

KNOWLEDGE AND THE HUMAN MIND: PHENOMENOLOGY AND OTHERS

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Abstract: the brain produces the mind through cultivation. Thus, the structure of the mind is not a priori, but culturally developed. The logic, semantics, and conceptual framework of a mind are all cultivated. While feeling is a natural function of the mind, all feelings of a mind are concept-laden or concept-mediated. A person is educated to think better, to feel in a certain way, and to have a better taste; the mind educated and civilized is better than the mind uneducated and barbarian. The key here is that a knowing mind is a constructor and a constructing space, not merely a knower akin to a mirror or a camera in the process of knowing.

It should strike us as self-evident that the more we know, the more we can know. What does this tell us? It tells us about a unique relationship between knowledge and mind. The fact that the more we know, the more we can know is a fact that the more the mind knows, the more the mind can know. The fact that the more the mind knows, the more the mind can know is a fact that the more the mind knows, the more the mind is expanding its horizon in which things can be known and make sense to the mind, and expanding its space that can house more knowledge; that the more the mind knows, the more the mind enriches, refines and develops its semantics to increase its capacity to interpret and construct meaning.

Philosophers today continues to debate on realism, contextualism and pragmatism on the subject-matter of knowledge. This essay proposes a new view of knowledge that can be categorized as “epistemic constructivism.” It is crucial for us here to bear in mind this simple, but often forgot fact: knowledge is produced by minds and in minds. Correspondingly, we must not lose perspective of the truth that just as a kind of machine produces a kind of product, different kinds of mind produce different kinds of knowledge. Here the concept of different kinds of mind does not refer to, at least does not mainly refer to, minds of

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different discipline of enquiry. Instead, it refers to minds that have different conceptual frameworks and emotional frameworks. The differences among conceptual frameworks and emotional frameworks lie not only in kinds, but also in degree and level, for example, in the level of horizon.

This essay does not purport to give a definite settlement of the subject-matter of how can the mind know. Instead, it is devoted to demonstrating that while knowledge implies a correspondence between the mind and its cognitive object, the possibility of knowledge is a two-way street: (1) a way through which mind can correspond to its cognitive object; and (2) a way through which an object can confirm to the mind and can be given in the knowing experience of the mind.

The essay is to demonstrate that while Kant is profoundly right that experience of knowledge is made possible by the structure of the mind, we should see that the structure of the mind is not something given, fixed and static, but an evolving being that can be refined and expanded, or falls into outdated and becomes prison of understanding. It is to demonstrate that Husserl and Habermas rightly see that intentionality and interests serve as the bridges for a consciousness to reach its cognitive objects, they could have seen that expansion of knowledge requires the knower's intentionality and interests to be situated in a better horizon, which in turn requires a knower to expand his/her horizon of mind; as a cognitive method, phenomenological reduction suffers the same problems of Buddhist emptying of the mind. It is to demonstrate that while Gadamer is profoundly right that development of understanding involves fusion of horizons of understanding, we should see further that knowledge and mind are co-expanding; knowledge expand minds, and expanded minds make expansion of knowledge further possible. Without further introduction, I shall start my case here.

I. Husserl and constitution of the knowing consciousness in experience of knowing

Husserl has put forth two important questions of knowledge: (1) how can consciousness go beyond itself to know an object that exists outside of it? (2) How can consciousness be sure that its knowledge corresponds to the reality of its cognitive object out there? In his words, "Knowledge belongs to a knowing subject. The known objects stand over against it. How, then, can knowledge be sure of its agreement with the known objects? How can knowledge go beyond

itself and reach its objects reliably?” (Husserl 1999, 17). Here, Husserl’s questions can be translated in the questions of how does the mind go beyond itself and how does the mind is sure that its knowledge corresponds to a knowing object, amid there can be a distinction between the mind and consciousness—that is, consciousness is the function and content of the mind. For Husserl, knowledge means that the mind knows a knowing object. But the object is not within the mind. Then how does the mind go beyond itself to a knowing object. Correspondingly, to know a knowing object is to reflect truly a knowing object in mind. Can the mind tell that its knowledge and reflection is true?

Fair to say, in these two questions, Husserl does not necessarily operate with Kant’s concept that knowledge starts from experience, but does not stops in experience. Evidentially, for Husserl, the mind or consciousness is still akin to a mirror or a camera in the knowing process, while Kant’s claim is intended to point out that the mind is not just a mirror or camera in the knowing process; knowledge presupposes the contribution of the mind. For example, for Kant, causality does not exist objectively between two events. It is the mind that conceptualizes a certain relation between two events in terms of causality or as causality. That being said, when Husserl talks about that a knowing object is given in the experience of consciousness, we are not unreasonably to infer that he operates with a concept of the mind as a space. The mind is a space and therefore a knowing object can be given the experience of the mind. That is to say, a knowing object is given only in a space or time.

Notwithstanding, Husserl then sets out to reject what he dubbed as “the natural attitude of the mind”. By “the natural attitude of the mind”, Husserl evidentially meant the attitude of the mind to take for granted things and naturalize its cognitive objects. Husserl indicated that such an attitude of mind is detriment to knowledge and therefore we should suspend it or bracket it at the outset. As he put it, “in such an attitude, our attention is turned...to things as given to us, and given as a matter of course.” (Ibid, 15). In other words, the problems of the natural attitude of the mind are two. First, it leads us to focus on the reality of X in itself, not on how X appears in our consciousness. The problem here is that we take for granted that our consciousness can go beyond, and is going beyond, itself in approaching its cognitive object as it appeared to do so. Second, it is an unreflective attitude. It leads us to be uncritical of our beliefs and experience, no question of that. In particular, we take for granted that when things appear so and so in our consciousness, they exist as so and so. That is to say, we

take for granted the correspondence between them. The criticism is a rich mine of gold for inquirer of the connection between knowledge and mind and therefore of profound importance. It indicates some crucial here.

