The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind

The sciences ask limited questions about Man, or questions about specific sides of the human life. Such questions are then solved by experimenting, collecting systematical observations and from them draw up theories. The sciences collect systematical experiences and throw out theories, that can be tested through new experiences, or serve as the best explanations.

So, one crucial principle in science is, that a certain theory has to be testable. Another crucial principle is the use of abductive reasoning (inference to the best explanation).

Is it testable whether God exists or not? No! Is it testable, that the human consciousness only consists in some physical-chemical reactions in the brain, or that it only is a social construction? No!

Is the best explanation for crop circles, that they have been made by extraterrestrials? Although it is undoubtedly true, that strange patterns are sometimes found in cornfields (crop circles) - it doesn’t follow that they must have been made by extraterrestrials. There is a wide range of far more plausible alternative explanations of the phenomenon, such as that they have been made by pranksters.

Pseudoscience is philosophical, political, religious/occult theories, that seek legitimacy by claiming, that they are scientifical theories, while the fact is, that they either not is testable, or that they abuse the use of abductive reasoning.

Pseudoscience is for example seen in the New Age environment, where they demand that science has to be integrated with so-called “alternative sciences”, such as Intelligent Design, Cryptozoology, Dianetics, Eugenics, Graphology, Homeopathy, Morphic Resonance, Perpetual Motion, Astrology, Personology, Phrenology, Theosophy, Physiognomy, Pyramidology, Quantum Mysticism, Quantum biology, Radionics, Time Cube, Ufology, Vitalism, and many more.
New Age pseudoscience is always based on some kind of religious or occult viewpoint (read more in my articles The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism, and Quantum mysticism and its web of lies).

More accepted pseudosciences is seen in the intellectual environment in form of reductionisms, where they for example claim, that Man fully can be described and explained with the methods of natural science. This happens in various forms of Naturalism, Positivism and Behaviourism. Or they claim, that psychology, sociology or history can give the total and superior understanding of, what a human being is. These viewpoints are described respectively as Psychologism, Sociologism and Historism.

But all this is not testable. Often the reductionisms then claim, that their theories are the best explanations. The reductionisms observe Man from fragmented viewpoints, for example as organism, as physical-chemical system, as society being, as psyche, as producer and user of language and meaning. But what becomes of the wholeness? What unites all this knowledge to a total image of Man? The reductionisms’ explanations of this always end up as philosophical shipwrecks. Reductionisms are philosophical viewpoints, which under cover of being science seek to answer the question of Man, or reality as such. But no single branch of science gives anything else than a limited perspective on Man or reality. If the reductionisms should be taken seriously, then they shall contain a unifying perspective on all knowledge about Man.

It is unfortunate that the reductionisms are so accepted, because it is them that have created distinctions such as “Jewish” and “Aryan” physics; “bourgeois” and “socialist” biology; IQ tests; eugenics; personality typing - and a lot of other political inferences from science that have had catastrophical consequences (see for example my article Personality typing is a refined system of prejudice).

Where New Age pseudoscience typically is based on the claim that science has to integrated with occult and religious viewpoints, then the pseudoscience of reductionism typically is based on that science has to be integrated with (or is the same as) atheistic and/or political viewpoints.

What can be a serious problem in the future, is that a new kind of pseudoscience is trying to unite New Age pseudosciences with some of the pseudosciences of reductionism (see my article The Matrix Conspiracy).

Both New Age pseudoscience and the pseudoscience of reductionism are common in sharing some kind of scientism; that is: they overestimate the importance of science, for example by claiming:
1) that philosophy and religion need to be founded in science
2) that certain single branches of science can give an explanation of everything
3) that certain single branches of science are self-sufficient and that philosophy and religion are superfluous.

In New Age it happens in the demand of “alternative sciences.” In reductionism it happens in the form of pseudoskepticism.

Pseudoskepticism is an important concept in my work as a paranormal investigator, because pseudoskepticism usually is used in opposition to an assortment of questionable claims (from UFOs and paranormal phenomena to alternative medical practices to religious ideas). Pseudoskepticism refers to arguments which use scientific sounding language to disparage or refute given beliefs, theories, or claims, but which in fact fail to follow the precepts of conventional scientific skepticism.

The term “pseudoskepticism” has gradually been expanded to include any unsubstantiated invalidation of a theory.

