance. Unfortunately, a great many of these important distinctions are lost in the existing English translations of Kant's work, and other important points of clarification Kant makes are only found in parts of the Kantian corpus that have not yet been translated into English or else had not been translated at the time I was doing the research that led to this book. Some of the existing translations are accurate enough to provide the valuable service of putting one in the approximate neighborhood of what Kant was saying – the best of these, in my opinion, are provided in the series published as *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* – but I found none of them adequate for rendering the *precision* of Kant's theory needed to achieve the synthesis of the system presented in this book. It is precisely this loss of precision in the English translations that sometimes makes Kant appear to contradict himself. I have found that apparent contradictions in an English translation of Kant are always a signpost that the translation has blurred or even altered a key technical distinction. For example, the so-called "standard" translation of *Critique of Pure Reason* by Kemp Smith is so loaded up with errors of this sort as to be totally unreliable.

This aspect of translation is not unusual in science. Physics, for example, has its own very specific connotation for the word "work" and this connotation is very different from the layman's use of that word. Similarly, psychology retains the word *Gestalt* for want of an adequate English technical equivalent. Disagreements still exist today as to the correct way to translate some of Freud's technical terminology. On top of this peculiarity of scientific translations, Kant cannot be translated mechanically yet this is precisely what most translators attempt to do. German words have, as words in all languages do, multiple context-dependent connotations and not all of these map over into one and same English word. Some of these specific *technical* connotations have no exact English equivalent, and for these I have been forced in some cases to introduce a new English counterpart (e.g., "judgmentation" for *Beurtheilung*) or to simply retain the German word (e.g. *Lust*, pronounced "loost"). It is not *words* we must translate. Rather it is the idea, the argument, the *meaning* that must be translated from the one language into the other. For these the connotations of the original words are context-dependent and must be mapped over into English equivalents in such as way as to preserve the meaning to be conveyed. Thus, sometimes *Erkenntnis* translates as "cognition" and sometimes as "knowledge." I translate *Wissen* as "Knowledge" (capitalized). *Begriff* sometimes translates as "notion," sometimes as "concept," and sometimes as "idea" while *Idee* is always rendered in my translations as "Idea" (capitalized).

In still other cases, we find distinct German words all funneling into one English word, which eradicates the distinctions Kant was making. For example, *Begierde*, *Begehr*, *Begehren*, and *Begehrung* are all invariable rendered into English by most translators as "desire." This destroys some crucial technical distinctions Kant was making. I render them as appetite, demand, desire, and desiration, respectively. In other cases, the requirement to keep meanings distinct is met by employing capitalized and uncapitalized words. Thus, for example, *Gegenstand* is "object" while *Object* is "Object." Of all the many hours I spent on translations, the greatest fraction of these went into teasing out the proper technical rendering of Kant's very complex terminology. Because this terminology is so rich and complex, this book contains a Glossary of Technical Terms at the end to help the reader keep all this sorted out.

This book is written as a textbook and for the purpose of teaching the theory of mind it contains. It was preceded by another and much larger work I published in 2006 under the title *The Critical Philosophy and the Phenomenon of Mind* (hereafter abbreviated to *CPPM*). *CPPM* was written from the viewpoint of an explorer in a strange and unfamiliar territory. In engineering we have a phrase for the task of analyzing very complex systems; the phrase is "peeling the onion."

That is an apt description of *CPPM*; it progresses, so to speak, from the outside (observable phenomena) to the inside (core principles and acroams). The deductions and detailed explanations of how the principles are arrived at are contained in that work. Because Kant's metaphysics differs so radically from anything that came before it or has come since, the older work also had to devote a considerable amount of space in razing to the ground a great many metaphysical presuppositions that have become commonplace but are fundamentally incorrect and lead eventually to error. It also had to devote considerable space to reviewing the history of how we came to these presuppositions in the first place, and where theorizing went awry, so that the reader is then prepared to appreciate the very different consequences that come out of Kant's system of metaphysics. The result was a work of twenty-four chapters and some twenty-four hundred pages. It is a challenging and difficult tome wholly unsuited for teaching this subject. This new book is written in the style of a textbook and from the viewpoint of a trail guide, proceeding as it were from the inside out by setting down the principles themselves and keeping the focus on their implications for the phenomenon of mind. The order of the chapters is important. If you wish to understand this material, you must start with Chapter 1 and go chapter by chapter to Chapter 12. Only Chapter 13 can be read out-of-sequence without compromising one's comprehension of the material.

The topic of this book is the phenomenon of mind. It presents what is probably best provisionally called, at this point in the book, the *functional model* of mind and does so in the holistic context of the complete individual human being. This context is conveyed by what is called the Organized Being model. The famous mind-body division has objective validity *only* as a logical division, *never* as either a real division into independent Cartesian substances *or* as a pseudo-division into one phenomenon (body) and one epiphenomenon (mind). Roughly, the theory can be said to explain "what mind does" within the overall and *indivisible* whole that is the individual person. This is why I do not speak of *the* mind but only of mind. In the final analysis, this book is about the Nature of being human. As the theory presented here will show, to be a human being is to be, all in one, a transcendental idealist, an empirical realist, and a practical pragmatist. How each of us balances this synthesis in ourselves produces, and is called, one's individuality.

There is no reason to keep you, the reader, in suspense for the next twelve chapters. **Mind is** one of the two principal phenomena characteristic of human beings (the other being body). Mind is the supersensible Nature of a human being regarded as an Organized Being, while **body is** the sensible Nature of a human being regarded as an Organized Being. The fundamental function mind performs is to *make representations*. Representation is a primitive in this theory and for its explanation, as well as for the other explanations required to comprehend the definitions just given, you will just have to read the book because mind is not a trivial thing to understand.

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