First, there is a question of whether a knowing object can be given in the experience of consciousness. That is to say, we cannot take for granted that an object can be given as a knowing object in the experience of the mind. This may be because an object itself is not givable or because the mind cannot be given an object. It would not be difficult for us to see that no object is not knowable to an omnipotent and all-knowing mind such as the mind of God; some objects are not knowable to some minds and some objects are not givable in some experiences of some minds. All the same, the situation described here can lead us to ask another pregnant question: Under what condition of the mind an object can be given as a knowing in the experience and under what condition of the mind it cannot? For example, under what condition a self, country, or the universe at large can be given as a knowing object in the experience of my mind.

Second, there is a question of how can the mind know. If a question of how can the mind know a knowing exist, so should be questions of how does the mind know and whether some minds can know better and some minds can know only poorly. To ask the question of how the mind can know is to ask the question of the possibility that the mind can know on the one hand and the question of how does the mind know on the other hand. For example, the question of how can I know myself is a question of whether I can know myself and how to know myself simultaneously.

Together, these two sets of questions lead us to the question of whether different minds may have different knowledge—that is, at least, minds of different levels and horizons will have different kinds of knowing. On the one hand, different minds may see a same objects differently. On the other hand, a same object can be given as different phenomena in the experiences of different minds. This amounts to saying the truism that different minds know differently. If different minds know differently, then different knowing experiences of different minds are not of the same quality, value, and worthiness. All the same, what matters here is that the difference of minds matters to having knowledge and understanding. Not surprisingly, this is the reason why Daoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism emphasize the value of an enlightened mind.

Now, having claimed that consciousness consists of *noemata*, *noesis*, and transcendental ego, Husserl then raises the question of how *noemata* is

constituted and experienced in *noesis*, the intentional acts of the consciousness, while the source of *noesis*—the transcendental ego—cannot be experienced. The word “constituted” here is the key. *Noemata* does not just appear in consciousness, but is constituted to appear as phenomena in consciousness. That is to say, the transcendental *ego* is not just a mirror or camera in the process of experience and knowing, but *a constructor*—a constructor that constructs given *noemata* to appear as phenomena or a knowing object. In other words, *noesis* indicates that the transcendental ego is active in the process of knowing. So far, so good. That being said, one can easily see that whether an object can be constituted by consciousness to appear as *noemata* or phenomena in the consciousness cannot be taken for granted. It is not difficult for us to recall an experience wherein an object is beyond our horizon or outside the loop of our mind (consciousness) and thus cannot be constituted as *noemata* or phenomena in our consciousness (mind). That is to say, an object can be given through *noesis* as *noemata* in consciousness if and only if the transcendental ego’s conceptual and perceptual frameworks are compatible to the object on the one hand, and structurally competent in constituting the object as a given phenomenon in experience on the other hand.

Husserl’s two questions return us back to Kant’s question of how is experience of knowledge possible. Asking the question, Kant intends to point out that knowledge implies the contribution of the mind. As Kant sees it, “though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience.” (Kant 1965, 41) That is to say, experience is not the sole source of knowledge. On the one hand, knowledge comes also from the contribution of the mind. On the other hand, the mode of experience is determined by the structure of the mind that experiences. Thus Kant points out, “even our empirical knowledge is made up of what we receive through impressions and of what our own faculty of knowledge (sensible impressions serving merely as the occasion) supplies from itself (Ibid, 42). Husserl’s insight into *noesis* as constituting act of consciousness is an affirmation of Kant’s insight in a two-fold sense. On the one hand, it affirms that knowledge involves the contribution of mind; the mind constitutes a given object as an object of knowing. On the other hand, it affirms that the structure of an object as a knowing object involves construction of the mind and corresponds to the structure of the mind.

Returning to Kant, for him, cognitive experience is made possible by the formal conceptual framework of the mind or the formal structure of the mind consisting of formal categories. Moreover, Kant profoundly points out that our

knowledge springs from two fundamental sources of the mind: the first is the capacity of receiving representations (receptivity for impressions), the second is the power of knowing an object through these representations (spontaneity [in the production] of concepts).” (Ibid, 92) That is to say, the mind makes two crucial contribution to knowledge:

1. The capacity to constitute what is given to the mind as representation (or phenomenon in Husserlian term) makes an object be a knowing object;
2. The capacity to know through understanding the representation in the mind; the capacity to know consisting of a set of formal categories bring structure to an object and therefore makes it a knowing object.

The mind is a builder of knowledge, not merely a space that houses knowledge. The mind has a space, but its space is a creating capacity, not a passive place wherein things are placed. In light of the above, we can see that Husserl and Kant share common points but also differ in aspects. They both recognize that what is given to the mind—in Kant is representation and in Husserl is *noemata*—is not an external object itself simply moving from outside of the mind into the mind or from outside experience into experience of the mind. Instead, it is a constituted representation of an external object to the mind and in the experience of the mind. Second, they both indicate that the constitutive act of the mind is crucial to producing knowledge. For the purpose of present inquiry, what matters most is that here both Husserl and Kant recognize that in the process of knowing and experiencing, the mind is not akin to a copy-machine, mirror or camera; instead, the mind is a constructor. The mind both builds an object as a knowing object out of a given and contributes structurally to knowledge of an object. For both of them, the act of reflection is not merely an act of mirroring, but also an act of constituting.