The term was coined by professor in sociology, Marcello Truzzi. Truzzi attributed the following characteristics to pseudosceptics:

1) The tendency to deny, rather than doubt.
2) Double standards in the application of criticism
3) Tendency to discredit, rather than investigate
4) Presenting insufficient evidence or proof
5) Assuming criticism requires no burden of proof
6) Making unsubstantiated counter-claims
7) Counter-claims based on plausibility rather than empirical evidence
8) Suggesting that unconvincing evidence is grounds for completely dismissing a claim

Truzzi characterized true skepticism as:

1) Doubt rather than denial; nonbelief rather than belief
2) An agnostic position, one that says the claim is not proved rather than disproved
3) Maintains that science need not incorporate every extraordinary claim as a new “fact.”

4) As a result, has no burden to prove anything

5) Discovering an opportunity for error should make such experiments less evidential and usually unconvincing. It usually disproves the claim that the experiment was “air tight” against error, but it does not disprove the anomaly claim.

An example of pseudoskepticism within reductionism is the British ethologist Richard Dawkins. He is well known for his criticism of religious pseudoscience such as creationism and intelligent design, but is himself, in his atheistic faith, ending in the pseudoscience of reductionism (biologism), for example in his book *The God Delusion*.

Other examples of the pseudoscience of reductionism is the American philosopher Daniel C. Dennett, who in his book - with the ambitious title *Consciousness Explained* - seeks to explain consciousness, partially through computer analogies, partially through neurology and psychology.

Personally I am supporting true skepticism within science, but my method is in itself not building on science, but on philosophy. I am using critical thinking, but I am not a scientific investigator, who has to follow the precepts of conventional scientific skepticism. This is due to, that I have experienced spiritual crises and paranormal phenomena (therefore I can´t be an agnostic), but I am at the same time critical towards how to describe and behave in relation to such phenomena.

**Reductionism and philosophy**

Along with the development of the sciences the so-called reductionisms have got status of whole research programmes. After Darwin many thought, that everything could be explained biological. In Logical Empiricism materialism lived onwards in the form of Physicalism, which was about, that all sciences eventually can be reduced to classical physics – or eventually to “the intersubjective controllable language of things”. Psychologism was one of the other ravaging reductionisms in the twentieth century. Freud and Jung thought separately, that they had the key to the understanding of diverse cultural phenomena because of the storeroom of the unconsciousness. Moreover there was Historism, which followers thought that they could generalize hermeneutics also to include the exact sciences. The latest craze in reductionism is Social Constructivism (see my article *Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry*).
Surely – many are the people, who become seduced by the reductionisms. Maybe not so strange after all: all reductionisms imply a simplification, a manageable solution to all problems, a key, which saves the supporters for having to think fundamentally over the philosophical questions – which after all only a few are capable to.

What is reductionism? Science can´t give answers to the problems of lifeviews and view of values. Single branches of sciences can´t out of hand answer questions about values or moral standards.

However this they nevertheless often do, but then it ends in reductionism. And there has not been a lack of trying to understand Man from one or the other single branch of science. As already mentioned: They have for example claimed, that Man fully could be described and explained with the methods of natural science. This happens in various forms of Naturalism, Positivism and Behaviourism. Or they have thought, that psychology, sociology or history can give the total and superior understanding of, what a human being is. These viewpoints are described respectively as Psychologism, Sociologism and Historism.

These viewpoints are forms of reductionism; that is to say: they reduce or devaluate Man to a phenomenon of a single type. The problem is then to lead all other sides of Man back to this single type, for example to explain ethics, politics and mathematics as pure historical or psychological phenomena. Here the reductionisms always end in various forms of explaining away, which often is direct absurd.

The reductionisms observe Man from fragmented viewpoints, for example as organism, as physical-chemical system, as society being, as psyche, as producer and user of language and meaning. But what becomes of the wholeness? What unites all this knowledge to a total image of Man?

The reductionisms view themselves as scientific approaches, but they are not. It is here the fundamental invalidity in the reductionistic viewpoints arises, since their basis not is building on argumentation, but on the claim, that they are founded in science. But science is as mentioned not able to answer problems of lifeviews and values. Reductionisms are philosophical viewpoints, which under cover of being science seek to answer questions of values or moral standards. No single branch of science gives anything else than a limited perspective on Man or reality. If the reductionisms should be taken seriously, then they shall contain a unifying perspective on all knowledge about Man.

Our wonder over Man becomes philosophy, when it reaches the question of Man as such. Philosophy throws out answers to the question, argues for the answers and
investigates their consequences. This happens first of all by reflecting and meditating over the things, not by experience-scientifical way.

