

## Inside out: Reversing the roles of outer world and inner perspective

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*"The fundamental categories of the language at [time] t prescribe the order of things at that point in history; they determine both its metaphysics and its logic, as categories always have."*

David Hyder on Ian Hacking's *Rewriting the Soul*

(<http://evans-experientialism.freewebspace.com/hacking.htm>)

The inner/outer distinction -- one made at a child's early age -- separates the inner world of fantasy, dream and desire from the outer world of "reality". This epistemological split reflects a deep bipolarity about how the world is to be understood, and both language and cognitive development play a key role in affixing this differentiation. While there are languages and historical periods where this bipolarity has been expressed differently, with the boundary between reality and mind extended one way or the other, most contemporary languages subsequent to the Enlightenment and the burgeoning of the empirical sciences have imposed a clear norm as to what marks the dividing line, with dissident views as to inner/outer domains usually relegated to the genre of fantasy, or treated as delusional (a "losing touch with reality") or as playful metaphor, or interpreted as the lingua franca of religious faith (itself deemed a kind of metaphor from the empirical perspective).

The question proposed in this presentation concerns the appropriate content of each of these two domains, what in fact should belong on either side of the fence, and whether what language usage deems appropriate for inner world and outer world categories needs fundamental revision and rethinking. Underlying this question, which I would argue in the affirmative, is the underlying implication that what constitutes the bedrock criteria for objective vs. subjectively tainted data (based on traditional notions of empirical methodology) needs reexamination.

This presentation proceeds by first taking on the argument of the materialists that in fact there are not two categories -- mind and physical nature -- but only one: the outer physical world, including the physical brain. In other words, everything, in this view, is reducible to physical substance or measurable data. After presenting counter-arguments to that view, we move to examples of how content allocation in one or the other inner/outer categories -- based on language usage -- is contended to be misplaced.

The examples taken up address (1) the apocryphal boundary between inner and outer worlds, (2) the attribution of "time" to outer world domain, (3) Steven Pinker's attempt to give category two status to the cross-cultural sense of morality, and (4) the misplaced restriction of felt awareness, or perceptual experience, to category one, when in fact -- as here contended -- it extends into category two terrain, the physical world. (By implication, the notion of "extension" itself -- and space -- is given a seismic turn from the traditional viewpoint.)