Husserl may not follow to Kant’s Copernican Revolution all the way to emphasize that experience of knowledge becomes possible when a cognitive object confirms to the structure of the mind, instead of the mind confirming to its cognitive object. Indeed, while recognizing that “knowledge belongs to a knowing subject,” Husserl’s focus is still on the question of how the mind can reflect its cognitive object. Thus, his question is still: “How, then, can knowledge be sure of its agreement with the known objects?” (Ibid, 17) Husserl rightly indicates that the possibility of experience of knowledge involves (a)

intentionality guides the consciousness to its cognitive object and (b) the cognitive object is given as immanent in the experience of the consciousness. He insists that knowledge is the mind's cognition of its cognitive object.

While Husserl rightly holds that "knowledge is a mental experience," Kant rightly points out that the possibility of such an experience supervenes crucially on the structure of the mind. Kant's error is that he conceives the formal structure of the mind, which is necessary to understanding, as a kind of given, formal, fixed, and invariant framework consisting of a set of formal categories, instead of an evolving structure that is subject to expansion or contraction. Correspondingly, Kant concludes that "space...serves as the *a priori* condition only of outer appearances." (Kant 1965, 77). But space, like time, is the mode through which the mind constitutes an external object and the consciousness itself.

Now, for the purpose of exploring the relationship between knowledge and mind, it may be helpful to bring in Habermas' view on knowledge and human interests. According to Habermas in *Knowledge and Human Interest*, our knowledge is interest-mediated. As he sees it, if we divide human knowledge into three general categories—technical-controlling, practical, and liberating knowledge, we find that knowledge in each of these three categories is interest-mediated and equally crucial, involves what Husserl dubs as *noesis*. To translate Habermas' view into Husserlian idiom, in knowing, intentionality that serves as the bridge between knowledge and its object can be divide among three categories: the technical-controlling, the practical, and the liberating, and so is *noesis* of consciousness.

Thus, Habermas' view here give new stock values to Husserl's view. Meanwhile, Habermas also operates with a same concept as Husserl does: knowledge means that the beliefs of the mind confirms to the objects of beliefs. In Habermas' account, the role which the mind plays in knowledge is not more important than it is in Husserl either. Drawing from in the Hegelian-Marxist tradition, Habermas emphasizes the mediation role of social practice in knowledge too, but not so much the Kantian insight that knowing implies the confirmation of an object to the structure of the mind.

Fair to say, Habermas talks about interest-constituted knowledge, not concept-constituted knowledge. Still, Habermas' view re-enforces Husserl's view on the relationship between knowledge and intentionality and brings stock value to the idea that the framework of the mind—that is, the totality of both the conceptual and emotional frameworks—does matter; knowledge is

mind-constituted. Since interests are activities of the mind, the greater framework of the mind is, the more refined interests are; the greater horizon of the mind is, the more refined, proper interests are; the more refined interests are, the better knowledge they can contribute to constitute. That is to say, from Habermas, we can learn that the greater the framework of the mind is, the greater knowledge the mind can have; the greater horizon of the mind is, the greater knowledge the mind can have. In short, while Habermas correctly see that knowledge is interest-constituted, he could have seen also that how a cognitive object is given as an interesting object to interests, which in turn depends on how the mind constructs its own interests. Interests have no its own subsistence, but can only be interests of the mind.

Let us here return to Husserl again. Husserl insists that knowledge presuppose that a cognitive object is given in experience of the mind in experience. He is right on the mark. The difference between experience of knowledge and merely experience of dream is that in experience of knowledge, there is a real cognitive object given in experience, while in experience of dream, such an object is no such a given. That being said, Husserl takes too much for granted that an object *can* be given in the experience of the mind. Or he takes too much for granted the possibility of an object's being given in the knowing experience of the mind. He could have recognized two things: 1. Whether or not, and how, an object is given in the experience of the mind depends on whether or not the mind has a capacity to receive the object; 2. And how an object is given in experience supervenes crucially on what kind of mind the mind is and thus what horizon and perspective the mind.

When he rightly sees that an object is not just given in experience, but constituted to be given in a certain way in experience, he could have asked the Kantian question: What is the necessary condition for a cognitive object to be given in the experience of the mind?

The Kantian misgiving is crucial here. Whether an object can be given in the experience of knowing of the mind depends, to a great extent, on the structure of the mind that knows. No every cognitive object can be given in the experience of all minds. That is to say, some may not be given as cognitive objects in the experience of some minds. Or an object may be incomprehensible to a person because it is beyond the horizon of his/her mind. Needless to say, cancer will not be given as cancer in the experience of a mind that has no medical knowledge and has no concept of cancer. Meanwhile, a same object is given as different things in

the experiences of different minds that have different conceptual and emotional frameworks. A same act can be given as one of justice in the experience of one person's mind, and as one of injustice in the experience of another. It may also be given as something else in the experience of a further another. A same object may be given as an object of specific meaning in the experience of one person's mind, but as a meaningless object in the experience of another person's mind. Even a number, say, number "6", may be given as a mere number in the experience of one person's mind, but as a number connoting happiness and good luck in the experience of another person's mind.

Husserl proposes epoché or phenomenological reduction as the method that starts from bracketing or suspending all natural beliefs. As I shall understand it, this method suffer some same problems of Buddhist doctrine of empty the mind. Two problems arise here. First, can we bracket all natural beliefs? Noteworthy, what natural beliefs express is the initial confirmation of an object to the structure of one's mind. Thus, unless we change the structure of our mind, the mind will continue to produce and operate with natural beliefs. Second, if all natural beliefs are bracketed, can an object still be given as a cognitive object in the experience of our mind? Noteworthy, conceptual framework and other tools such as logic may not be dispensable for any possible experiences of knowing. Kant has a point here when he claims that where there is experience, such an experience is made possible by categories. For example, if Wittgenstein is right in claiming that language is as it is used, then can an object be given as a cognitive object in our experience without language or can we depend on a language as the mediation of knowledge without natural beliefs in the meaning of this language as it is used?