Philosophy is in that way a deepening of our everyday understanding. It is a reflection over well-known subjects. Its answers lie in continuation of our immediate knowledge and understanding. Similar you can say, that philosophy is a deepening of the forms of understanding, which lie in for example science, art and religion.

Philosophy seeks for oneness and coherence. This means, that it both ask for the fundamental trait of the essence of Man, and for how all other traits of Man is connected therewith. The answer to, what the essence of Man is, has to throw a light of transfiguration over everything we know about man.

Philosophy asks the most universal question about Man, the common or universal which all of us have part in, in spite of the fact that we can behave so different and be studied in so many various ways. Here it is about what, we can call the essence of Man, and the question is solved, not by experimenting, collecting systematical observations and from them draw up theories. It is only solved by reflecting and meditating over everything we already know about Man, and by searching for oneness and coherence in it.

The sciences ask limited questions about Man, or questions about specific sides of the human life. Philosophy asks the most universal question about Man. The sciences collect systematical experiences and throw out theories, that can be determined by new experiences. Philosophy uses alone the tool of reflection and meditation.

Reductionisms are philosophical viewpoints, because they seek to answer the question about Man as such, but as philosophical viewpoints they are cognitional and ethical shipwrecks.

Let us first try to look at the cognitional shipwreck. The truth, which philosophy seeks to achieve, is a truth that raises over human views, yes over the whole of the human existence. That something is true means in philosophical sense, that it is true independently of, who claims it, and when it is claimed. And independently of, whether anybody at all has claimed it, thought it, believed it or knows it. Truths are therefore, in philosophical context, both time-independent and idea- and consciousness-independent.

Since all philosophical views qua views claim to be true in precisely this sense (also relativism and subjectivism!!), then it should be clear, that views, which try to reduce or cause explain all views, are self-refuting views.
A self-refuting view can´t be saved by saying, that it shall apply to all views except itself. For in that case you have to accept, that there exists at least one scientific and/or philosophical doctrine, which are independent of what you seek to reduce everything to, and this is precisely what the understanding itself claims, that there isn´t.

It seems to be a common trait of the self-refuting philosophical views, that they pull the carpet away under themselves, because they seek to reduce fundamental concepts such as ”meaning”, ”truth”, and ”validity” to something factual, for example physical, biological, psychological, social or historical. Herewith they at the same time claim, that if these conditions had been different (because they are changeable), then all our concepts about meaning, truth and validity also had to be different. But therewith they deprive themselves the possibility for being regarded as meaningfull, true or valid.

Let us now try to look at the ethical shipwreck, which the reductionisms lead us out in.

My concept of Illuminati is based on the rise of pseudoscience. As suggested, there are especially two kinds of pseudoscience: 1) the pseudoscience of New Age, which demands “alternative” sciences with spiritual content. 2) The pseudoscience of reductionism, which connect their “sciences” with certain atheistic and/or political views.

Both are a part of The Matrix Conspiracy because they both support subjectivism and relativism, which are a fundamental philosophy of this ideology. In the following I will concentrate about the reductionism.

**The heredity and environment ideology and the problem of mind**

When you today ask: what is a human being? Then most people answer, that Man ”is a product of heredity and environment”. This has become a whole ideology in the Western world, and a fundamental part of the Illuminati aspect of The Matrix Conspiracy. It is actually a kind of sociobiology, or social Darwinism.

As mentioned, then both Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett advocate some kind of sociobiology. Social biology became notorious in 1975, when the American biologist Edward O. Wilson published a major treatise on the subject: *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*. Accusations of sexism and racism were leveled because Wilson suggested that Western social systems are biologically innate, and that in some respects males are stronger, more aggressive, more naturally promiscuous than females. Critics argued that all social biology is in fact a manifestation of Social Darwinism, a
nineteenth-century philosophy owing more to the English philosopher Herbert Spencer, than to Charles Darwin, supposedly legitimating extreme laissez-faire economics and an unbridled societal struggle for existence.

But the search for a synthesis of the heredity and environment split, a holism, is common in the pseudoscience of reductionism.

Within the pseudoscience of New Age the American physicist Fritjof Capra, has in his book, *The Turning Point*, outlined an ideology, where he combines quantum mysticism with reductionism, especially reductionisms such as historism and sociologism (read more in my article *Quantum mysticism and its web of lies*).

And, since the first publication of his ideas at the age of 23, the American New Age guru, Ken Wilber, has also sought to bring together the world´s far-ranging spiritual teachings, philosophies, and scientific truths into one coherent and all-embracing vision. This integral map of the *Kosmos* (the universe that includes the physical cosmos as well as the realms of consciousness and spirit) should then offer an unprecedented guide to discovering your highest potentials.