What is said above can be summarized as follows. In a true experience of knowing, an external object is constituted or structured as a knowing object by the mind to be given in the experience of consciousness or the mind. Correspondingly, as Kant indicates, the mind that constitutes an external object to be a given cognitive object in the experience of consciousness does so by exporting its structure or framework to the external object. For this reason, what knowledge can be produced or be experienced as knowledge by the mind supervenes crucially on the kind of structure or framework of a mind.

In other words, Kant and Husserl, as well as various Buddhist masters, rightly insist that it is the mind which constitutes a phenomenon (from multifold appearances) as a cognitive object in experience of consciousness. While an external object is given as a knowing object (phenomenon) first in sense

experiences, or intuition, sense experience is in effect concept-mediated. Kant profoundly claims that “intuition without concept is blind” (Kant 1965, 93). Here, what Husserl dubs as internationality or what Habermas calls “interest” in experience of knowing is concept-laden or concept-mediated. All the same, the structure of the mind of knowing experience is key factor of knowing experience: it can determine what can be known, how an external object is known, and to what extent an object can be known. In turn, this makes Husserl’s epoché or phenomenological reduction suspicious and problematic.

Now we shall turn to another group of philosophers: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Gadamer.

II. Insights on Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Gadamer

What we learn from Gadamer, the student of Husserl’s student Heidegger, is that the structure of the mind is no *a priori*, but culturally evolving in a person. Gadamer indicates that the experience of knowing is a hermeneutic experience. And he points out, “The nature of the hermeneutical experience is not that something is outside and desires of admission. Rather, we are possessed by something and precisely by means of it we are opened up for the new, the different, and the true.” (Gadamer 1997, 200). Gadamer’s claim consists of three ideas as follows: 1. It is a mind that intends to know an external object and is guided to the international object, not that an external object itself presents itself as a cognitive to the mind; 2. A mind’s internationality is grounded in what possess the mind or the understanding of the mind; 3. And what can be given in the experience of knowing of a mind supervenes crucially on what possess the mind that is culturally developed.

Noteworthy also, Gadamer’s claim implies that the minimal level of our mind’s understanding is the necessary condition for it to be opened to, and therefore to be able to embrace, the new, the different, and the true. For example, a minimal level of a mind’s understanding is necessarily required in order for an external object to be given in the experience of the mind seeking to go beyond itself to know its intentional object.

Gadamer’s claim is supported by the fact that the more knowledgeable a mind is, the more the mind can know; conversely the more ignorant a mind is, the lesser it can know. That being said, Gadamer’s claim that “prejudices are biases of our openness to the world” needs to be treated with some care here (Gadamer

1997, 99). As Gadamer sees it, “prejudices ... constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience.” (Ibid). That is to say, prejudices, understood as prejudgments in Gadamer’s use of the term, constitute our initial intentionality or cognitive interests. In this sense, “they are simply conditions whereby we experience something—whereby what we encounter says something to us.”(Ibid). Needless to say, what Gadamer dubs as prejudices include what Husserl would call “natural attitudes”. Since prejudices are prejudgments of our mind, they reveal the structure of our mind and indicate the initial confirmation of a knowing object to the structure of a mind on the one hand, and they may be limited, even flawed on the other hand.

Thus, while we appreciate Gadamer’s insight into the truth that the experience of our understanding is initially made possible by what we possess in our mind. We must also be cautious about the fact that in hermeneutic experience or the experience of knowing by a mind, only that which can confirm to the structure of a mind can be admitted into the mind or be given as a cognitive object in the experience of the mind. Notwithstanding, the limit of the structure and horizon of the mind is also the limit of the possibility of the experience of knowing. Gadamer rightly indicates the development of understanding involves fusion of horizons. Meanwhile, he could have recognized the significance of the fusion of horizons lies the structure of one’s mind. The conceptual and emotional frameworks are expanded, and as a result, the range of objects which can be confirmed to the structure of one’s mind is expanded and finally the possibility of knowledge and understanding is increased.

Therefore, in light of what is said above, with regard to the relationship between knowledge and mind, Gadamer’s insights reveal follows. First, to knowledge, a mind is a space. Whether or not its door is opened determines whether or not it can know, or a knowing object can be a knowing object to the mind. Equally crucial, an object is always given as a knowing object within a given horizon of the mind. That is to say, an object is constituted as a knowing object by the mind within the horizon of the mind. Second, a mind plays a constituting role in the process of knowledge. Knowledge is constituted by human mind. The kind of horizon of a mind determines greatly the kind of knowledge that can be possible for the mind. For example, the kind of horizon of a mind determines the kind of possible knowing object that is constituted as a knowing object to the mind.

We should not speak of the constituting role of mind in the process of

knowledge without mentioning language. Indeed, we should draw from Wittgenstein's insight into language here. To a great extent, our mind is structured by the language which we speak. Wittgenstein has insightfully indicated that the limit of one's language is the limit of one's thinking. That is to say, thinking is mediated by language, or we think in language. Thus, the limit of the language is the limit of thinking. This can be understood from two perspectives. In one perspective, that is the perspective of existence, as Heidegger rightly indicates, while "thinking accomplishes the relation of Being to the essence of man", "language is the house of Being." (Heidegger 1997, 47). As Heidegger sees it, language houses Being, which is the object of thinking. Accordingly, the limit of language is the limit of the possibility of Being as an object of thinking. This should not be a surprise. In the mind's perspective, language structures the mind and is constitutive of the structure of the mind. The limit of language which a mind uses is the limit of the structure of the mind. The limit of the structure of a mind is the limit of the thinking capacity of the mind or the limit wherein an object can be given as a cognitive object in the experience of thinking of the mind.

Gadamer claims: "Language is the mode of our being-in-the-world and the all-embracing form of the constitution of the world." (Gadamer 1997, 195). To Gadamer's insight, it should be appended and completed with two ideas. First, the mind thinks through language; the world is constituted to be a knowing object to the mind through language; objects in the world are constituted as knowing objects to the mind through language. Language is a tool of the mind to constitute the world as its knowing object and objects in the world to be its knowing objects. Second, only what can be thought clearly can be known clearly; and only what confirms to the structure of the mind can be received by the mind and can be structured and given clearly in the experience of the mind. And a mind is structured by language. For example, a Chinese mind is structured by Chinese language. An American mind is structured by English.

All the same, the limit of language is the limit of thinking. And the limit of language is the limit of what possesses a mind and most importantly. That is to say, the limit of language which a mind uses is one aspect of the structural limit of the mind and thus of the limit of the horizon of the mind. The limit of language which the mind uses is a limit of how the mind is structured and what can be given in the knowing experience of the mind.

So far as the relationship between knowledge and mind is concerned,

Habermas' contribution is not limited to the concept that all knowledge are interest-laden. His criticism of the mind of modern enlightenment is also instructive. For Habermas, the mind of modern enlightenment is totalitarian and operates with a totalitarian concept of human reason in practice and understanding. As he says:

Only a reason to which we ascribe a 'power of the key' could either include or exclude. Hence, inside and outside are linked with domination and subjugation; and the overcoming of reason-as-power holders is *linked with breaking open the prison gates and vouchsafing release into an indeterminate freedom*. Thus, the other of reason remains the mirror image of reason in power ...Those who would like to leave all paradigms behind along with the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness, and go forth into the clearing of postmodernity, will just not be able to free themselves from the concept of subject-centered reason and its impressively illustrated topography (Habermas, 1987, 309).

Needless to say, Habermas' criticism of the Enlightenment reason or conception of rationality is a criticism of the mind of modern enlightenment.

What matters here is that from Habermas' criticisms, we can see that the totalitarianism of the mind of modern enlightenment is caused by the limit of the Enlightenment world outlook and by the structural limit of the mind of modern enlightenment. Because of its structural limit and thus limit of world outlook, in the name of reason, the mind of modern enlightenment excludes what does not confirm to it and admits what confirms to it. The structure of the enlightenment functions as the book shelf of the enlightenment to include those that fit into the bookshelf and exclude those that do not fit.

That being said, so far as knowing is concerned, Habermas should have seen that the solution is not to deny that knowledge involves correspondence between beliefs of a mind and its cognitive objects. He incorrectly privileges the consensus of knowing and practicing subjects over the correspondence between the mind and its cognitive objects in rationality of knowing and practicing. Therefore, he could have utilized Kant's insights to develop a concept that the value of communication is its being the bridge to expand the structure of a mind so that a mind can understand its cognitive object better; the value of reaching mutual understanding is not only to understand each other, but also to expand one's horizon of the mind to the extent that one's mind can understand the world,

oneself, and one's community better. This is true of individual persons' minds, as well as true of a collective mind of a community. This is true of cognitive objects in nature such as mountains and rivers, but also true of social objects such as other persons, societies, cultures, or the world at least. In summary, only if a mind has a conceptual framework or structural system that can construct a knowing object out of the manifolds given in experience, as Kant would insist, an external object cannot be given as a knowing object in the knowing experience of the mind. The limit of the structure of the mind is the limit of the mind, and the limit of the mind is the limit of the possible knowing experience of the mind. Therefore, what Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Habermas say return us back to Kant's insight in his Copernican Revolution: the possibility of knowledge lies also in the confirmation of an object to the structure of the mind.

Meanwhile, Kant claimed that the formal structure of the mind, which the mind exports to an external object to make it a knowable object to the mind and a cognitive object to the mind, is *a priori*. Needless to say, we should not simply return to Kant on this point for reasons as follows. First, at least only one part of the structure of the human mind is natural and comes from the brain, and another part of the structure of the mind is culturally cultivated. Second, even Kantian formal categories of the mind are culturally developed. For example, language is a human artifact and these categories are developed in language. Third, we should see that the structure of the mind is subject to change, development or decline. Therefore, an important ramification of Kant's Copernican revolution is that it leads us to appreciate the importance that humankind needs constantly to expand human mind, just as each person needs constantly to expand his/her mind, as well as each culture and community need to constantly expand its collective mind.

III. Knowledge and the expansion of one's mind

As many scholars point out, the brain produces the mind. That being said, the brain does not produce the mind by itself, but produces it with culture through cultivation or a mind is co-produced by a brain and specific culture (s). While what is the mind as a substance and its relationship to the brain deserves another paper in its own, suffice it here to say that the structure of the mind is not identical to the structure of the brain or *a priori* given, but culturally developed.

For example, the structure of logical reasoning, semantics, and conceptual framework of the mind are all culturally cultivated. Also, while feeling is a

natural function of the mind, all feelings of the mind are concept-laden or concept-mediated. No wonder, a person is educated to think better, to feel truly and deeply, and to have better taste; the mind educated and civilized is better than the mind uneducated and barbarian. Centuries ago, people did not think in terms of universal human rights, but the concept is an operating norm in the framework of human mind today.

Thus, while knowledge presupposes a correspondence between the mind and its cognitive object, the correspondence between the mind and its cognitive objects here, such a correspondence is a two-way street: the confirmation of an object to the mind or the structure of the mind on the one hand, and the confirmation of beliefs of the mind to their objects; the confirmation of an object to the structure of the mind is the necessary condition for the object to be given in the experience of knowing of the mind. Here, the key is for an object to be a cognitive object to a mind, it must fall within the horizon of the mind; and to fall within the horizon of the mind is to become *receptive* to the knowing experience of the mind, which in turn means that it can be structured or constituted by the mind to be receivable in the knowing experience of the mind.