Wilber introduces his vision by saying, that during the last 30 years we have witnessed a historical first: all of the world´s cultures are now available to us. In the past, if you were born, say, a Chinese, you likely spent your entire life in one culture, often in one province, sometimes in one house, living and loving and dying on one small plot of land. But today, not only are people geographical mobile, we can study, and have studied, virtually every known culture on the planet. In the global village, all cultures are exposed to each other.

Knowledge itself is now global, Wilber claims. This means that, also for the first time, the sum total of human knowledge is available to us – the knowledge, experience, wisdom and reflection of all major human civilizations – premodern, modern, and postmodern – are open to study by anyone.

Wilber asks: What if we took literally everything that all the various cultures have to tell us about human potential – about spiritual growth, psychological growth, social growth – and put it all on the table? What if we attempted to find the critically essential keys to human growth, based on the sum total of human knowledge now open to us? What if we attempted, based on extensive cross-cultural study, to use all of the world´s great traditions to create a composite map, a comprehensive map, an all-inclusive or integral map that included the best elements from all of them?

Wilber asks: Sound complicated, complex, daunting? In a sense, it is, he answers. But in another sense, he continues, the results turn out to be surprisingly simple and
elegant. Over the last several decades, there has indeed been an extensive search for a comprehensive map of human potentials. This map uses all the known systems and models of human growth – from the ancient shamans and sages to today’s breakthrough in cognitive science – and distills their major components into 5 simple factors, factors that are the essential elements or keys to unlocking and facilitating human evolution.

Ken Wilber calls these 5 elements **quadrants, levels, lines, states** and **types**; that is: quadrants of development, levels or stages of development, states of consciousness, and a human personality typing system, a typology. All of these elements are, right now available in your own awareness, he claims. These 5 elements are not merely theoretical concepts; they are aspects of your own experience, contours of your own consciousness.

What is the point of using this integral map or model, Wilber asks. First, whether you are working in business, medicine, psychotherapy, law, ecology, or simply everyday living and learning, the integral map helps make sure that you are “touching all the bases.” If you are flying over the Rocky Mountains, the more accurate a map you have, the less likely you will crash. An integral approach insures that you are utilizing the full range of resources for any situation, with the greater likelihood of success.

Second, if you learn to spot these 5 elements in your own awareness – and because they are there in any event – then you can more easily appreciate them, exercise them, use them... and thereby vastly accelerate your own growth and development to higher, wider, deeper ways of being. A simple familiarity with the 5 elements in the integral model will help you orient yourself more easily and fully in this exiting journey of discovery and awakening (read more in my article *A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method*).

In is very popular (if not directly a doctrine) in New Age, inspired by Theosophy, and writers such as Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber, to term their positions as “Holism”. But both Theosophy, Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber’s systems, can be seen as substantive philosophies of history; that is: searches for overall meaning in human history; searches for models of everything (read my articles *Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr* and *The fascism of Theosophy*).

In the West, substantive philosophy of history is thought to begin only in the Christian era. In the *City of God*, Augustine wonders why Rome flourished while pagan, yet fell into disgrace after its conversion to Christianity. Divine reward and punishment should apply to whole peoples, not just to individuals. The unfolding of events in history should exhibit a plan that is intelligible rationally, morally, and (for
Augustine) theologically. As a believer Augustine is convinced that there is such a plan, though it may not always be evident.

In the modern period, philosophers such as Vico and Herder also sought such intelligibility in history. They also believed in a long-term direction or purpose of history that is often opposed to and makes use of the purposes of individuals. The most elaborate and best-known example of this approach is found in Hegel, who thought that the gradual realization of human freedom could be discerned in history even if much slavery, tyranny, and suffering are necessary in the process.

Marx, too, claimed to know the laws – in his case economic – according to which history unfolds. Similar searches for overall “meaning” in human history have been undertaken in the twentieth century, notably by Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) author of the twelve-volume *Study of History*, and Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), author of *Decline of the West*.

The main problem with all the above theories, are that they, in different ways, reduce consciousness to heredity and environment. They also commit the thought distortion *Nondual bias* (see my book *A dictionary of thought distortions*).