Notwithstanding, whether or not an object can be given in the knowing experience of the mind depends crucially on the horizon and conceptual and perceptual structures of the mind. That is to say, if the mind is a constructor in the process of knowledge, what constructing ability a mind has is of great importance. And what constructing ability a mind has depends importantly on the kind of horizon of a mind. It depends importantly on the depth and width of the mind.

No wonder, Zhuangzi talked about expanding the mind to the extent that the mind could travel in the infinite realm of the *Dao* and the universe and co-extensive with the realm of the *Dao*. He also pointed out: "A frog in the well cannot comprehend the ocean, because he is limited by the size of his well. A summer insect cannot comprehend ice, because he knows only his own sea. A narrow-minded scholar cannot grasp the *Dao*, because he is constrained by his beliefs and conceptual frame-work (Zhuangzi 1995, ch.17). As Zhuangzi sees it, for a person whose mind has a very limited horizon, what s/he can see, know, and understand is very limited. On the one hand, that which can be constituted as knowing objects by his/her mind are very limited. On the other hand, the truth, value, and meaning which a narrowed mind of much narrowed horizon are very limited, fragmentary, and therefore problematic.

In comparison, Mencius talked about expanding the mind to the extent that

the mind can embrace all things in the universe. Mencius further indicated that the broadest, greatest, profoundest, and finest horizon of the mind is called “divine (神)” (Mencius 1996, 7B25). Needless to say, the broadest, greatest, profoundest, and finest horizon of the mind presupposes the broadest, greatest, profoundest, and finest space of the mind. He taught that one should “extend one’s mind is to know one’s (human) nature (尽其心者，知其性也)”; moreover, one’s mind should be extended to the extent that “all things in the universe are embraced by one’s mind (万物皆备于我).” (Mencius 1996, 7A1/4).

Meanwhile, in Buddhism, the doctrine of empty mind is taught. It is alleged that an enlightened mind is a substantially empty mind. That is to say, in Buddhism, an enlightened mind is a mind that is purged of all its substantial contents—all conceptual frameworks, all feelings and sentiment (except love as universal compassion) and value systems—and remain only one consciousness, the feeling of love as universal compassion. Buddhist belief is that only when the mind is totally empty or totally purged of all its substantial contents except the consciousness of love as universal compassion, the mind is free of all empirical imprisonments and thus arrives at an infinite view of reality as it is, instead of a reconstructed view. This amounts to saying follows: 1. Daily understanding, which is an ignorant understanding, is a reconstructed view of the mind; 2. The daily, unenlightened mind does not reflect reality as it is, but reconstructs reality in accordance with its beliefs, values, and sentiments; 3. The more one purges those substantial contents of one’s mind, the lesser reconstruction the mind will make in understanding; 4. Only when all reconstructed views are purged from one’s mind, one can have an enlightened view of the world as it is.

Therefore, from a different avenue, Buddhism also arrives at the conclusion which Daoism and Buddhism arrive at: the mind is a constructor in understanding, not merely a copying machine or camera; the mind does not just reflect or mirror, it constructs. Now, at the core of the Daoist and Confucian doctrines of expanding one’s mind is the concept of the centrality of expansion of the horizon of one’s mind. That is to say, while the importance of expanding one’s mind is that to expand one’s mind is to expand one’s capacity of knowing and understanding, the core of expanding one’s mind is an expansion of the horizon of one’s mind. The horizon of a mind is the range of vision within the mind can see. As Gadamer puts it,

The concept of ‘horizon’ ... expresses the superior breadth of vision that the

person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand ... to see it better, within a large whole and in truer proportion (Gadamer 1991, 305).

That is to say, the range of horizon of the mind is the range, scope, and limit within which the mind can make sense of a given object and thus can turn it into a knowing object. This should not be a surprise. As Charles Tylor points out, the horizon of a mind is its background of intelligibility; “Things take on importance against a background of intelligibility. Let us call this a horizon.” (Tylor 1989, 37). He further suggests that one is capable of taking stands only when one has a horizon (Ibid.). A lack of horizon not only makes us lose our motivations and sources of inspiration, but also deprives us of the very ability to construct meaning and value of things that present themselves to us. Taylor calls the loss of self-motivation as “self-disorientation”. He points out:

People often express [their disorientation] in terms of not knowing who they are, but which can also be seen as a radical uncertainty of where they stand. They lack a frame or horizon within which things can take on a stable significance, within which some life possibilities can be seen as good or meaningful, others as bad or trivial.¹³

Accordingly, only in horizons objects are given to us as knowing objects of specific meaning and value. The level of the horizon of the mind determines importantly the constructing capacity of the mind in understanding and interpretation. Before Gadamer and Taylor, Martin Heidegger also emphasizes the importance of horizon in understanding. He claimed:

The horizon of temporality as a whole determines that where upon [*voraus*hin] factually existing entities are essentially disclosed ... A potentiality-for-Being is in each case projected in the horizon of future, one's Being-already is disclosed in the horizon of having been, and what with which one concerns oneself is discovered in the horizon of the present (Heidegger, BT416/H365).