If Man only is a product of heredity and environment, then he has no longer any responsibility for his actions. Even the murderer, who is standing accused in court, is able to defend himself with, that he basically can´t help, that he has committed a murder. Firstly he was born with some unfortunate genes, which made, that he wasn´t all too clever. Therefore he was bullied in the school, and thereby he was developed to become aggressive and hot tempered. All this caused, that he in a certain situation committed a murder, but this he could not help. Heredity and environment led him precisely to this situation. Guilty? No, many people would say today, he is no more guilty, than a person is to blame, that he came to cough in a place filled with smoke. No, on the whole it is society and environment, which are to blame for the murder.

When you are advocating a reductionism and are claiming, that Man *is nothing else than* for example a product of heredity and environment, then concepts such as responsibility, guilt and duty loose all meaning. And it becomes meaningless to talk about human ideals. Why admire people, who have achieved something great? They have only good genes and a beneficially environment. Why condemn people, who spoil and break down society? They can´t help it.

The self-help industry, and its belonging therapeutic techniques, thereby exposes the paradox, that the more resource-filled a human being is conceived to be, the more it has to be supported therapeutic. The more self-actualizing a human being becomes, the more it is in need of help to actualize itself. And the more responsibility a human
being is said to have for its own life, the more this same human being, as a basic starting point, is considered as a victim, as non-authentic, and therefore as powerless.

The one face of this paradoxical Janus head is the empowerment culture, the other face is the victimization culture (and the connected recovery movement). Read more about this paradox in my articles The four philosophical hindrances and openings, The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing, and Self-help and the mythology of authenticity).

Typical enough (foolish enough), then heredity and environment also are being used as a political tool. Often with followers on the respective sides of the extremities. In the dispute between heredity and environment it is for example considered political progressively ("left wing") to think, that the environment is more or less the sole decisive factor. The environment (upbringing, social conditions) is people themselves in the principle able to control and change through political actions. This is also background for, that Lamarckism in the form of Lysenkoism – which almost completely refuses the biological genetic meaning – got monopoly on engaging themselves with heredity in Soviet.

Similar it is regarded as political reactionary ("right wing"), if you believe, that the hereditament (genes) of the individual is the most important factor, which determines its actual development. Ideological this is connected with, that in that case a social reformatory policy is not for a lot of benefit: the biological inheritance has so far been a destiny, which you have to tolerate. Right wing politicians have for example claimed, that aggression or competition is inborn in the biological nature of man. Therewith the assertion can be used to justify, that specific social conditions, for example warfare or the capitalistic, economical system, is "natural". Evolutionism ”proves” that the unlimited competition is as natural, as the survival of the best fitted. Moreover we know Nazism’s use of biological theories.

As mentioned, the combination of the two extremeties – the heredity and environment ideology – looks like a kind of social Darwinism. Before we go further it is important to mention, that evolutionism – also in its most modern Neodarwinistic version – is a natural historical report, and not a natural scientifical theory. Neodarwinism can – as all other historical sciences – only retrospective explain the development up to now in a rational way. This appears clearly from the fact, that it can’t give any scientific well-founded prediction of the future development. It is not possible with any reasonable precision to predict the future biological development on the background of the theoretical foundation of evolutionism.

Until today Man has not been able to do anything in order to change his genes. This has been changed with the modern genetic engineering, which already in principle
has made it possible to change the genes of our gametes. In the future the problem about conscious changing peoples´ genes in order to improve certain characteristics is not any technical difficulty. It is in turn a serious ethical and political problem about setting limits and about, where these limits have to be set.

As mentioned in my article The fascism of Theosophy, then the reductionism of Theosophy is due to the attempt of synthesizing spirituality and science. Theosophy is especially inspired by Darwinism, and its theories about human evolution. And the idea continues today in New Age and Ufology, where spirituality, apart from Darwinism, furthermore is sought synthesized with new developments within psychology, psychotherapy, natural science, especially biology and quantum mechanics. The whole thing is presented as an ideology with a lot of attempts to predict the future evolution of Man, often connected with eugenics: the applied “science” or the bio-social movement (social Darwinism) which advocates the use of practises aimed at improving the genetic composition of people, usually referring to human populations (see for example my articles A critique of The Human Design System, Time travel and the fascism of The WingMakers Project and The new feminism and the philosophy of women´s magazines).

But it could also be, that it is wrong to say, that Man only is a product of heredity and environment. Has science really proven this assertion? No, it hasn´t. Firstly science till today has not been able to give any explanation of, that we have a consciousness, that we are conscious about ourselves and are able to reflect and meditate over our own wishes, actions and doings. In natural science all explanations are quantitative; that is to say: they are given within the frames of, what can be measured, scaled and counted. It speaks from an outside-and-in perspective on Man. But when we speak about everything, that the word consciousness covers - thoughts, feelings, considerations, pains etc. – then it seems quite clear, that it is not something that is quantitative. When we are using an inside-and-out perspective and describe our states of consciousness and our experiences of, what we think is beautiful, ugly, attractive, repelling etc., - then we use a completely other language than the quantitative language of natural science. So how should one be able to reduce everything to natural science?