For Heidegger, the temporary horizon of the mind is essential to one's ability to construct the truth, meanings and values of beings in the world as well as the truth, meaning and value of a person's existence, and what kind of the

spatial-temporary horizon a mind has supervenes on what space of the mind one has. William James famously claimed, “A man’s vision is the great fact of him.”(James 1996, 20). A person’s vision is the great fact of him/her because it is a fact of his/her ability to know and to understand. The greater his/her vision of his/her mind, the greater ability to know and understand s/he has. Thus, James further claimed that “No one of us can get along without the far flashing beams of light it [philosophy] sends over the world’s perspectives.” (Ibid, 8). That is to say, no one can do well without a far-reaching vision of the mind. The limit of one’s vision of mind is the limit of one’s understanding and being. What a mind can know depends greatly on what kind of horizon, vision, and space of mind the mind has.

The Chinese philosopher Feng Youlan divides the horizons of human mind into four categories:

1. The primitive, the horizon under which the mind sees only its desires and everything in the world in terms of the mind’s desires;
2. The utilitarian horizon under which the mind sees its needs and desires in terms of practical necessity and mean-end calculation;
3. Moral horizon under which the mind can see things from the ethical-moral point of view—that is, from conventional ethical-moral view;
4. The transcendental and universal horizon under which the mind can capture truths, values, and meaning of things and human existence from the universal perspective (Feng 1999, 576-577).

As Feng sees it, the kind of horizon a person’s mind has determines what a person can know and will know as well as how a person can know and will know.

Some scholars today recognize the constructing function of the mind, in particular the constructing function of conceptual space. For example, Peter Gardenfors indicates, “Conceptual space provides us with a natural way of presenting similarities.” (Gardenfors. 2000, 5). Conceptual space in the mind is not just a passive place to house beliefs, it is a constructing space wherein things are categorized. Conceptual space is only one part of the space of the mind. Other parts of the space of the mind include the feeling space—the space in an agent can emotionally receive things—and the space of the sub-conscious within which an agent can sub-consciously receive things. Just as we make sense of things in terms of similarities or contraries within a specific conceptual space, we experience and understand things in terms of concepts (beliefs), feelings, and

values occurring and developing in the space of our mind. Thought and feeling occur and move in given space of mind. Where experience of understanding occur, the space of the mind makes such experience possible. The broadness of such space is crucial for thought and feeling to move well, freely, and authentically.

The conceptual frameworks or structures, therefore, are sources of the constructing capacity of mind. The limit of such structures of a mind is the limit of the constructing power of the mind. Kant is right in insisting that knowing is not merely an activity and experience of copying and duplication, but an activity and experience of constructing. Notwithstanding, while the potential to be rational is inborn in a human being, the particular conceptual and perceptual frameworks or structures of a person's mind is developed in a person in his/her existence by culture. Thus, for example, specific concepts are developed here and there by specific thinkers and in specific cultures and then spread to and are learned by all. The same can be said of logical reasoning and thinking, for example, deductive and inductive reasoning. Therefore, Confucianism is right in insisting that one should make one's mind broad, great, profound and refined through constant cultivation. The neo-Confucian Zhang Zhai urged us:

Enlarging your mind, you can grasp the truths of millions of things in the universe. A narrowed mind will separate you from truth and prevent you from being able to embrace the universe at large This is why Mencius said: extend your mind, and then you will know your nature, and, therefore, know the universe at large. The universe is limitlessly large and this is why it contains everything. [Accordingly, your mind must also be limitlessly large so that it can embrace everything.] If your mind still leaves one thing outside of it, the mind is not perfect (Zhu & Li 1998, 61)

Evoking Mencius' argument for extension of the mind, Zhang insisted that unless we have broad minds, which include broad spaces of mind, we could not comprehend many things. He pointed out: "*I Jing* says, 'Knowing all profoundest truth and essence of the universe, this is the feature of the sage.' Can anyone who is narrow-minded accomplish this?" (Ibid, 163).

According to Confucianism and neo-Confucianism, ancient sages all have the transcendent, universal horizon of the universal mind. Wang Yangming claimed that great men have minds that are co-extensive with the universe at large

(Wang 2015b, 1066). Chen Lai indicates, “Sages have the supreme horizon of the mind.” (Chen 2013, 223). The horizon of ancient sages’ minds is characterized as *tong, da*, not fragmented by things (Ibid). Therefore, sages enjoy total freedom in spirit, feelings and thoughts (Ibid.). Taking Wang Yangming ideal as the paradigmatic example, Chen Lai outlines four features of Confucian sages’ horizon: (1) transcendent; (2) universal; (3) far-reaching and height-reaching, and (4) all embracing and including (Ibid, 218-255). Chen Lai is on the right mark. Here, the concept is that a sage is not only distinctive in moral virtues, but also, may be more importantly, in their horizons of the mind. Equally crucial, sages differ from ordinary persons in one important aspect: the horizons of their minds are of extraordinary length, width, and height. That is to say, their minds, as well as the spaces of their minds, are expanded to extraordinary length, width, and height.

All the same, in both Daoism and Confucianism, to expand one’s mind is to model one’s mind after the minds of those ancient sages and therefore to develop a mind of “supreme broadness, firmness, height, illuminating, far-reaching, and lasting (久)” (Zisizi 1996, chs.25/26). It is to cultivate the mind with a vision of “all things in the universe” so that the mind is not fragmented by and imprisoned in desires for particular things.” (Ibid, 61). It is to develop a universal mind of those great feelings and principles of the universe (Wang 2015, 31). It is to develop a horizon of the mind that enables us to see the profoundest truths, to live in profoundest wisdoms, and to imbibe the profoundest enlightenments, and to be extensively contributing to the public good.