The interesting is however, that the more science develops, the more you have to give up backgrounds, which once occured evident to everyone. In nuclear physics and the quantum mechanics we have learned, that there exist processes, which is not cause determined, and which do not follow the old rule about, that everything has to be continuous. Brain functions are in a wide extent quantum mechanical, and since the quantum mechanics breaks with the principle of causation and determinism, then the human brain is not fully a cause determined system. And then you can´t up from the ground explain brain processes from genetical and environmental factors.
(Read more in my article Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr, where I also present, not an ontological dualism, but an epistemological, a so-called gnoseological dualism. Unambiguous description has the distinction between subject and object as a necessary precondition. And the fact itself, that we have to discriminate between subject and object in order to communicate unambiguous, actually indicates, that both materialism and idealism (subjectivism/relativism) are mistaken points of views).

Just as inexplicable is it, what an "I" or a "Self" is. I wake up in the morning, and I know, that I am the same as yesterday or ten years ago, in spite of the fact that my body since then has changed look and that the content of my thoughts in many ways has become something else. What is this "Me"?

It is not my body, because then I should each morning go out in the bathroom and look in the mirror, in order to find out who I am. Nor is it the content of my consciousness, my thoughts and my memories, because then I first had to evoke a line of memories each morning, before I knew who I am. The whole of the total science has no explanation of, what a "Self" is, or what personal identity is.

In this there also lies another factor, namely the question about the free will, the possibility of Man consciously to decide on his own present condition and within some limits to make a free choice.

Meanwhile I mean, that the concept of free will and free choice is unfortunate concepts. In my understanding the will is the will to power, and belongs to the Ego, which makes it choices on background of the past, and which therefore is determined by both its personal and collective history. Therefore the Ego always strives towards being something else than what it is, it imitates others, are a slave of others ideas and ideals, and its actions are charaterized by irresoluteness and doubt. A more fortunate concept would in my understanding be the freedom that lies in the existential concept of being yourself; that is: where you live in accordance with your own essence and thereby achieve authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action. I will therefore use the concepts of freedom of action and freedom of decisiveness.

The assertion that Man is nothing else than a product of heredity and environment, has become an ideology, a part of the planlessness of our welfare society, where no one is responsible, where no one can help anything, where everything is to blame the genes or the society. However facing this reductionism you can place a more true understanding, which has science on its side: Man is a product of heredity and environment, yes, but also of your own consciousness about yourself.
I am born with some specific genes, which to a high degree put limits for, what I am able to and not able to. In some ways I have had good growing up conditions, in others bad. But I have since my childhood been conscious about myself and my surroundings, and have more or less freely been able to decide on something, rather than something else, within some limits. So therefore I am not only a product of heredity and environment, but also a person, which has become what I am, due to a line of decisions, which I have made through life.

It is a viewpoint between two extremes. On the one hand we have the assertion, that no one can help, that he is as he is. No one is able to change himself. My answer is: yes, you can. You can within some given limits work with yourself, and conscious decide to reflect and meditate over your background, your past, your environment, the whole of your character. You can decide to start a spiritual practice, which you know in longer term will change your outlook and way of being. In a spiritual practice you can change yourself quite considerably.

On the other hand we have Sartre’s assertion about, that a person’s life is determined alone by all the choices, he makes; that is to say: by the evaluations, which the inner thinker makes by saying yes and no, justifying and condemning, accepting and denying. But this is an overstatement, which sounds a bit too much of “everyone is the architect of his own fortunes”. Moreover there is the problem with the Ego and its thought distortions (see my book A Dictionary of Thought distortions).

It is therefore not true, that freedom lies in choosing to become what you want to. You can for example without guilt become beaten down by an assailant, so that you have to spend the rest of your life in a wheelchair. Here it is so so with being the architect of your own fortunes.

Truth lies in the middle of these extremes. Heredity and environment put some limits for, what we can do and not can do. But our self and our consciousness, which scientifically seen can’t be explained alone from heredity and environment, makes us capable running to decide on, how we want to react in a lot of the situations, life puts us in. Therefore you can in some situations talk about a personal responsibility.

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