Correspondingly, in both Daoism and Confucianism, the metaphysical virtue of the mind consists importantly of its spatial extent—that is to say, its spatial length, width, and height (deep). The more spacious the mind is, the virtuous it is. In comparison, Socrates/Plato conceived the metaphysical virtue of the soul in terms of the following: the soul: divine; immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, and always identical (Plato 1997, 70). While the spatial dimension bears no meaning in the Socratic-Platonic concept of the excellence of the mind, in early Confucianism, spatial broadness, length, width, height and deep are core, necessary aspects of the excellence of the mind. Noteworthy, Socrates/Plato famously divided the soul into the rational, the spirit, and desires. Socrates/Plato talked about wisdom as the virtue of the rational, courage as the virtue of the spirit, and moderation as the virtue of desires. In comparison, Mencius conceptualized the mind in terms of feelings and beliefs/thoughts and emphasized

spaciousness as the virtue of the mind Mencius 1996, 3B2). Both Confucius and Mencius emphasized the virtues of *tong* (通) and *da* (达) of the mind. *Tong* is that the mind is stopped at some point; the mind is able to move freely in space and time. *Da* is that the mind is able to arrive at and encompass what the mind intends to arrive at or encompass. Both the virtues of *tong* and *da* imply the virtue of spaciousness of the mind. Only a spacious mind can be *tong* and *da*.

Needless to say, here, what kind of knowing ability of a mind has depends not only on the depth and width of the mind, but also on the substantial contents of the mind. As indicated above, a same object can be given as different knowing objects in the experiences of different minds. Thus, Zhuangzi once pointed out, “Mao Chiang and Li Chi were considered by men to be beauties, but at the sign of them fish plunged deep down in the water, birds soared high up in the air, and deer dashed away. Which of the four knows the right kind of beauty.”(Zhuangzi 1995, ch.1). Here, two same persons were given as four kinds of knowing objects to four kinds of mind: to the human mind, they were beautiful women; to the minds of fish, bird, or deer, they were unwelcome or undesirable objects. In Husserlian idioms, these two *noemata*, through the *noesis* of the transcendental egos become four kinds of phenomena that were given in the experiences of four minds of consciousness. The same can be said that a same object will be given as different knowing objects in the experiences of different kinds of mind of different kinds of person. All the same, the scope of the mind is a defining factor of the constructing ability of the mind. So is the content of the mind.

All the same, what knowledge which a mind can produce depends on what kind of construct capacity the mind has. What kind of constructing capacity a mind can have depends on what kind of conceptual and perceptual structures the mind has and what kind of horizon the mind has. One cannot expect that another person is given as a lover in the experience of one’s mind if one’s mind does not have any conceptual and perceptual structure that has the capacity to receive love as an object of experience of one’s mind. One cannot expect that a piece of law is given as a law of justice or injustice in the experience of one’s mind if one’s mind does not have any conceptual and perceptual structure that has the capacity to receive justice as an object of experience of one’s mind.

Conclusion

The experience of knowing object of a mind starts with an object’s being given as

a cognitive object within the horizon of the mind, which in turn indicates that an initial confirmation of the object to the conceptual and perceptual structure of the mind. Confirmation here is understood in the sense that by nature an object can be conceptualized or perceived as a cognitive object. More crucial here is that an object is not simply given in or moved from outside into the experience of consciousness of the mind. It is constituted as a knowing phenomenon to become a knowing object in the knowing experience. Knowledge is always the mind's knowledge of an external object or of the mind itself as a cognitive object. That is to say, knowledge of an external object implies a correspondence relationship between the mind's belief and the external object, and self-knowledge of the mind implies a correspondence relationship between the mind and itself.

Therefore, we can, and should have a constructivist view of knowledge and mind or epistemological constructivism here. We can conclude at least as follows:

1. Knowledge involves a correspondence between reality and beliefs of the mind; however, the case that a mind knows reality is that a mind has beliefs and understanding which reflect and capture reality as they are; meanwhile, the mind always construct its beliefs of reality with a specific capacity; how much its beliefs can correspond to reality outside depends importantly on what the mind can construct;
2. In the process of knowing, the mind is not akin to a copying machine, a mirror or camera; instead, the mind is a constructor;
3. As constructors; some minds are more capable of knowing or have better capacity to know and some other minds are less of capable of knowing or have poorer capacity to know;
4. The level of one's capacity to know depends on the space and content of one's mind; the more spacious of a mind, the more a mind can know; also, the more substantial the content of one's mind is, the more one's mind can know; the more a mind knows, the more the mind can know;
5. In order to know, one must cultivate one's capacity to know; to cultivate one's capacity to know, one must constantly expand the space of one's mind and to increase, enrich, refine and elevate the content of one's mind;
6. Kant profoundly points out that the mind is a constructor; but Kant could have seen that the capacity of the mind to construct—for example, those formal categories (the tools⁰ of the mind—is not a priori, but culturally cultivated;

7. Both phenomenology and Buddhism rightly see the mind to be a constructor in knowing. But neither call for us to expand the space of one's mind and to increase, enrich, refine and elevate the content of one's mind; instead, phenomenology proposes phenomenological reduction; Instead, Buddhism proposes that one should strive for substantial empty of the mind;
8. In comparison, Daoism and Confucianism are profoundly right in calling for us to constantly expand the horizon of one's mind, to expand the space of one's mind; Daoism teaches us to expand the mind to be able to travel in the realm of infinite truth; Confucianism teaches us to expand our minds to be broad, great, profound, and refined to the extent that the mind can know all things in the universe at large;
9. Victor Hugo claimed: *There is one spectacle grander than the sea, that is the sky; there is one spectacle grander than the sky, that is the interior of the soul.* Daoism teaches that we can expand the mind to be infinite; Confucianism teaches that we should cultivate a mind that is the broadest, greatest, most profound, and refined; we should say here that cultivating the mind, more cultivating the mind, and always cultivating the mind.

Mind and knowledge, what a twin! That is all we know, and that is all what we ought to know.

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